

FAITH AND ENDURANCE: THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISTINCT
THEOLOGIES AND THE EXPERIENCE
OF RUNNING FOR CHRISTIAN WOMEN

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Abstract

This project takes a new approach to the issue of endurance and the meaning that it holds for people. As runners 'hit the wall', or complete distance events without 'hitting the wall', the significance of endurance itself for that runner plays a part in the experience, and in the outcome of those moments. This project addresses the problem of these moments by focusing specifically on women whose philosophical foundations lie in their Christian faith perspective.

The project covers three central areas, and uses a hermeneutical methodology which enables each of the areas to illuminate the central problem. The areas examined are: Biblical and other theological texts; literary accounts of women's endurance running; and four case studies which are used to ask what Christian women today, who participate in distance running can tell us about the experience of endurance and how it relates to their whole world view. Material from these areas is then drawn together in a theological interpretation of endurance, and laying out a framework for a more illuminated understanding of endurance for Christian women who run.

The interpretation of the material, drew out four central areas which were found to be integral to the experience of endurance in distance running. These were - running in a specific environment; transcendence of everyday life, such as experience of relationship with God; solidarity with other runners or with a specific community; and isolation. These factors, as they were distinctly experienced in specific contexts, were found to contribute to the balance of hope and despair which impacted an individual's experience of endurance and response to the experience. It was also found that a theological understanding of endurance would require a theology of the cross, and would stress the importance of choosing an attitude of active endurance within specific limits. In this way, the project constitutes a contribution to an emerging theology of sport.

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Declaration

I declare that this is my own work and that it has not been submitted for any other award.

Signed:  J. L. Borra

Chapter One: Part 1

1.1.1 Introduction

This project addresses the issue of endurance and the meaning that it holds for people - specifically the meaning that it holds for women who spend a great deal of their time and energy training their bodies to endure high levels of physical activities over prolonged periods of time, as they prepare for, and compete in, distance running events. Some of these women are top level athletes pushing back the boundaries of human endurance, others are enthusiasts pushing back personal limits. Endurance is an important quality in human life, which is talked about with some accuracy in physiological terms, but the meaning which it holds has not been adequately accounted for. As runners 'hit the wall', or complete distance events without 'hitting the wall', the significance of endurance itself for that runner plays a part in the experience and in the outcome of those moments. These demanding moments of athletic performance interact with the philosophical foundations of each runner, as will be shown below. This project addresses the problem of these moments of performance, in focusing specifically on women whose philosophical foundations lie in their Christian faith perspective.

The project covers three central areas - firstly, Biblical and other theological texts, which are used to begin to discover what a theological view of endurance might look like; secondly, literary accounts of women's endurance running, which are used to indicate what themes and values writers portray around the whole area of endurance; and the third is the empirical study, which is used to ask what Christian women today, who participate in distance running, can tell us about the experience of endurance and how it relates to their whole world view. Material from these areas is then drawn together in a theological interpretation of endurance, and used to lay out a framework for a more illuminated understanding of endurance for Christian women who run.

1.1.2 The contribution of this study.

This section will discuss the contribution which this study makes to the wider study of sport. The section will indicate that there is a place for theological discussion of endurance both in sport psychology and in the theology of sport. Here, 'theology' will be used to refer to Christian theology, on the understanding that a writer of a different faith perspective would write a different theology. The theology discussed here is intended to make sense within a Christian framework of understanding.

This project makes an original contribution to sports studies in several existing areas as well as to the theology of sport, which is a newly emerging area of sports studies. The study contributes to the history of sport in the area of sport in the Hellenistic world. The New Testament texts themselves provide us with interesting historical, as well as theological, documents which comment on a particular way of understanding sport in the ancient world. This project examines one aspect of these historical sources in the light of sport studies, thus advancing an aspect of the history of sport in an important direction. We shall see below how this advance contributes to this project overall.

This study contributes to sport psychology by looking at the moments of endurance in distance running in conjunction with the theological foundations of the runner. These moments are problematic for scholars in the area of distance running. This study takes an original theoretical stance by taking into account the philosophical foundations of each runner, and by bringing these to bear on the experience of endurance. It furthers this contribution by carrying out case studies which have been called for by sport psychologists to bring more adequate understanding of athletes (e.g. by Berger and Mackenzie, 1981), and which are required in this area to bring more adequate understanding of the attentional focus of distance runners. In taking this approach, this study opens up a possible way for the study of running to include a more holistic understanding of the runner and his or her attention, as something which interacts with each runner's broader views. We shall see below that these questions of sport psychology are also our central questions as we turn to questions about the meaning of endurance in specifically Christian cases.

This study also makes an original contribution to the newly emerging theology of sport. As this subject area is new to sports studies, this immediately raises the question of whether or not we really need a theology of sport. On his examination of whether or not

there should be a 'philosophy of sport', Graham McFee draws attention to several issues which are also relevant to our question. One is that sport simply provides examples for the discussion of general theses, rather than generating issues related particularly to a sports context. For instance, what sport is, functions as an example for discussion of the nature of concepts and our understanding of them. Alternatively, a general thesis can be applied to the example of sport, such as concerns of philosophical anthropology particularly applied in a sports context (McFee, 1998, p7f). The second issue is that philosophical questions involving a physical dimension become drawn into a philosophical discussion of sport, but are not really so much a philosophy of sport as an area of overlapping concern for any area in which physicality is fundamental. Thirdly McFee is concerned about aesthetics being drawn into the philosophy of sport, when the consideration of aesthetic questions in a discussion of sport is already moving the discussion out of the centre of what would be a philosophy of sport. Central to McFee's discussion is that the questions which naturally arise from sport itself are ethical, and that it is the ethical questions which are most legitimately asked of sport because of their specific location in the context of sport.

If we are considering the legitimacy of a theology of sport we must address these issues. Would a theology of sport merely be repeating general theses in a sport context, such as repeating a theological anthropology developed elsewhere but now stated in relation to competitive sports? Would issues involving a physical dimension masquerade as questions relating to sport when they could relate to many other physical situations? If so, it would seem that encouraging a theology of sport would be an absurd and derivative enterprise. Aesthetic questions would seem less likely to arise in the context of the theology of sport, but questions of judgement and artistic value do arise in theology and can cause problems if they are not clearly distinguished from other kinds of value. The next discussion deals with how these questions may be resolved.

Some of these problems might be solved in the relationship between theology and Christian ethics. Christian ethics relating to sport is problematic unless it is supported by theological underpinnings. This is because of the claims of Christian ethics to be distinctively Christian (claiming to be a field of discourse which makes sense to people who hold specifically Christian beliefs, rather than beliefs which are atheist or arising from another faith, such as Islam or Buddhism), and because of the problematic relationship of sport to Christianity. The problems in the relationship are situated in

many of the claims made by the Church about the inferiority of physical things and of play. So theological questions must be asked of sport before ethical questions can be answered. This may mean that the theology of sport finds itself primarily interested in questions of value, and specifically of values which arise in the context of sport. At the same time a theology of sport would have to acknowledge its limitations, and interact with other areas of theology and would have to remain sensitive to contextual distinctions. So the theology of sport might find itself limited to questions of 'what should we do', and 'why should we do it in this way', rather than questions of 'what is it?'

Allowing for broader interaction and the limitations required by a theology of sport, it appears that a theology of sport is a legitimate enterprise and that it might best concern itself with questions of value and ethics in a specifically sports context.

The perspective of the theology of sport has the potential to be valuable to the study of sport as a whole. Sports studies itself has several places for looking at religious issues, such as in ancient history of sport, where sport was often a sacred event; in the history of sport in Britain, where the Church has played for or against various sports at different times; and of course in the sociology of sport, where sport and religion have been compared as locuses of human social activity. Yet, while sport and religion are compared for their role in human life, religious questions could bring deeper answers to a variety of areas of the study of sport, particularly, perhaps to questions of value and meaning. This could be helpful where many people participating in sport hold religious views, and many of these views are still Christian today. In this way sport studies may benefit from discussion in the area of the theology of sport. I shall now briefly outline the current state of the theology of sport, in order that we see what this project contributes to the discussion.

There are theological questions being asked of sport in both Roman Catholic and Protestant thought today. Pope John Paul II has given several addresses in sports contexts and so has been required to voice the opinion of the church on sport and issues relating to particular sport. The Roman Catholic Church also requires a theology of sport in order to answer questions about what might be distinctive about physical education in the context of Roman Catholic educational establishments. Some of the answers presented by the Catholic Church have been gathered and rearticulated by Robert Feeney in his book *A Catholic Perspective: Physical Education and Sports* (Feeney, 1995). In his

work we find the Catholic Church frequently situating the theology of sport in the context of the dignity of human life, and the maturing of the whole human person. We also find discussion of the limitations of the theology of sport, in the contrast offered between sport and spiritual matters.

The Church has also responded to the need for its voice to be heard with regard to sport through the work of organisations which bring together Christians involved in the world of sport to discuss the relationship of their sport and their faith. These organisations, such as the British Protestant organisation 'Christians in Sport', highlight the need for theological questions to be examined. This work has been begun through the writings of Stuart Weir, the director of 'Christians on Sport' whose work is aimed not at scholars but at Christians working in sport, but is none the less based on scholarly research. He presents a summary of what a theology of sport might include,

"Sport is:

- a gift from God
- part of God's creation
- an opportunity for worship.
- an opportunity to love one's neighbour.
- a testing ground
- an opportunity for witness.
- important but not all-important
- not the source of our significance as people" (Weir, 2000, p 42)

The first two of these points, and perhaps the third, are most centrally theological, in the sense that they talk about God and who we are in relation to God. The points about loving one's neighbour, being tested, and Christian witness are on the whole ethical points, as Weir explains that the opportunity for witness arises from the experience of the sports person having their behaviour closely observed by others. The final two

points present the challenge of theology to elements of popular thinking about sport which Weir discusses. Weir uses theological understandings about what is truly important, and what is the source of our significance for the critique of popular discourse.

Although Weir does make claims for a theology of sport which have a more general significance, he does not claim that they are the content of a theology of sport but that they provide essential guidelines for a theology of sport. They are points which must be 'got out of the way' before specific areas are discussed. When the specific areas are discussed in Weir's work they primarily refer to behaviour, but also include questions of identity which have a bearing on behaviour.

Endurance is only one of many values which might be discussed in an emerging theology of sport. Yet there is clearly a place for an understanding of endurance at this stage. Pope John Paul II talks frequently of sport as effective for building maturity. Sport can create a well-balanced person because of the positive physical and moral virtues found when sport is at its best. By talking frequently of the maturing and strengthening of the human being, and of the values of sport, the Pope leaves space for discussion of endurance in a Catholic theology of sport. A Catholic theology of sport might for example want to look at the relationship between physical and spiritual endurance in the maturing person, building not only on the writings of Paul which appear in the Bible, but also on the discussions of wholeness which appear in the writings of Thomas Aquinas.

Weir offers a brief discussion of the New Testament texts which compare athletics to life. He talks about endurance as a kind of commitment and also talks about Jesus as an example of endurance. Weir makes it very clear that we cannot immediately apply these metaphorical texts directly to the world of sport, but must first construct a broader theology of sport before developing our understanding of areas such as endurance. There would be a place for endurance in the theology which Weir proposes, as his is a theology of our creation and redemption which suggests that how we go about sport and how we use and develop the gifts with which we are created, are central to theology.

In the theology of sport as it stands there is a place for discussion of endurance, and a need to understand endurance. This study provides that discussion of endurance in the context of distance running, and paves the way for more such contextual studies of endurance in sport. This contribution is particularly valuable for an emerging theology of

sport because endurance is so frequently discussed in a positive context in the Bible. As the Christian reader of the theology of sport searches out guidance in the Bible, the theology of sport is not useful to that reader unless topics central to the Bible and occurring in sport are addressed. The endurance with which the Bible presents us is not limited to one particular context, nor is it only a spiritual quality of steadfast commitment to God. It is rather sometimes a physical quality with a spiritual significance and sometimes a physical quality with a spiritual dimension, as we shall see in Chapter 2. And it is something which can be seen in the Biblical stories of heroes even where it is not explicitly mentioned. Discussion of this issue can significantly advance the theology of sport by examining a centrally biblical issue as it occurs in a sport context.

It is particularly helpful to examine what might be said about endurance for women, as women's experience has rarely been taken into account in the history of theology, and more women are beginning to ask questions about how traditional theological values can relate to their distinctive experiences. By focusing specifically on women, this project allows the theology of sport to begin to speak to Christian women in a realistic way.

1.1.3 The scope of this study.

This project takes the ancient problem of endurance in specific contexts in Christian life and experience - the problem of why it is significant, how we encounter it, and how we are to deal with it - and brings these issues into the problematic context of endurance in distance running in which sport psychologists are asking what runners are thinking and how this relates to performance in the crucial moments of endurance events.

The questions leading to this study arose initially from the discrepancy which I observed between the theology of the Early Church which theorised the physical aspects of human life, including Biblical exhortations to endurance, and more recent theological writing which neglects the physical aspects of human life including endurance, or reinterprets them as purely psychological phenomena. Recent understanding of endurance had become remote from the specific context of daily life and human activity in today's context, and particularly remote from those who are involved in endurance sports, who value endurance highly and strive towards it.

To carry out authentic research which could yield meaningful interpretative results on the subject of endurance, it was necessary to turn to an area of sport in which people are involved in enduring and in which the problems surrounding the issues of endurance are being examined. As a woman who runs I was attracted to the questions which arise in the discourse on running. My engagement with the question allowed an area of focus. Further focus was achieved by limiting the study's focus to Christian women, and by selecting cases, which would allow that level of focus to be examined.

Psychological studies of distance running have tended to study the thoughts of runners, by focusing on the therapeutic benefits of running, for individuals with psychological or psychiatric problems (Sachs and Buffone, 1984), or on cognitive strategies applied by runners, and the benefits or problems with those strategies (Sachs, 1984; Sachs and Sachs, 1981). Studies of runner's cognitive strategies have investigated runners' attentional focus (e.g. Masters and Lambert, 1989; Schomer, 1986), often specifically at those parts of a marathon at which a runner might be expected to experience that kind of tiredness which is known as 'hitting the wall' (Stevinson and Biddle, 1998; Masters and Ogles, 1998). These moments of a marathon are where the central questions in the study of endurance arise. This is the place in which it should be possible to discover more about endurance, and what it is to endure.

As I shall show, in the first part of Chapter 4, this area has presented researchers with several difficulties which have not yet been resolved, leaving a great many unresolved questions in this area. These questions relate to how a runner's thoughts impact on endurance, and what types of thoughts are beneficial for optimum performance. How do runners counteract 'hitting the wall'? This research will be discussed further in Chapter 4, in which I indicate that some of these problems are being confounded by researchers ignoring the complexity of a runner as an individual, bringing not only personality and motivation but also philosophical foundations to his or her marathon performance. The need for sport psychology as a whole to investigate the philosophical foundations of athletes has already been ascertained (Hardy, Jones, Gould, 1996). It is to the question of the relationship between a runner's philosophical foundations and the moments of endurance, that this study turns, using theological questions to gain access to the complex experience of endurance, and a theological framework to gain a more holistic understanding of the experience as it occurs in specific contexts.

The study draws on three central areas as source materials: literary sources, theological

sources and case study accounts. The data from each of these sources has an equal place in the study as a whole. Data was gathered from each of these sources over the same time period in order that each could be examined in the light of the other. The discussion, however, occurs in three consecutive chapters, in order that what is discovered about endurance may develop in a cumulative manner, leading to the construction of an understanding of endurance which makes sense in the context of the theology of sport.

As this study aims to make sense in terms of Christian theology, theological texts relating to endurance were re-examined. The Greek texts of the New Testament were explored, using historical critical method to examine how the texts would have been understood in their original context. Literary critical methods were also applied in order to produce deeper readings of the metaphorical language which occurs in many of the relevant texts. The details of the method by which this was carried out will be discussed in Chapter 2. This work has produced an original contribution to the study of the New Testament and to the study of the history of sport, through the application of ideas from the study of sport in the ancient world to specific New Testament passages relating to sport. The exegetical study of the New Testament texts will be discussed in Chapter 2, and the conclusions of that chapter will be related to the material from the other sources in Chapter 5.

The study draws on literary sources to gain an impression of the portrayal of endurance in narrative sources. Literary texts, which relate and discuss women's distance running, were gathered and analysed. The methods by which this was done is discussed in Chapter 3. Themes were drawn out of these texts by which endurance and the significance which it might hold may be understood.

The study explores the relationship between faith and endurance running, by examining the moments of potentially hitting the wall, in the cases of four Christian women marathon runners. The philosophical foundations of these runners were examined, as were the impact of those on the most demanding moments of the marathon. This aspect of the study can be found in Chapter 4. The experience of these moments, in the cases of these four Christian women, enables a deeper understanding of the problem of the psychology of distance running, the thoughts of distance runners, and the experience of marathon running.

The final chapters of this study draw once more on the material from the three sources

and reinterprets each in the light of the other two, in order that some degree of synthesis is reached of the ideas arising from each of the sources of data. This synthesis sketches out possibilities for understanding endurance in a way which makes sense in the context of the theology of sport. In this way, materials from distinct sources, but which all speak about endurance, are brought from separate analysis into dialogue with one another to produce a richer understanding of endurance than any single source could. Deep analysis was possible when all three areas had been examined, as it is at that point that the deepest themes requiring analysis arose. Here, we can see that this study contributes to the study of sport by using a method which brings together material from a variety of sources to enable a deep understanding of endurance.

An appropriate hermeneutical theory was necessary to allow this work to take place. This theory, as discussed in part 2 of this chapter, allows material from different types of source to be interpreted, and allows transformative reinterpretation of material, so that an increasingly accurate account of endurance emerges. Each chapter will work according to the hermeneutical theory developed below, with the specific methodological implications of the theory being addressed in each of the relevant chapters.

The thesis will include assessment of how successful this hermeneutical methodology was for studying women's sport in psychological and theological terms. This will be particularly important for any future work to be carried out in the theological study of sport, in which hermeneutical method may be considered as a method of study.

1. Part 2. Methodology

1.2.1 The standpoint of this study

As the researcher carries out a research project, he or she enters into a close engagement with the familiar or unfamiliar. The time period during which the researcher is engaged in that process is intended to be transformative, in that it is intended to produce knowledge or understanding in some kind of new way. In so far as the researcher is expected to discover something new, he or she must exist in a state of openness to encounter with the surprising aspects of what is studied. For Sharon H. Ringe, researching theology, the text which she studied compelled her onward to deeper involvement. She writes,

The longer I spent with this story, coming to know and to befriend the woman in the context of the church that continues to tell her story, the more perplexed I became. I found myself cheering the woman for her gutsiness, wit, and self-possession, and at the same time I was offended at the picture of Jesus that the story presents. I wanted to know where such a scandalous story came from, how it found its way into the Gospels, and what point it made for those who told and retold the story and for those who heard it in the Church. (Ringe 1985, p66)

On the other hand, there may be an aspect of the researcher which holds back from being transformed by the experience. That aspect can be seen perhaps as the researcher's ability to view in a critical manner, or can be seen as the researcher's bias. It is helpful to call this critical element the impossibility and, indeed undesirability, of intellectual neutrality.

In this sense the researcher is an interpreter. Traditionally, the researcher has been viewed as interpreter only in disciplines related to value, while other disciplines have been seen as relating to fact and requiring the observation and dissemination of those facts. The fact value distinction is now open to suspicion and it has now become possible to assert that any process of research is a hermeneutical process. Paul Ricoeur rightly argues that hermeneutics brings us to a position in which we are aware of a primitive interpretative process in all human functioning and a more deliberate reflective hermeneutical process in all academic disciplines (Ricoeur 1991a, pp53-88). We can see this in the very existence of the philosophy of science, and in the inclusion of research methods courses into university research programmes.

It is helpful for the researcher to embark on any research with a self consciousness of him or her self as a person involved in a particular array of discourse communities, and with a

particular set of critical values. It has become the norm in some fields of study for the writer to declare those critical values at the outset of a piece of writing. James W. Voelz, for example, declares, "I am a 52-year-old white male of German extraction who was raised in a traditional home and educated according to the traditional German 'gymnasium model'". (Voelz 1999, p156) But for some this is still problematic. As Bronwyn Davies writes,

Recently... my attempt to write jointly with a male colleague became an extremely difficult process. My references to femaleness and feminism irritated him intensely, detracting, he said, from the value of what I had to say because they drew attention to the position from which I spoke. The myth of the positionless speaker as the one who speaks the most valuable truths was one he was not able to give up. (Bronwyn Davies 1992, p54)

It was assumed, or perhaps hoped, at one time that the writer had laid aside personal feelings and come objectively to the research. More self-consciousness of methods and views, and the more reflective interpretative standpoint, leads today to doubt any claim to true 'objectivity'. In place of 'objectively', we can now reread, for example, the history of theology, as Christian researchers assuming (as in 'taking on') the gaze of the, largely secular, academy while approaching theological research. This was not an objective perspective, but a perspective from an alternative standpoint. Today's researcher must be self-conscious and, in an arena where a selection of academic positions is available, he or she must be clear about the methodological underpinnings of the research, if that research is to be helpful to the wider research community. It is also helpful for the researcher to declare his or her standpoint, because of the role which that standpoint plays in the whole process of research and the research which is produced.

As, here, I am the interpreter of endurance, I am relevant to the interpretation. It is, therefore, important to be clear about what I bring to the enquiry. First and foremost, I am a Christian theologian and minister. This rules out the possibility of my carrying out an authentic inquiry which claims not to be Christian but rather, for example, purely secular or Islamic. Like many practical theologians, I am also a psychologist. My role as psychologist goes beyond my identity as a trained pastoral counsellor and into my understanding of people as thoughtful agents. I also bring, to this enquiry, my stance as an advocate of feminism. I am a woman who sympathises with what I read about the experience of oppression in various situations, and I am concerned with the disclosure of women's perspectives from their former position as concealed interpretations.

For the study of endurance, the nature of people as thoughtful agents is a significant place to start, and so needs some explanation. People have thoughts and opinions about the things that they encounter in daily life. We cannot reflect, for example, on the subjects of metal, or blueness, or God, outside human encounter with those objects. We can talk about how we study metal, or how we see blueness, or how we experience God. We, as human beings, are in context - we are really beings in the world (Heidegger, 1962 pp78-90). We are, in this sense, to some extent responsible for the construction of the world, through our discovery of it, in relation to ourselves. The role of our interpreted experience, which is also our interpreted action, is therefore of primary importance to the thinking about the world with which this enquiry begins.

It is necessary, however, to heed the advice of the theologian T.F. Torrance, who reminds us that all understanding is not of our own construal. He gives the example of medical scientists who do not impose their own sense of order onto the inner organs of the bodies which they dissect, but find a natural pattern within the nature which they examine (T.F. Torrance, 1971, p 42). This type of example reminds us that our knowledge is knowledge of the world and of the details of the world in which we live, rather than an internal cognitive knowledge which can be shaped however we please and placed upon a shapeless world.

This project is written from a specifically theological standpoint. Within theology, there are internal categories of claim to be made regarding the stance of the scholar and the role of the scholar. Some theologians would claim that the role of the researcher is to engage in ontological speculation regarding God and the world. This requires prior claims about the accessibility of the ontology of God (as well as presuppositions concerning the currently contested area of God possessing anything which might be called 'being'; contested primarily by the theologian Jean-Luc Marion (Marion, 1995)). Other theologians would contest the accessibility of knowledge of the ontological properties of God, but would allow that the world is worthy of ontological examination and that, through Biblical witness and the reasoning of past and present theologians, something of God, perhaps most specifically of the divine economy (the God-world relationships), can be known and should be studied. This is the type of theology that is found, for example, in the works of Karl Barth, who considers that all theology should begin with what is known about God through revelation and what can be said about God and ourselves through what we know from the witness provided by the Bible and through our theological

dialogue within the church (Barth, 1956 e.g. pp 457-472.). Liberal theologians attribute greater importance to the role of the scholar in that process, while evangelical theologians privilege the Biblical witness. The liberal feminist theologian, Sallie McFague can say, "If a case can be made, as I believe it can, that traditional imperialistic imagery for God is opposed to life, its continuation and fulfilment, then we must give serious attention to alternatives. It is this I propose to do in these pages" (McFague, 1987, p. ix.). McFague includes the Biblical imagery for God, as something for which she intends to seek alternatives. For evangelical theology, Christian theology cannot really suggest alternatives to the Biblical witness. Barth can speak of theology fulfilling, "...its definition as the human logic of the divine Logos " (Barth, 1963, p 49). In Logos, Barth includes the Bible and so would evangelical theologians continue to do. Human theology is seen as derived from God's word.

There is an increasing awareness apparent in theological discourse of the inadequate nature of any claims to ontological knowledge which has led to a re-emergence of negative theology (see for example, articles in Coward and Foshay, 1992), a variety of narrative theologies (often found in sermons today), some relativist theologies, postmodern and deconstructive theologies, such as the atheology of Mark C. Taylor (Taylor, 1999 and Taylor, 1984).

The theological standpoint taken in this enquiry means that it is conducted from a Christian perspective. Theological questions are asked which lead to theological answers. This standpoint is one which does not allow any claim which denies the reality of the triune God spoken of in the Bible, to outweigh the stance of the project as Christian theology. The theology conducted in this project is a Reformed Biblical theology which is not merely conceptual but which accepts the interrelatedness of the conceptual and the empirical.

This project enters into the interrelatedness of the conceptual and the empirical by bringing women's experience together with theology. Psychology enables a deeper account of human experience here, as the psychology carried out retains the authenticity of the approach as it is laid out in this section. This combination is enabled by a hermeneutical theory, which will be discussed in the next section. I am aware that developing a theology which involves human experience and action involves a risk of veering towards that sort of theology which celebrates the triumph of human experience over and above either revelation or reason. But that is not the aim here. The aim is rather

to emphasise the role of interpretation as involved in the three areas - experience, revelation and reason. This project begins from a position which does not oppose scientific reasoning with reasoning about the non-scientific aspects of the world, but is, on the other hand, honest about the epistemological questionmark between human beings and every aspect of the world in which we exist.

As was said above, I am an advocate of feminism. I am drawn to feminist understandings of the purposes of research, and how to approach the research itself. My experience of being a woman has often enabled me to sympathise with women's stories, and to experience a sense of alienation from much male research which is unaware of its masculine perspective. At the same time it would be quite wrong to uncritically accept everything which declared itself to be feminist, given the partial nature of knowledge and understanding.

As a theologian, I encounter the research process without setting aside my convictions as a Christian and an advocate of feminism. As I encounter the raw material of my research I expect, and hope, that I will be surprised and transformed by what I discover. At the same time I reserve a critical position based on an awareness of the contradictory and oppressive aspects of discourse, and a familiarity with the Biblical cry for justice and loving equality, which, through Christopraxis and immersion in the Biblical text, has become 'etched on my heart'. In other words, the Christian stance taken in this research is not merely conceptual but is lived out, however inadequately, and has become a way of interacting with the world. In this way it affects my approach to other areas of interest, such as feminism. It is to the problem of the relationship between Christian theology and feminist approaches that we now turn, as these do not always sit happily together.

A few decades ago, feminism was situated within fairly narrow confines. It was the placing of women's equality first on the agenda. Within theology, this has led to some feminists becoming unable to tolerate the biblical and ecclesiastical traditions because of their nature as part of patriarchal discourse, and these thinkers moved their position from Christian theologians to post-Christian feminist theologians. bell hooks points out that traditional feminism presented only a white, middle class, well-educated view of the feminist position (hooks, 2000, pp1-17). The experiences of oppression for women who did not fit that category was not considered in mainstream feminist thought. hook writes, "Privileged feminists have largely been unable to speak to, with, and for diverse groups

of women because they either do not understand fully the interrelatedness of sex, race, and class oppression or refuse to take this interrelatedness seriously.” (hooks 2000, p15) There have, however, been changes within feminism including the wider recognition of the diversity of women’s experience such as we find expressed in the writing of bell hooks herself. This allows a position within feminism which aims to be constructive, and which aims to speak from a Christian position.

For the theologian wishing to benefit from, and continue, feminist scholarship there will always be the question of the relationship between feminism and Christianity. If feminism is an overriding critical standpoint then it can destroy Christianity, as Christianity has been created and developed within male dominated communities and forms of discourse. Christianity, on the other hand, can critique any critical standpoint as being worldly, and adherence to such a standpoint as risking idolatry. Idolatry occurs when what is contextual is accepted uncritically as an overriding concern, preventing an individual from being open to the surprises brought by the spiritual. Feminist theologians come to the theological task from a variety of positions. Two of the central scholars in the field are Schussler Fiorenza (e.g. her reading of the Book of Revelation, 1985), who is developing liberating methods for reading Biblical text, by privileging texts and experience of liberation as a hermeneutical tool; and Rosemary Radford Ruether, who is reconceptualising doctrine traditionally trapped in patriarchal constructs (Ruether 1981, 1983, 1990). Each of these scholars could be accused of placing their concern with feminism before their interest in maintaining the integrity of Christianity, as neither aims to maintain a central core of Christianity but rather to highlight one aspect of Christianity and use that aspect to critique and interpret others. In this way, narratives of freedom, or the opposition to patriarchy begin to obscure the multidimensional possibilities that Christian theology has to offer. This is not the sort of aim with which I come to the theological task.

bell hooks suggests use of the expression “I am an advocate of feminism” rather than “I am a feminist” (hooks, 2000, p32). This is very helpful for theology as it suggests the possibility of taking on a critical stance which includes feminism and also includes a distrust of other manifestations of domination and oppression. I would like to move, in my position as an advocate of feminism, and also a theologian, away from the narrowly gender oriented sort of feminist position of which hooks can say, “Feminist analyses of woman’s lot tend to focus exclusively on gender and do not provide a solid foundation on

which to construct feminist theory” (hooks, p15). Christianity itself provides stories, poems, and prophetic declarations which offer a critique of domination and oppression, but simultaneously continues some of the cultural prejudices of the various human contexts from which it has arisen. If a critical awareness is retained when engaging with Christian Biblical and theological texts then the critique of domination and oppression can be beneficial for expanding a feminist stance to include a more complex understanding of the power structures within society and discourse. They can, therefore, be used for transformative feminist writing.

In advocating feminism in this project, I have brought a critical awareness of the possibilities of the presence and undesirability of domination and oppression within texts and life, including the Biblical text and the life of the Church. I have also brought a critical awareness of the possibilities of the presence of narratives of liberation and goodness occurring in those same places, and a readiness to be surprised by the location and form of these narratives.

1.2.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is an ideal basis for this research as it enables the development of theology which is rooted in both the Biblical text and life experience, and it enables the generation of theory from a variety of types of material. In this section, I will outline my hermeneutical model which underpins this research, and in the next section I will go on to demonstrate, how the hermeneutical underpinnings of this research lead to the three pronged method which I have taken.

My hermeneutical model is developed from the first Christian theologian to discuss hermeneutics, the Egyptian patristic theologian, Origen of Alexandria. He is possibly the most important thinker in this area, partly because he was the father of the mystical tradition within Christianity, and so has had a lasting impact on the relationship between Christian life and the Biblical text, and partly because he thought and wrote in this area while many other theologians through the ages did not present the theories behind the theological processes in which they engaged. I shall present Origen’s theory as it contributes to my hermeneutical framework and shall then go on to develop that theory through the work of Paul Ricoeur.

Our first question has to be: Why does Origen contribute to the hermeneutical underpinnings of this study? Origen's thought is particularly interesting for this project as his hermeneutical model is based on the relationship between the intellect and physical experience. This project is interested in the philosophical foundations of female marathon runners and the impact of those foundations on their experience of endurance. In this way the project requires an approach which does not separate cognition from physical experience, or concepts from actions but, rather, which allows for the intellectual to be an aspect of physical human life in the world.

In Origen's model, each person is an interpreter, developing their ideas and engaging in life experiences, whether they are a deep thinker or not. For Origen, there are levels of reading any text based on the maturity of the reader. Origen uses the analogy of the human body, soul and spirit (or intellect), to talk about deeper and deeper readings of texts (*De Principiis* IV.II.6.) The analogy is not just a figure of speech; Origen has not just chosen something in three parts to explain three levels. This aspect of Origen's model is often overlooked. It is a model suggesting an organic unity. As there is organic unity between various understandings of the same text, so there is organic unity between our physicality and our ability to conceptualise what we encounter. The bodily level of interpretation means understanding the text at a basic level, and relating the text to the physical experience of life. As interpretation gets deeper, so the level of reflection on life gets greater until a spiritual level is reached. Origen rightly points out that the greater the experience of life, and the deeper reflection, the deeper also subsequent reflection will be. What scholars often overlook, is that Origen was in favour of always beginning by bringing the physical experience of life first, to almost every reading of the text.

This model provides us with an organic impression of what hermeneutics might offer to this project, although for this project the physical cannot be seen as an inferior or simpler level than the spiritual, because, here, these are to be understood as aspects of the human being which coincide, as that person engages with the world. Nonetheless, the images of deeper understanding are helpful for our model.

In the final chapter of his book, *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, Origen talks about his own ability as an interpreter compared to the ability of his readers, and suggests that the readers may be worthy to see more of God's mysteries (musterion) - ready for greater and richer apprehension (meizona kai plousiotera katalambanontes). At the end of his book he specifically describes his readers as no longer of the flesh (ouketi sarkinoi).

Origen tells us that the theology which he is writing in the *Martyrdom*, is suitable for those who are no longer of the flesh, who have increased in the extent to which they are worthy to see God's mysteries.

The experiences of others can contribute valuably to reflection and can deepen any interpreter's understanding. Here, we can begin to see something of the process of maturity in human life and the increasing depth of reading and understanding that is possible for some people. We can also see how Origen's theology was done by interpreting the messages of the Bible using his life experience. This was done not by discussing his life in relation to the texts he was using but by bringing about a period of thoughtful encounter between the Biblical text and himself as a mature Christian.

The aim declared by Origen, in the *Martyrdom*, is what Origen considers to be 'spiritual' interpretation. Origen's spiritual interpretation is a level of interpretation aimed at those who are 'no longer in the flesh'. He describes it in his book *De Principiis* as beyond carnal interpretation. Spiritual interpretation moves Origen, as an interpreter, away from a literal reading of a text in its historical or cotextual context into the wider context of scripture, which has a theological aim, as it is a living, divinely inspired entity. He describes a process, into which a believer enters upon reading; a learning process related to the reader, which continues to lead the reader beyond where he or she stands, drawing him or her to the deepest type of understanding (*Contra Celsum* 441, D.P. IV.II.6) which is called spiritual or allegorical, throughout Origen's work.

Origen's work allows us to understand each person as an individual who encounters the world and Biblical and philosophical texts and is changed by these. This is a helpful model for understanding the development of theological ideas and for suggesting a method of processing further areas of theology in new situations. It also very specifically suggests that people who have experienced endurance will be able to contribute positively to theological understanding.

Several detailed studies of Origen's procedure in his interpretation of specific texts, have been completed by Karen Jo Torjesen. She believes that the pedagogy of the Logos in and through scripture is the central core of Origen's hermeneutics, and she sees his method as always guided by the pedagogical notion. Although Torjesen does place unwarranted emphasis on this aspect of Origen's theory, she does enable us to see how this idea led Origen to construct a model through which human beings learn

hermeneutically in a variety of circumstances. So that, God's communication is a form of pedagogy mediated by Christ, the self-disclosing Logos (Torjeson, 1986). The revelatory activity of the Logos in history was tutelage for the writers of scripture (p110ff). This pedagogy did not cease in the event of the writing of scripture but continues, so that the Logos teaches the individual who reads scripture, adapting the teaching to each Christian, according to his or her level of spiritual progress. This begins with healing from sin, through knowledge of mysteries and leads towards perfect union with Christ (p120f).

What Origen is saying is that God enables us to learn from the Biblical text and also from history. The Biblical text does not cease to be relevant but continues to be something from which we might learn. Torjeson's reading of Origen does produce valuable insights into the relationship between the reader and the text in Origen's hermeneutics, and the moment of encounter with the text as a moment of learning with a specific learning encounter available to each individual reader. She does, however, place more emphasis on knowledge than we find in Origen's own writing. Origen, himself, describes the process of encountering the Biblical text as one of 'going beyond', and finding freedom. It is a personal transformation and an intellectual illumination.

We can accept much of Origen's model as an accurate account of the formulation of right theological thinking, as it is an account which coheres with the understanding of the importance of the Biblical text, but also allows other ideas, and the physical experience of living in the world, to constantly change and correct those ideas. This kind of idea is crucial to this study and the methods which will be used. Here, we will be analysing both Biblical and secular material and will also be giving a high priority to life experience, as it is ultimately a theology about life experience which is developed in this project.

The God-centred nature of Origen's model is also helpful as theology is always created from a faith perspective and aims to cohere with belief in God and experience of God. It is the acknowledgement of the presence of God in life experience which changes the meaning attributed to that experience. As we turn to endurance and ask about meanings, it is helpful to understand those meanings interrelated to experience and a faith perspective. Here, the theology of sport can allow a central role for the presence of God in the questions of value and meaning with which it concerns itself.

For the spiritual sense, Origen suggests a particular sort of reader is required, as the mysteries which are revealed by God are hidden so deeply, as they are precious, that

only one who has studied with devotion, and increased in purity, has the chance of discovering them (D P. IV.II.7). This reader finds the clues in the text, stumbling points in the carnal sense, which cause him or her to discover a narrower road, leading upwards to the immensity of divine wisdom (D P. IV.II.9). In developing his own theology, Origen follows this procedure, beginning with a literal reading, before moving into a more complex interpretation. In the same way, Origen struggled to live out this model in his own life, living a life as pure and holy as he could, and studying a variety of texts in conjunction with that life.

In less poetic terms, this procedure is one of looking first at the Biblical text, then noticing confusing things in the text, or metaphorical language, and moving to a deeper analysis of the text, through the questioning of these aporias. Origen tells us that those who are able to comprehend the divine meaning in texts are like people bathed in light, which pours through a narrow opening (D P. IV.II.3). That means that in trying to develop theology we would be wise to work towards theory that is illuminating, clarifying our perception of reality.

When he juxtaposes Exodus 34 with Paul's interpretation of that text, in his twelfth Homily on Exodus, Origen uses these images of illumination to explain the sense in which spiritual interpretation can lead to freedom. As the people of the Exodus were unable to look upon Moses' face, so we cannot look at the glory of what he wrote in the Old Testament, which is spoken with a glorified face. Paul says that the cause of the veil's removal is turning to the Lord. Without this rotation of our gaze we discover only our failure to read scripture with understanding (Hom Ex XII.1). Turning to God is turning to the study of scripture, meditating day and night on the law (Psalm 1:2), and this rotation towards the divine discloses mysteries concealed behind the veil (John 8:36, Mark 12:30).

Origen explains that the text is read in a quest for freedom, which is a transforming knowledge of self and world and of God's glory. This is achieved by thorough study, and love of God, on the part of the hearer. But Christ too must play a part in opening the book and setting the listener free. For Origen, the process of reading is always described theologically. So a spiritual reading is an unveiling of God's glory, and a passage from bondage to freedom.

The model which we derive from Origen of the experiencing and reading individual

examining the world and the text from a faith perspective, and discovering more about oneself, the world and God, suggests rightly that theology is most rigorous when life experience and reading of texts are brought together. This accurately characterises the model developed here. The model also acknowledges that the process of asking theological questions about life as it is lived, brings freedom to that life. The usefulness, for us, of Origen's model also lies in his insight that the process of developing theology is highly specific and contextual, and is also a Christian process emerging as part of the Christian life. In all these ways, Origen's description of these processes is relevant to the theological process that is the aim of this project. This project uses the model of illumination through study of the Bible, analysis of its metaphorical language and contradictions, and the bringing of secular texts and life experience of endurance in a specific context into the process.

Potworowski has done important work on understanding Origen's hermeneutics in today's context, and has demonstrated that it is useful to relate Origen's work to that of Paul Ricoeur. He does this by indicating that each thinker is attempting to construct a Christian hermeneutical theory, and by indicating the similarities and distinctions between those theories. He has noticed that Origen's hermeneutics is clarified when understood in the light of the theoretical framework presented in Ricoeur's thought. This is helpful in allowing some of Origen's concepts to also be reshaped for today's context. As we will see, Ricoeur's concept of 'appropriation' and his suggestion that interpretation is the work of the imagination are particularly relevant for bridging the gap between Origen's hermeneutics and our context.

The work of Ricoeur describes the process of reading as oriented towards redemption. This is expressed in his understanding of the appropriation of a text as the moment in which the narrative's potential is fulfilled. Although Origen has been criticised for subjectivism (because he appears to disrespect the literal sense and history in favour of the experience of the reader) we saw that for Origen's reader, deeper understanding of texts brings freedom, especially where the reader takes on board texts about freedom in history. Ricoeur allows us to understand more fully the way in which a text translates itself into human action. The text is received by the reader and is then expressed in that reader's life. This notion of the manifestation of the text in the activity of the reader is missing in Origen's hermeneutical model, even although he clearly believed the Biblical texts which he interpreted to exhort the reader to action. While Origen has enabled us to

perceive the reader as a complete being (rather than an isolated reading mind), Ricoeur enables us to understand that the reading process continues into the life of the reader in a way which includes the physicality of that reader.

In Potworowski's understanding, Origen's work is redeemed from criticism by Ricoeur's understanding of a reader receiving an enlarged self from the text, rather than projecting him or herself into a text. Texts are, in the work of Ricoeur, the mediators of self-understanding (Potworowski, 1992, pp163-66). There was however, an element of self-discovery in the work of Origen which Potworowski does not adequately acknowledge in the form of the whole reader learning and developing into a deeper and fuller person. However, while both thinkers allow us a hermeneutical model which present an indication of a growing self-awareness of the reader, Ricoeur's account is more fully worked out on this point.

We are provided, by Ricoeur, with an explanation of the change which takes place in the reader of a text. The reader 'appropriates' the world of the text, and with that the reader appropriates a new mode of being in the world (Ricoeur 'Appropriation', 1991, pp86-98). With an attitude of reflection and acceptance the reader can hope to pass beyond reflection on the text and relinquish self-understanding, and discover a new way of being (Ricoeur 'Word, Polysemy, Metaphor', 1991, pp65-85). Let us take a simple example: a person who has treated dogs as greatly inferior to human beings reads a text which encourages the equally and morally fair treatment of household pets. Were that reader to appropriate the text, he or she would emerge from the transformative reading as someone who treated household pets in a morally fair manner. The actions of the person would have changed as a result of a whole change in the person and his or her way of relating to an aspect of his or her life.

We do have to be cautious here as, if we were to accept Ricoeur's theory of appropriation completely, we would have a model which advocates the complete acceptance of texts. I would want to add an ethical dimension to that model, so that the texts which were appropriated were ones with some sort of claim to such a role. In this way we can allow encounters with the Biblical text to play a transformative role in understanding of ways of being in the world.

If our analysis of the Biblical texts can begin to provide us with a way of looking at endurance that allows us to participate in, and understand endurance, then what we have

discovered in the text is not just the text, but an opportunity for readers of the text to discover a way of being in the world. The content of that way of being, is what is discovered as we bring this hermeneutical model to the text. In Origen's writing it is a mystical encounter with God which enables discovery in the Biblical text, while for Ricoeur the process occurs in a wide range of reading encounters and is not expressed as a spiritual process. This opens Ricoeur to the criticism of not taking into account unethical or immoral texts, but also allows inclusion of any relevant text into a hermeneutical model.

Ricoeur's explanation of the world of the text is very useful for us in a re-articulation of Origen, as this project requires a foundational hermeneutical model which explains how we can read an alien text in today's world, and use it accurately in the construction of theology. In the Biblical text the heavenly world, is the world of the text. The text opens the spiritual world to the reader, shows the reader the mysteries of Christ, the heavens, salvation; a mystical reality. The faith of the reader is called upon. The reader receives a new self, enlarged by the disclosure of God and aspects of the relationship between God and the world. Origen allows us to bring a theological type of enquiry to the text, which is particularly relevant in the case of the Biblical text which has the role of yielding theological answers. The alien and mysterious nature of the Biblical text, becomes more accessible as we draw on Ricoeur's sense of our incorporating the meaning of the text into our way of being in our own world, rather than translating it into more friendly terms.

Ricoeur describes the process by which the text may pass beyond the restricted horizon of the author's intention and gain autonomy, opening itself to an unlimited series of readings. It can then re-contextualise itself in the act of being read. The formal arrangement of the text may take the place of necessary mediation, which bridges the gap between the original and received contexts of a written work. The hermeneutical moment is the interrogative moment where the text opens a world. The unfolding of this world, introduces the reader to imaginative variations of his or her self (Ricoeur, 1981, pp63-100). This image of the text provides a more accessible understanding of the problems of accessing historical texts, than we find in the writing of Origen. Origen was aware of the formal structure of the text, but Ricoeur describes the way in which proper attention to the structure of the text can uncover meaning, and disclose a world to which the reader may not otherwise have access. Adopting this position enables us to present an account

of what this project does as it turns to Biblical texts written by long dead authors, and asks questions about endurance.

Origen brings pastoral and polemical concerns to the text, and in doing so, he engages in what I would like to call a critique of ideology. As Ricoeur points out, such critique is a part of the hermeneutical process, the reinterpretation of cultural heritage. Ricoeur argues that this is not simply a theoretical task but is where the aim of articulating to others unites with the aim of realising emancipation. As he says, there is a dialectic between the recollection of tradition and the anticipation which is eschatology of freedom (1981, pp87-100). Origen can be seen to engage with a similar dialectic. The hermeneutic, which Ricoeur perceives as anticipation, is what enables Origen to turn to the Exodus, and other traditions and current ideologies, with a Christian 'critical' perspective. His reason for turning to these, for polemical writings, for redefining a neo-Platonic world view, is to find a Christian orthodoxy which is response to Scripture with a hermeneutics of emancipation. While Ricoeur brings a post modern suspicion into one part of the hermeneutical process, Origen is also bringing critical awareness to any text (although Origen acknowledges that this may not be possible for all readers).

Here, too, I bring a critical perspective to the interpretation of endurance, bringing the Biblical text into dialogue with what endurance can be and what we may hope for it to be and mean in the future. The critical framework is essential, where we have any suggestion of appropriating the world of the text, in order that 'bad' texts are not absorbed without question.

In this study, the hermeneutical framework not only allows me to examine three types of material together, and also allows a clearer understanding of what it is for women who run to bring their philosophical foundations to bear on their experience of endurance, and for their experience to be brought to bear on our sketch of endurance.

1.2.3 The three pronged approach

In this section, I shall indicate how the three pronged approach relates to the hermeneutical model suggested above. The model begins by providing us with a holistic understanding of the reading of texts. The hermeneutical circle is completed (ready to

begin again) as those texts are lived out in the world. Here, we begin by bringing the empirical together with the theoretical in order to discover something that is worth living out. The model is specific and contextual and so is this project. This project studies the context of distance running, and specific problem moments within that context. How does the model above, suggest that a three pronged approach will lead to an understanding of those moments and an evaluative analysis of endurance?

The model presented a holistic portrayal of the reader of texts, by indicating that the reader can be understood to be someone who is active in the world rather than merely a thinker. The reader comes to the text as a thoughtful agent and brings his or her life experience and conceptual framework to the text. The individual is transformed by encounter, not only with text, but also with the world. This immediately suggests that simple discussion of texts without adequate examination of experience would lead to an inadequate reading of the texts. This is particularly important in the case of the Biblical texts, which present themselves as containing illuminative material to guide the reader in life. An empirical element enables this study to fulfil the expectations of such a hermeneutical model, by bringing endurance, as it is thoughtfully experienced, and interpreted, into contact with Biblical and other theological and secular texts. Reflective and thoughtful texts from the Bible are included in the study, as are texts telling the stories of women who run with endurance.

This hermeneutical model provides an account of the formulation of right theological thinking, which allows the Biblical text, as well as other texts, to come together with the physical experience of living in the world, in this way theory may be generated, and may also be allowed to be constantly changed and corrected. This study honours the model by analysing both Biblical and secular material, and by examining what the Bible says about the details of life and allowing that to change and correct, and be changed and corrected by, material about women enduring.

The model with which this project begins acknowledges the presence of God in life experience, and, in this way, changes the meanings which might be attributed to that experience. As we turn to endurance and ask about meanings, it is helpful to understand those meanings as interrelated to experience and to a faith perspective. Here, what is being carried out is the theology of sport, and allows a central role for the presence of God in the questions of value and meaning. Within this theological model it becomes essential to ask if the presence of a faith perspective impacts endurance itself. And in the

same way to enable the theological foundations of Christian women to be taken into account, as these women are participating in sport as a part of their lives, which they intend to live in a Christian way. For this reason, it was necessary to gather material for this enquiry not just from literary narratives, but also from an empirical aspect of the study, in which Christian women could be encouraged to reflect thoughtfully on endurance as they experienced it.

As suggested by the hermeneutical model, the procedure, here, is one of looking first at the Biblical text, then noticing confusing things in the text, or metaphorical language, and moving to a deeper analysis of the text, through the questioning of these aporias. This procedure allows the study to move towards theory that is illuminating, clarifying our perception of reality. This project includes Biblical texts in the quest for that illumination of the moments of endurance. It attends closely to the metaphorical language and contradictions which are found there, and also brings a specific problematic element of human life as something which requires illumination and clarification. It brings then, the Biblical text and relevant discussion from the Early Church community, as the first prong of the approach, it brings women's narratives from literary sources, as the second prong, and it brings endurance as experienced by the runners, in the case studies, as the third prong. It then asks, in what ways can this sort of reading of the Biblical texts illuminate endurance.

The illumination for which we are searching is an opportunity for readers of the text to discover a way of being in the world. The reader 'appropriates' the world of the text, and with that the reader appropriates a new mode of being in the world. This leads us to draw together the three types of material and to ask what it suggests about how Christian women might best be in relation to endurance.

Chapter Two: The Christian Interpretation of Endurance as Expressed in Biblical and Early Church Texts.

2.1 Introduction and method.

This Chapter looks at Biblical and other theological material written on the subject of endurance. The aim of this chapter is to discover what we might find out about the meaning of endurance from the Biblical literature, and to find out about how the Early Church interpreted that tradition in the specific context which interested them.

In this chapter, Biblical discourse and the writing on endurance from the early Church are being brought into play. These accounts are narrative or metaphorical or exhortative in nature, and it is important to distinguish the aim of this chapter from an entirely different type of research which might aim to find out something about Biblical writing. The assumption here is that the Biblical writing will convey something true and meaningful about endurance. Our aim is not to describe the historical setting of the texts, or to stop our discussions at some sort of imaginative insight as to what an ancient author intended to tell someone, but to reveal what endurance is, how it is experienced, and how it is understood. The aim here, is to use the understanding revealed by the text to gain a more enlightened understanding of endurance, which can be used to clarify, deepen and develop the further understanding which will arise in later chapters.

The texts which are central to this chapter are texts which need to be included in order that any interpretation of endurance will be a Christian theological interpretation; the Biblical texts. In seeking to investigate endurance, I am looking for an account of endurance which is both credible and persuasive.

2.2.1 The hermeneutical method and the Biblical texts

We come to the analysis of the Biblical texts as one aspect of our three pronged study of endurance. The texts analysed in this chapter, will include texts discussing concepts through the use of athletic metaphor, and texts which talk directly about endurance. The Biblical literature provides a source which can claim some authority for Christian theology, and so is a helpful place to begin a theological project. This section introduces

the way in which our hermeneutical method will be used for this aspect of the study. The first subsection addresses the issue of how the hermeneutical method will influence the steps taken to in the exegesis of the Biblical texts. The following two subsections will look at two issues which are required for the exegetical process; metaphor, and the nature of sport in the Greek world.

Varying degrees of authority have been attributed to the Biblical literature. For the purposes of this study we can make some claims about the Bible as a source. Within Christian theology, the Biblical text provides discussions and ideas which are significant beyond their specific context. So what is read in the Biblical text is in some ways generalisable. That is, the reader of Biblical text can expect what is read in the text to cohere with his or her experience of reality or the sort of thing which might occur in that experience. However, reading Biblical text is always problematic. The problem here, is addressed by way of our adoption of the hermeneutical method discussed in Chapter 1.

Some scholars claim that the central problem in the interpretation of the Bible lies in the historical context in which it was written. It was written in ancient times, to which only historians can grant us access. This view, however, is based on the assumption that the text is only significant if we read in as the original author intended us to read it. These assumptions fail to acknowledge the necessary autonomy of the text, as we saw in our discussion of hermeneutics in Chapter 1, part 2. The author is actually dead, but also metaphorically dead, in the sense that it is the writing, rather than the intended writing, which is read by the reader.

In our hermeneutical model, we saw that the autonomy of the text enables us to look for ways of making sense of the text in its current grammatical structure, rather than in the historical quest to seek out the original author. In the hermeneutical model outlined above, we also adopted Ricoeur's understanding of the world of the text, and, here, we can apply it to the Biblical text. If we can understand the world of the Biblical text on its own terms, then we can work towards appropriating it, into an interpretation of endurance which may be lived out. The historical gulf lies, not between ourselves and the author of the text, but between ourselves and the words and expressions found in the text itself which present a historical world. Stepping into that historical world requires some historical information about points of the structure and meaning of the text, within its original historical context. The world of the text, when clarified, can be more easily

appropriated.

Each text, used for this project, was written in a specific context. For the text to be generalisable, the words and expressions found in the text need to be understood in our context. This is the passage of the text from original meaning to current significance. Reading requires understanding of the words (and so the world of the text) within their semantic context, (or cotext), when the words themselves may no longer refer to anything familiar. The current significance of a text, is not restricted to, but is limited by, the meaning of the text in the historical context of the original audience. When we turn to Biblical discussions of endurance, we find a great deal of metaphorical language. Metaphorical language by nature alludes to things which are familiar to the language community in which the metaphorical language is used. For this reason, extra-Biblical historical knowledge is helpful for the reading of the Biblical metaphor about endurance. In this chapter, such material will be used in order that the world of the texts we are reading may be understood.

In the reading of any text, the context of any reading, will also influence the reading. Reading the Biblical text in the context of any claims that the text is generalisable, is to read it as sacred scripture. That is, to read it as scripture authorised by God (in order for us to use the text as something to which we can bring our theological questions, it is not necessary to view it as text authored by God, as some sort of direct dictation). As authorised by God the text gains significance as an aspect of the Church, and so can claim to be authoritative for the Church community. Reading it in this way, means that, where there is uncertainty in reading, it will be read in such a way as coheres with what is known about what God might say, from personal experience of God, as it occurs for members of that Church community, and also from experience of having read other parts of the text.

In the reading of any text, the experience of the reader will always play a role in interpretation. There have been and still are, attempts to read the Bible in a so-called, 'objective' manner. This reading is usually attempted in the context of the academy, and involves the reader in 'laying aside' his or her faith, in an attempt to see what the text would mean if God did not exist. This type of reading requires a certain amount of naiveté about the possibility of intellectual neutrality. If faith is laid aside, then something must replace it. What will be brought in, would be the discourse of some other

branch of the academy which would then be used for reading the text. This can be done, for example, when the interpreter uses his or her belief in the supremacy of current historical methodology as a framework within which to read the Biblical text. If we were to ask to whom such a reading would be significant, we would find that the reading would be significant only to a historian, and would require additional work to gain relevance outwith historical discourse. A study written using such reading would be found to cohere with the experience of the reader of that study, if the reader of that study were an academic historian and a real or temporary atheist. If the atheism of the reader was something put on specifically for the purpose of reading academic writing, then the merely historical reading of the biblical text would not actually cohere with his or her life experience. As endurance is something from within life experience, a purely historical interpretation of endurance would fail to cohere with anyone's actual experience of endurance in his or her life.

The hermeneutical model which I am using (as discussed in 1.2.2), and the theological stance of this approach (discussed in 1.2.1), allows the text to be encountered from a faith position. That is, it allows the text to be encountered by an interpreter looking for theological understanding in the text. In this project, we are approaching this text with theological questions in mind. We are looking for illumination of how we might be in the world, according to what we discover about endurance. In this way, it is unnecessary to lay any beliefs aside, but it may be necessary to relinquish old inadequate views of what endurance may mean, in order that any new understanding of endurance may be allowed to deepen and further our understanding of life in the world.

Once the texts have been analysed in their contextual and cotextual settings, a certain amount of meaning will be understood. At this point, however, we cannot consider them to be fully interpreted. As the reader can only read in a specific context, I (as interpreter) can only read within a specific framework of understanding. According to the hermeneutical model discussed above, what the interpreter brings to the text is not merely a collection of theological concepts, but the interpreter approaches the text as a human being who is physical, as well as having philosophical, and in this case theological foundations, which bear upon that physicality. As discussed above, the text must interact with experience of that physicality in order to be understood, as understanding is discovering possible new ways of being as an active and thoughtful person in the world.

Here, the reading of these Biblical texts cannot be considered complete until it is read from the point of view of the experience of endurance as it occurs in people's lives. This will occur in later chapters, as we bring women's experience of the moments of endurance back into contact with the reading of the Biblical texts. As our aim is to lay out a framework for understanding endurance in the context of the theology of sport, our interpretation will not really be complete until real women use the understanding of endurance developed, as a result of this project, to act in a certain way when encountering moments in distance running which demand endurance.

2.2.2 Metaphors and the language of ancient sport

On several occasions, the New Testament uses metaphors related to sport, to speak of the Christian and the Christian life. Often these metaphors bring together the Christian and the athlete, whilst the surrounding text notes either the similarity or the contrast between the two. Other Biblical texts appear to use some metaphors as though they are now understood by, and familiar to, the new Christian community, and words and phrases from sport have come to take on an extra significance.

In this section, these texts will be explored for their historical meaning, rather than their current significance. I shall analyse the texts in the context of the first century Mediterranean world, to discover something of what the author wrote, and what significance the language of these sport metaphors would have had, to the early audience of the texts.

In order to analyse these sport metaphors, we shall look at sport in the ancient world, and at the nature of Christian persecution and the Christian life. This approach to the study of metaphors, presupposes an understanding of metaphor as a semantic structure which is understood only by knowledge of the referent of each part of the metaphor, in order that, through knowledge of these, the relationships between them may be understood.

First, I shall turn to the nature of metaphor and an explanation of how metaphor is understood. A metaphor is a category of language; a structure created by placing together two concepts which will stimulate the mind of the reader imaginatively. Here, I am in

agreement with Max Black, in his insistence that to describe a metaphor as comparison is inadequate, as two components placed together for straightforward likeness, do not have the impact of a metaphor (Black, 1962; Black, 1979). When we read a metaphor, the mind draws on the most obvious assumptions about the components signified. Black refers to these assumptions as 'associated commonplaces'. This is a useful term for the analysis of New Testament metaphor, as it calls us to explore what would be commonly associated with each signifier used in the metaphorical structure. In this way, our interpretation can penetrate behind the language as we find it today, and draw closer to the original audience.

This interactionist view of metaphor is particularly helpful for interpreting much of the metaphorical language found in the New Testament. Kittay criticises this interactionist view on the grounds that the commonplaces associated with a particular thing, are too indefinite and even infinite for metaphors to function in this way. This criticism, however, misrepresents the interactionist view of metaphor. She claims that in reading a metaphor which calls a man 'wolf', to draw on commonplaces would be to draw on beliefs such as 'are not ironing boards' (Kittay, 1987, p182). While it is no doubt true, and known to be true, that wolves are not ironing boards, what Kittay fails to understand is that to say that metaphors function by means of associated commonplaces, is to imply that the associations are common within a particular language community, in which the commonplaces are, in Black's view, "readily and freely evoked" (Black, 1962, p40). Because of this, it is unlikely that there would be a particular cultural setting in which wolves would be commonly associated with their not being ironing boards. The problem that has occurred in Kittay's critique of Black's position, is Kittay's failure to understand the dependence of Black's view on the cultural nature of language.

Kittay also suggests that the idea of associated commonplaces can be successfully developed by replacing that idea with the idea of semantic fields. The idea of semantic fields does provide an indication of how the predicates involved in metaphorical language are limited to specific domain. We will see below how the semantic field of sport is brought together with the Christian life. However, interpreting the New Testament metaphors, encourages us to notice that metaphors make sense within specific language communities. It is in this way that some of the metaphors in the New Testament, do not make as much sense to a reader today, because the reader does not share the same associations as would have been common to the intended readership of the texts in which

the metaphors occur. The idea of associated commonplaces is helpful here, as it brings with it the presupposition that a community of people might expect each other to share these commonplaces, and so we shall retain the idea of associated commonplaces, for the purposes of this discussion.

The analysis of metaphors in this chapter will also require imagination. As the associated commonplaces come together in the reader's mind, they are compared and contrasted as a new understanding arises. Ricoeur stresses the novelty of what arises from reading metaphor: creating metaphor is an innovative art, and so reading metaphor enables creative activity. Kittay suggests that the view of metaphor as something which involves the creation of concepts arises naturally from a view of metaphor as the transfer of the predicates of one thing to another, such as the interactionist view. Ricoeur moves on from the view of Black by talking not about a substitution of commonplaces, but a network of interactions. He does this in order to stress the nature of metaphor as a semantic event occurring at the intersection of several semantic fields. In this way he can speak about the emergence of meaning. Ricoeur sees himself as pushing theories such as that of Black to their limits (Ricoeur, 1978 p98). This development occurs in Ricoeur's account of metaphor, because Ricoeur is pulling metaphor into his particular understanding of how language works. It is because of this that Ricoeur can claim that metaphors are both meaning and event (p99).

Theology has used theories about metaphor in a variety of ways (cf. Soskice, 1985). Metaphor has been seen by some theologians as the basis of theology. This is the type of view that is characterised by the work of McFague (McFague, 1983). Colin Gunton rightly indicates that focus on metaphor has led to a misleading understanding of biblical metaphors as merely imaginative expressions. He urges that we understand metaphor in theology to play a similar, though distinct, role to metaphor used in science. Gunton's view helps us to see that metaphor enables the process of discovery, by allowing us to talk about things that are difficult to talk about, and metaphor also allows our language to develop in such a way that we are able to speak more adequately about these things (Gunton, 1988, pp40-45). Gunton indicates that in his study of the atonement in the Christian tradition, he must begin with the metaphors which he finds in the Bible. The early Christian community used the metaphors of atonement to express the significance of the events of Jesus' history (p46-7). In the same way here we will see that the metaphors relating to endurance were helpful for the early church in the discovery of a

new and distinctively Christian theology and in the development of a language which can articulate newly discovered ideas.

Much discussion of New Testament use of metaphor, shows little interest in discovering what metaphor is. This often leads to an inadequate understanding of what is going on in texts containing metaphorical language, so that Williams, for example, can write, "If the term expresses a likeness and appears to have been deliberately used by Paul for that purpose, then for the purposes of this discussion it comes under the heading of metaphor" (Williams, 1999, p2). In a similar way, Schreiner and Caneday read their own views into biblical texts about perseverance, by failing to develop an adequate understanding of metaphor. The authors aim to look at the relationship between perseverance and salvation by close examination of biblical texts. They do not, however, allow a range of predicates from the metaphorical language used to enhance understanding of the topics which they discuss. They claim that metaphors are symbolic representations. In this way they can claim that the, "...verbs in the athletic metaphor are symbolic representations of Christian faith" (Schreiner and Caneday, 2001, p105). They suggest that without metaphor language would be dull, implying that rather than these symbolic representations, direct statements could just as easily have been used (p104). As they go through the process of interpreting New Testament metaphors, this means that they miss out on some of the depth of meaning which is found when metaphor is used.

The New Testament requires the creation of new meanings which is made possible by the use of metaphorical language. What they required was not a more artistic way of presenting propositions, through symbolic representations, but rather language events which articulated remarkable and complex aspects of the world. Douglas Templeton explores the language of Paul and helpfully finds that much of it is poetic. He investigates the reasons for this poetic speech. As Paul investigates the traces of God, Templeton points out that in order to find ways of talking of the strangeness of the eternal appearing in time, Paul requires new words (Templeton, 1999, pp184-209).

As the components of a metaphor are brought together there is a tension between them, the distinctions as well as the similarities arise in the readers mind, this stimulates the mind of the reader. Here we shall continue to call what arises in the mind of the reader associated commonplaces. On first reading language including a metaphor, the mind

attempts to understand it as literal, the language then appears to make no sense. The metaphor must then engage the creative imagination of the reader. Metaphor begins to signify the components named by drawing attention to the similarities of the associated commonplaces, but then the tension arises and the words seem to make no sense. So, unlike more straightforward language which signifies something already understood, the metaphorical language also sends the mind away from the components named, by highlighting the differences between the associated commonplaces.

The novelty of the association between sport and the Christian life is important for the understanding of the metaphors in which we are interested. The authors appear to be attempting to say something not yet said; to enable new knowledge in the minds of the audience, as two components with similar, as well as distinct, associated commonplaces. In this way, the authors could enable their audiences to reach a deeper level of understanding of Christ's purpose, and of Christian discipleship.

2.2.3 Sacred and secular: the nature of sport in the Greek world

While, today, sport and religion are located respectively in the secular and spiritual spheres, the Greco-Roman understanding did not divide them in that manner. In the Hellenistic first century Mediterranean world, sports took place at occasions which are more accurately called sacred than secular, although to insist on the use of these terms would be to enforce a modern distinction on the ancient world. It is not entirely reasonable to call these ancient events sports at all. However, as detailed discussion of this choice of term is beyond the scope of this project, I shall occasionally use the word sport in spite of its inadequacy, here. The Ancient Olympics were still the ideal of the Greek world (Swaddling, 1980, p100). They began at the temple of Zeus on Mount Olympia. Pindar claims that they were founded by Herakles, and writes "But the ordinances of Zeus have prompted me to sing of the choice contest, which Herakles founded with its six altars by the ancient tomb of Pelops, after he killed the son of Poseidon..." (Pindar, Ol 10.24). Although the competition ground moved away from the temple over time, the site was still sacred and associated with the god Zeus. Not only did the games take place on this sacred ground, they were also dedicated to Zeus, and during the classical period a sacrifice was made to Zeus, during the Olympic festival (Sansone, 1988, p83, Swaddling, 1980, p29).

Other games and races were arranged for festivals and funerals (Sansone, pp21-22, p83). These games were also associated with the gods. The Roman arenas in which the Christians faced martyrdom were dedicated to the Roman pantheon, with the Christians facing the death penalty for the crime of atheism, refusal to sacrifice to the gods of Rome. It was frequently the emperor to whom they would not sacrifice, but the emperor, in the context of sacrifice, was also a sacred figure (Kyle, 1998, p243).

Sport in the ancient world was not defined as it is today. David Sansone, in his book, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport* (Sansone, 1988), points out that the English word 'sport' is so unique that other languages had to adopt the same word, in order to be able to indicate to the same referent. He indicates that the characteristics which define sport today are not those by which athletics of contests would have been defined in the ancient world. He argues that, today, we define sport by its competitive and secular element, while the similar phenomenon tended in the ancient world to have a sacred context, and to have arisen in the context of hunting and sacrifice, rather than competition. We shall look further at this theory as the necessity arises.

2.3.1 Endurance in the Bible: introductory remarks

The theological interpretation of endurance is not alien to the Bible. The Old Testament contains stories of characters who keep going in difficult physical, and social, circumstances: such as Abraham, who set off from his homeland and God's command and travelled in desert places with his family and livestock, and the fugitives who headed off into the wilderness with Moses. The New Testament provides further stories of this type, and discusses both with, and without, metaphorical language, the place of endurance in a Christian life of faith.

Detailed discussion of the implicit occurrence of endurance in the Biblical stories is outwith the bounds of this study. This means that texts have been selected here on the grounds of saying something explicit about endurance. The study of the other stories is something which would perhaps be done most authentically, after this study has been completed, as a rereading of the stories of characters who endure, could be a deeper reading when endurance has been more fully explored.

Endurance in the Bible will be discussed in the following sections: Jesus and the martyrs; other Christians; the Christian life as running, and faith and endurance.

2.3.2 Jesus and the martyrs.

We encounter many sporting metaphors in the text. Some of these are more developed, and more clearly sport metaphors than others. There is some lack of clarity in this matter particularly where the texts refer to Jesus. Because of the overlap between the secular and sacred, some references may not exclusively be sport references.

In ancient Greece, the athlete was awarded a crown. This crown was the same as that worn by the priest at the sacrificial altar. According to Sansone, the crown had also been used in the past, to represent the victim of the sacrifice (Sansone, 1988, pp83ff). When we see Jesus crowned, he is portrayed as victor and priest, victim and king. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews, speaks frequently in symbolic and metaphorical terms of Jesus and his saving work, and also tries to explain to his audience, the current status and role of Jesus. It is clear that metaphorical language is necessary for the type of theological discourse into which the writer is entering. He is explaining who Jesus is, not as a man who died and came alive, but as an agent of God performing activity which is efficacious on a spiritual level. As human beings have no experience of the heavenly world, and the purely spiritual domain, the writer has set himself a difficult task. He has to enable his audience to form new patterns of understanding, using that with which they are familiar.

In Hebrews 2:9, we read, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." We are presented with an image of the man Jesus wearing a crown. The literal sense of the image is then held in tension as the crown is not made of any material substance but is constructed from glory and honour. This is unlike an earthly crown, and provides the audience with a second metaphorical component. However, in some ways there is a similarity with an earthly crown.

We hear many times in the letter to the Hebrews that Jesus is a high priest. 5:10 tells us, "...was designated by God to be high priest..." some glory was given to him in this role, "So Christ did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest..."(5:5) While

Jewish priests were not known to wear crowns, in Hellenistic society the crown could be a sign of a priest at the altar (Sansone, 1988, p84). A high priest is clearly an important person, and the audience would be aware that the high priest was someone looked upon with favour by God. The writer increases the importance of 'high priest', by saying that Jesus is no ordinary high priest, but one, "according to the order of Melchizedek". Melchizedek was a priest mentioned in one verse in the book of Genesis, who, by the first century, had taken on great significance as being the first ever priest (Horton, 1976, p152-60). To be the first, in Jewish thought, represented purity, rather than a primitive or old fashioned nature (Timothy Lim, personal communication). The lack of Biblical information presented on Melchizedek had also rendered him the reputation of descending from heaven (although this is contested by Attridge, 1989, p192). We are told that Jesus was this type of High Priest; one who was pure, original and heavenly.

The crown of glory would be likely to stimulate these priestly associations in the minds of the early reader, especially when supported by the surrounding text of the letter, where the priestly aspect of Jesus is frequently referred to. The associations of a crown would not, however, end there. The early audience would probably be familiar with Greek athletics. Athletics reference were common in ancient literature. We can see as Michael Poliakoff indicates, in his book *Combat Sports in the Ancient World*, that wrestling references appear in Greek literature, indicating that writers expected their audience to have an in depth knowledge of the rules and scoring system of wrestling (Poliakoff, 1987, pp23-30). The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews appears to expect his audience to associate a crown with those presented to winners in athletic contests, or military situations. The athletic or military reference is supported by Hebrews 6:20. In the Greek text we read, "Jesus entered (the sanctuary) as a forerunner on our behalf..." Attridge, (1989, p185) indicates that the word, 'fore runner' is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, and is used in athletic and military contexts.

While the word does carry military reference, here the image is athletic. We know that Jesus is crowned. The one who runs first in a race is the one who wins the crown, and the honour. We are also told that Jesus is running in a temple towards the altar. The previous verse reads (6:19) "... (our hope) enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain". This setting of running towards an altar in a sacred site, evokes images of contestants in the stadia race, on Mount Olympus. Sansone points out that only one of the contestants in a race was dedicated to the gods. He believes that the primary meaning attributed to the

races was sacrificial, so that only the winner was fit for sacrifice (Sansone, 1988, p80). His interpretation of the Greek games, is useful as we come to how our text would have been understood.

The similarity between Jesus and the victorious runner of the games indicates that his crown has great similarities to the athletic crown. At the same time the early audience have drawn on the associated commonplaces of a glorious high priest. The two alternative references of the crown component of the metaphorical language, priestly and athletic, are not as distinct as they might appear in a modern context. They indicate that Jesus is priest and offering, in the heavenly sacrifice; an animal rendered sacred by the altar ritual.

The metaphor of the crown, which is like and unlike an earthly crown, being athletic, and priestly, but immaterial, leads into a strange twist. The writer in 2:9, after speaking of the crown awarded to Jesus goes on, "because he suffered death... for everyone". In a modern context this death indicates defeat. In the ancient Greek contests, however, it was possible to die and still be victorious (Poliakoff, 1987, p90-1). Many of the games were dangerous, and even the racing in the scorching heat of Mount Olympus at the time of year the games were held could prove fatal. Bringing the observation that a contestant could die while nonetheless being the victor of the contest, from the history of sport, into our understanding of New Testament metaphor, produces a new reading of how Jesus' death is portrayed in the New Testament texts. Viewed within the language of athletic context, victory through death was not the paradoxical reversal of everything expected, which Jesus' death is frequently portrayed as today. Its nature as victorious, is a part of the similarity to be found in drawing together the commonplaces associated with Jesus' death, and athletic death.

This metaphorical language of Jesus as both athlete, dedicated to God, and the priest who dedicates and sacrifices, enables the writer to evoke an innovative portrayal of Jesus as like and unlike what we know of things in this world. His activity was like and unlike an athlete in the 1st century. He won the race and was awarded a crown, in a religious context and under a divine name. His crown, however, was not material but was glory and honour in God's sight. Glory and honour are concepts from this world, they are about high status, and being a recognised winner. Yet they are also unlike that, as the status indicated is higher than a human being can imagine, it is even higher than that of the mythologised figure, Melchizedek, and the honour is recognised and given by God, rather

than in earthly ceremony. In light of all this, the acts performed, are seen as enormously more significant, than the running of a race. The writer is able to create understanding of what it is for Jesus and his activity to be alike and yet completely beyond that of a victorious and famous athlete, and to have status greater than any earthly celebrity, by including the language of athletics in his letter.

Jesus becomes, in this interpretation, a suffering athlete. For our study of endurance, we find here running and suffering leading to a transcendent sacredness which goes beyond earthly glory, and a victory which goes beyond earthly victory. We find also that Jesus is running ahead of us and that we are also in the race.

Colossians 2:14-15, may refer to an arena contest, Christ wins over the opposition, in full view of others. A few verses later the Colossians are invited to win the same crown. Here the roles of Christ and the authorities have been reversed. Christ has become the powerful figure, while the authorities are on show as the defeated enemy.

Jesus functions in these texts as the ideal, who all Christians were to strive to follow. His life was to be an example, and his teaching a guide. Martyrs were seen in the early Church as those who led the ideal Christian life, following the example of Jesus to the very end. In New Testament times a distinctive word for what we call a 'martyr', did not exist. The stories of martyrs in the Bible describe these 'witnesses', dying for the sake of the Christian faith, and indicate that the Greek word associated with witness is beginning to have a specialised meaning. The trend continues in the writings of the Early Church Fathers. For the sake of this discussion the word 'martyr', will be used here to denote those who died for their faith, because it is the word we use today. Martyrs did die in a sports environment, which was the Roman arena. They would be used as an event in games organised as a spectacle. Both the history of the martyrs and how they are spoken of in the New Testament can enable us to analyse the metaphor of the Christian as athlete, because of their exemplary status, and because of the real sport setting of their final moments.

In the New Testament, martyrs are spoken of as contestants, participating in a contest (agon). Revelation 6:9 for example talks of martyrs joining their fellow contestants at the altar in heaven. This draws our attention immediately to the nature of this text as containing, amongst other things, a sports metaphor. The metaphorical nature of the language becomes clear when we consider that these martyrs were not really in a contest.

A contest is a form of game entered into by participants, trained for the event, hoping to win. In a Greek contest the winner would gain a wreath, and on some occasions a prize. From the Roman point of view, the martyrs were part of a spectacle. They were displayed in the arena because they had already lost, like enemy soldiers and other criminals. Their death was to be used as dramatic visual entertainment. For this reason they were faced with means of death which could not be defeated. The usual procedure for criminals in the Roman arena, facing death, was that they were bound up, and mauled by animals, tortured by instruments, and burned in fire.

These events are not accurately described by the word, 'contest'. For this reason it is clear that the language used is metaphorical and intends to refer to Greek athletic contests. The audience of this verse would, therefore, have in mind, as the two components of the metaphorical language, both what the martyrs appear to have suffered in the Roman arena, and the Greek athletic contest. The contrast and similarity between these two situations will enable the audience to understand something new about death in the arena. We have explored the brutality of the Roman contest, death as a spectacle before the people of the Roman Empire, and the Roman gods. It was a harsh defeat of the rebellious religion. It was a humiliation and not an honour to die in this way.

The Greek contest on the other hand, was an honourable pursuit. That is not to say that already honourable citizens became athletes, but that those who participated in the contests gained honour in their communities and throughout the Greek world. The contests took place at games, as we said above, the most important of these were the games on Mount Olympus. These contests included foot racing, wrestling, pankration, boxing. Although only limited to a few events today, it was then the norm for a contestant to take part in several events of different sorts, possibly in succession. All the sports were a test of endurance. A wrestling match, for example, would be over at sunset. If both contestants could keep fighting till dusk, both would be declared winners.

The religious aspect of the games is vital for reading the metaphor of the martyrs. Of particular interest here is the stadia race. This race was run from one end of the stadium to the other. The end to which the contestants ran, held an altar, and at the altar there was a priest wearing a crown. Sansone, as we saw above, points out that this act contains clear sacrificial imagery. The athlete has become a sacrifice to the gods. Sansone argues that what is being sacrificed is energy (Sansone, 1988, p83). He does not, however,

produce enough evidence to substantiate this claim. Sansone appears to be considering sacrifice in the sense of giving something up. In this way the athlete would be giving away energy, as a farmer would give away a prime animal to a deity. I would like to suggest, however, that sacrifice need not refer to giving something up, but can indicate the act of making something sacred. It is likely, therefore, that what is being sacrificed is not, as Sansone suggests, the energy of the athlete, but is, rather, the athlete him or herself. The athlete makes him or herself sacred, by performing a ritual which, for some reason, is pleasing to the gods. The reason need not be that something is given up. It makes more sense that the race in itself has a purifying significance. The athlete did, no doubt, symbolise the victim of sacrifice in one way or another. It could be that in ancient times they symbolised a hunter and the victim of the hunt, now made sacred by religious ritual, as Sansone argues. By the hellenistic period, however, it is likely that such original hunting references would be forgotten. But we find here that the sacrificial imagery was not forgotten by the writer of Revelation, or his Greek speaking intended audience. A good performance in the race purifies the contestant, so that he or she becomes a sacred sacrifice pleasing to God.

In the foot races, as well as the combat events, the participant could die, yet still be considered to have been victorious. The death of these martyr-contestants, need not indicate that they are not to be associated with the winning athlete.

When this image of the competitor in Greek games, is placed next to the arena martyr, what would then have been associated with each of those images comes to provide many similarities and contrasts. Without the similarities the metaphor would not be understood. The two situations are spectator events; they are both dangerous and present enormous physical challenge; each is a religious event. These similarities would not be far from the mind of the early reader. The distinctions are also clear. Those factors included the description of martyrs as 'contestants', do not make sense in literal terms, leading us to a deeper reading. Participation in Greek games was voluntary, death in the arena was involuntary; death in the Greek games could be victory for the deceased, death of a criminal in the arena, was victory for the Empire; Greek athletics required specific physical training, the martyr was physically restrained and helpless; Greek athletics was an honourable pursuit, arena death was for the noxious in society; the Greek athlete sacrificed to the gods, the martyr died for abusing the gods. These distinctions shed new light on arena death, for the early audience, and, in the same way, examining the contrast,

as we have, in the light of the history of sport, has enabled a new reading of these texts. In this way, victory, honour, purity, sacrifice, and a sense of purpose come to be associated with the arena of death.

Death in the arena becomes filled with the characteristics of Greek athletics. For the participants, or for possible future participants the metaphor is crucial. While Jews in the Roman empire largely regarded arena death as pointless, and thought it best avoided, the early Christians gave it significance. By using athletics metaphors to describe martyrdom the martyr became willing, victorious, well trained and prepared, honourable, even heroic, and primarily a sacrifice to God. The martyr had metaphorically run the stadia race to the altar at the other end, and had gained a rightful place beneath it. The Greek athlete had come through a test of endurance facing the difficulties of the harsh environment, and many long physical contests and may in the end be victorious. The hardships faced by martyrs become this same test of endurance and passing through it is victory, and purity.

2.3.3 Other Christians

Like Jesus, the martyrs were exemplary characters in the New Testament narrative. But not all Christians had the chance to die such heroic deaths. None the less, the Christian life could be difficult for many reasons. There was persecution which was less dramatic than arena death. We find in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, two passages which explain what is expected of a good Christian life, using metaphors of the games. The first we shall discuss, uses Greek athletics, the second uses the Roman arena.

Paul most clearly writes of the Christian life as a race in the first letter to the Corinthians. Here, Paul's metaphor, brings together Greek athletics, and the Christian life. He writes,

Do you not know that in a race, all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown of laurel that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man shadow boxing. No I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Cor 9:24-27: own translation)

Paul begins to unpack the metaphor himself by drawing together the distinctions between the two components. As we have seen, metaphor requires similarities as well as

differences. Paul's distinctions would not be productive, if he were merely contrasting two completely distinct entities. The imagination of the audience is engaged, as the commonplaces associated with Greek races may be compared with the Christian life.

The foot race was an event against opposition. The same was true of the Christian life. It was clear from the time of the very first disciples that there was opposition to the new Jewish sect. The most dramatic evidence of this was in the crucifixion of the sect leader. Opposition from the rest of the synagogue continued, until the distinct forms of Judaism could no longer continue to gather as one, and Christians became identifiable as a distinct entity. By this point to identify oneself as a Christian was to identify oneself in opposition to the Jews, as can be seen from so much of the New Testament, in which even the narrative of Jesus' life speaks of 'the Jews', as though Jesus himself were aware of a distinction in identity. The Christian life was also run in opposition to the Romans, as being a Christian meant adopting monotheism. To be a Christian was eventually considered atheist by the Romans. It would be necessary to outrun such opposition.

Running a race was known to be a physical struggle. Choosing to be a Christian in the Roman Empire could present material difficulties, apart from the most dramatic physical challenge of martyrdom. A person who chose to be a Christian could face a subtle exclusion from society. Work opportunities could be removed, useful contacts could cease contact. There could also be said to be a physical struggle in the adoption of the Christian moral code. All Christians were faced with the possibility that less than perfect behaviour was not acceptable to God, and that lack of repentance could lead to a life of severe punishment after death. Paul himself, saw this as a struggle against the body. He declares here, that he must make it a slave. One aspect of this writing, is the suggestion that the body is a contestant in the race or fight. The body and the spirit are struggling with one another, each trying to seize control. A person could not win a prize if the body was in control. This theme is also found in Paul's letter to the Romans, in his extensive discourse on the Law and the Gospel, and the struggle against the flesh. This is an aspect of Paul's writing, that is unhelpful for much discussion of endurance, and we need not accept Paul's view without modification, because we are provided with an alternative view in the teaching and action of Jesus. Jesus' teaching and action allows us to view the body, as an aspect of the integrated person, loved and healed by God.

These physical struggles were thought to involve hard work, and to involve a steady

improvement. In another metaphor, elsewhere, Paul compares the Christian life with growing up; Christians are eventually weaned from milk and move to eating solid food. The athletic metaphor suggests a similar growth process, but one in which great effort is demanded for skill and strength to grow. Paul says that athletes entering a race must exert self discipline. This is a reference to athletic training. Because of the harsh opposition that Paul sets up between the body and the spirit, he does not provide as useful an account of self discipline and training as he could. It is nonetheless, important, that self discipline and training are brought into the discussion by Paul. The reference to a boxer beating the air is also a reference to training. One method of training for boxing contests, which was used in the ancient Greek world was shadow boxing. This could attract a crowd of spectators, and so would be familiar to the audience of the letter. Paul is contrasting what he is doing, to this training process- he is now engaging in the real thing. The Christian, as the well trained athlete running in a race, must exert self-discipline and train hard, as the race demands great strength and endurance. The goal is to win the race. The struggle against the opposition of society, and of one's own body, demands an advanced stage of Christian growth, which occurs through disciplined training.

The adoption of distinct beliefs was also required of Christians. Those who had been Jewish, were to take on some distinct beliefs, such as the incarnation of God, and the possibility of the inclusion of many Gentiles into God's people. The belief in the afterlife had been abhorrent to some Jews, on conversion they would have to accept its reality, and aim their whole lives towards it. These beliefs were a challenge which also required training. Where training is described in terms of self discipline, the similarity with a whole lifestyle orientation becomes more apparent. The new belief system required acting in love and, we saw above, Paul considered this to be against the will of the body. Although the mind/body opposition is unhelpful, Paul does help us to see more clearly something of the type of struggle which a person faces in embarking on a new way of life. A new way of life is a long term commitment, which requires getting through a personal struggle of some kind. The race is over a particular course, it is specifically the race which Jesus ran, as the 'crown which lasts forever', suggests.

While the Greek athlete is given a crown publicly, the Christian receives no glory in this life. This is the most distinct contrast which Paul chooses to highlight in this text. However, by providing this contrast he can also innovate. It is not, he tells us a total contrast, as the Christian does eventually receive a crown. Something similar happens to

the good Christian as to the winning athlete. The good Christian qualifies for a prize. The prize itself is placed in a contrasting relationship. It is an incorruptible crown. It is an eternal reward, for athletics carried out in the heavenly sphere; for the winning of a spiritual race, against other beliefs, other cultures, and against one's own body and its alternative desires. The Christian is warned that it is possible to run the race and not receive the crown. Only one runner wins the crown, and that is the one who runs the best race. So the good Christian is one who runs well.

The crown metaphor indicates more than a crown. The crown is worth nothing financially but is a symbol of the honour bestowed upon successful athletes. This honour lasts for the lifetime of the athlete. When Paul uses the term corruptible, he is alluding to the Greek notion of all the material things of this world being corruptible, and is contrasting this with 'incorruptible' things; which continue even after death. To the Greeks this might primarily refer to things like 'goodness', but for Paul here, it refers to the eternal life which Christians have the opportunity to receive. By using metaphorical language, Paul can write about life after death, although he is aware that it cannot be directly described in the language of this world. As the next world is unlike this world, analogy will always fall short of accuracy in attempts to describe it. By using metaphor, Paul has more scope for including negative theology, in suggesting that it is unlike a prize or crown in this world, while Paul also includes positive comparison, in which the afterlife is said to contain something which is like winning a prize or crown. It is unclear whether eternal life is itself the prize, or whether it is something about eternal life which is like a prize. I would suggest that the metaphor indicates primarily honour, as that is what the crown symbolises in the Greek world. The good Christian wins honour, not before earthly spectators, but before God.

Earlier in the same letter, ch 4:8ff, Paul presents himself and Apollos as examples of those who are living a good Christian life of suffering. He contrasts the attitude of the Corinthians with his own, to indicate that he and Apollos are humble rather than proud, and willing to work hard and suffer. He exhorts the Corinthians to imitate them. We find in this letter the same contrasts as we found in the discussion of martyrs. The usual view held by society, is reversed from a Christian perspective. This is a typical Pauline theme. In 1 Cor 4:8ff the theme is presented using metaphorical language which refers to the Roman arena. He describes himself and Apollos as though they are under a criminal charge, and condemned to death in the arena. The language is metaphorical, they are not

condemned to death in this way, but are Christian teachers. They are not in the arena but in the environment of the early Church. Paul's argument is that they should not be regarded as the world would regard them, but from the alternative Christian perspective.

He writes

Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings - and that with out us! How I wish that you really had become Kings so that we might become kings with you! For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession like men condemned to die in the arena [on show as those condemned under the death penalty] We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe to angels as well as to men. (10) We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honoured, but we are dishonoured! (11) To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags [naked], we are brutally treated [buffeted], we are homeless [unsettled]. (12) We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless, when we are persecuted, we endure it; (13) When we are slandered we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world."

Paul describes the status of the apostles, as those under a death sentence, "epithanatos". They are a spectacle, which suggests that they are in a metaphorical arena. They are those at the end of the procession, the lowliest of the games. Many commentators believe that the arena metaphor ends at verse 9, but there is no reason to suspect that the arena would have gone from the mind of an early audience as they came to the description of Paul and the other apostles as fools in Christ... weak... without honour". The arena is also most likely intended in verse 11, "naked... buffeted... unsettled". The NIV translator has chosen to translate these words as though they refer literally to the life of Paul. So that he chooses 'dressed in rags' for 'naked', and 'brutally treated and homeless' for 'buffeted and unsettled (or unsteady)'.

The shocking and immediate image of public humiliation has been turned by the translator into a picture of everyday poverty. This has the effect of presenting a description which could not possibly refer to the arena. As a deliberate effort would have to be made on the part of a translator to interpret these words in this way, it is reasonable to translate the text more directly, and to read it as a continuation of the arena metaphor, rather than as a change of topic. The change of topic comes gradually, as interwoven with the metaphor. In this metaphorical language there is a description of Paul's life as it is, which is both like and unlike, being made an arena spectacle - the second component of this extended metaphor. In verse 12, Paul turns from the metaphor to speak directly of his own life, by

drawing out some of the similarities between the two components, of working, being reviled and being persecuted.

Paul's life is no doubt a struggle. He does labour with his own hands, and he does appear to be without honour amongst the early Christians, who have many views to listen to. He is certainly without honour from the point of view of the rest of society. He is probably viewed as a 'fool' wandering from place to place, telling people that a man was actually God, in spite of the fact that that man was condemned as a criminal and was now dead. As he says in verse 9, it is God who has placed him in this position. He is doing as God would have him do, which renders him without honour in the eyes of the world, and so without the social status required to have strength and wealth in Greco Roman society.

So, many of the aspects of Paul's life are similar to what he describes, and are similar to that of condemned prisoners in the arena. Yet they are not arena prisoners. The early audience would be aware that no one is made a spectacle by the Christian God, certainly not an apostle working for God, and that the arena is viewed by people dwelling in the Roman Empire, rather than angels dwelling in heaven. The arena has been taken over by the Christian God and God's angels in Paul's writing. This transforms the whole scene, and suggests that the usual judgements which might be made about the last in the procession at Roman games, must be reversed. The distinctions between the two components of the metaphorical language have been highlighted by Paul, who provides the key for how to read the language, when he replaces the Roman Emperor and pantheon, with God and the angels. The arena metaphor demonstrates a new view of Paul and the apostles. This new view draws on the imagination, and draws on prior understanding both of arena spectacles, and of the life of apostles.

The apostles have, in this text, become noble Christians, strong and honourable, fully clothed in alternative garb, able to pull punches, and having a worthy home. These are they who deserve imitation as prime examples of those leading a Christian life.

These two passages from Corinthians demonstrate Paul's use of Greek athletics, and of the Roman arena for engaging the imaginations of the early Christians, and provoking them to develop an innovative understanding of the Christian life. Comparing the two passages we find Greek athletics used to indicate what is honourable in the Christian life, while the Roman arena text, brought out the dishonour and indicated its transformation.

We find that what is honourable is struggle and humiliation, self discipline and the control of the body, willingness to suffer and acting in love in the face of opposition. These images of suffering are not passive but active to the extent of being athletic. Paul's negative view of the body, is not a notion that we want to keep hold of and use for this project. Here, we can allow other Biblical understanding of the human being as the image of God, loved and healed by God, to critique Paul's aggressive view. Paul's view has, however, drawn our attention to the profound personal struggle, which is spoken of here as a part of the long term commitment of choosing a Christian way of living.

2.3.4 The Christian life as running

Of the New Testament sports metaphors, many are about running. We saw that Jesus was the front runner in the race, victorious in his approach to the altar. The martyrs too were like runners in their claim to a rightful place at the altar. In our attempts to be good Christians these people are examples whom we, the New Testament audience, are exhorted to imitate. We must run the race, and not be disqualified. We are exhorted to win the race, against the trials of life in the struggle against the urges of the body, and against persecutors and other opposition. By choosing to train for the race, and enter it, we set off on the difficult course which Jesus ran.

Drawing on the sacrificial imagery, and the concept of running in a sacred space, as a sacrifice dedicated to God, we find that the Christian becomes an athletic sacrifice. The Christian is not only giving up ordinary life for something more challenging, but is also becoming a sacrifice in the sense of transforming his or her life into something sacred. As the athletic crown is replaced by an incorruptible eternal crown, the Christian becomes a victor suitable for a place at God's altar. The New Testament makes it clear that the Christian was to be in some sense holy, a suitable dwelling place for God's Holy Spirit, a temple in which God might live. The metaphor of a victor in the race, emphasises, not that the physical is replaced by the spiritual in a real understanding of the Christian life, but that the physical life of the Christian, and the way in which the Christian responds to the circumstances of life, can become sacred and dedicated to God. The Christian life, in its victory over social and personal struggles, can become something pure.

In some texts we find Paul referring to his own life as a race. These texts provide a

specific example which enable us to understand the details of how a life may be viewed as a sacred race. One of these texts was discussed above, 1 Cor 9:26, “Therefore I do not **run** like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.” This text stresses the nature of the race as on a specific course, and as the real event, rather than a training run.

Another is Galatians 2:2, “I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was **running** or had **run** my race in vain.” This text particularly indicates that Paul was hoping his race had a purpose, which would be understood by God, although not necessarily acknowledged by the world. This verse occurs in the context of Paul telling the story of his ministry. He relates in Gal 1:16 that he was set apart by God from the womb, for the task of bringing the Gospel abroad. He relates the years which he has worked at this task, and the opposition he has faced from other apostles.

We find the theme again in Philippians 2:16, “as you hold out the word of life--in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not **run** or labour for nothing.” Once again Paul refers to the purpose of his run, and the possibility of future acknowledgement of his success, in spite of the lack of worldly recognition. This occurs in the context of his exhorting the Philippians to lead blameless lives. They will be a credit to his work before God, evidence that his race, which is aimed at converting many people to Christianity, has been successful.

Paul is alleged to have used similar expression, as his words are reported by the author of Acts, in Acts 20:24; “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the Gospel of God’s grace.” Reading these words in the context of other Pauline running metaphors, we can be sure that they accurately indicate something like what Paul did say. Paul’s speech is on the subject of his having served God with humility, tears and trials. He speaks of how he is on his way to Jerusalem where he is well aware he will face imprisonment and afflictions. Here, Paul indicates that the race metaphor refers to a vocation specifically allocated to him by Jesus. His witness to the Gospel renders his life valuable from God’s point of view, and without his participation and success in that race, his life would be without value. This demonstrates the sacred nature of the race. Paul’s

vocation is sacred, and his life itself is worthless without that sacredness. Loss of his life would be victory if it meant winning the race. That victory would be what would give his whole life its value.

In these texts, Paul is using the running metaphor to indicate, not the Christian life in general, but his own particular life and the tasks which it involves. It is likely that Paul intends his audience to bring to mind the details associated with races which we have previously discussed in relation to the Christian life. As earthly races are dedicated to deities, so Paul's race is dedicated to God. In fact, it is commissioned by God, through Jesus, who has indicated that it must take a specific form. It is also an imitation of the race run by Christ. This means the activity is performed in God's name, as a race is run in the name of a deity. As the race winner is acknowledged by the world with a crown and celebrity status, Paul's race will be acknowledged by God at the time of Christ's parousia. The race is a risk, as an athlete must push him or herself possibly to death to win the race, so Paul cannot attach any other type of significance to his life in this world. He risks great opposition, scorn and even death. The race is in deadly earnest, and training is essential. We know that for Paul, life as a race, is life which involves the struggle which a race involves. Unlike in an earthly race, Paul's use of 'race' and 'running' of the Christian life involves earthly shame but heavenly glory, a life in society as someone without strength or wealth, but with honour from God, and a tremendous prize which is, or occurs during, eternal life after death.

Of particular interest for the theological interpretation of endurance is the endurance characteristic of running. In Galatians 1 and 2, Paul sets his race metaphor in the context of a story of the length of that race, and the opposition which he had to face during the race. In Acts 20 a similar story is being told. Paul's race contains trials and afflictions as well as tears and humility. The nature of his life as one which contains endurance, as we hear so often in his writing, is clearly intended to be a part of the race metaphor. The race does not require a burst of energy, but sustained effort. Running the race is actively participating and enduring the race, rather than merely suffering attack and opposition passively. Paul interprets the race favourably because he is continuing to run it, rather than having his life's purpose demolished by trials and afflictions, tears and humility.

2.3.5 Faith and endurance in the New Testament

Endurance is not discussed in the New Testament only in metaphorical language but is also discussed directly in several texts. I shall now turn to these texts and examine each occurrence of the Greek word *upomone*, translated in the NIV as either 'endurance' or 'perseverance'. The meaning of the word in these writings, will be understood to be its use in the literary context within which it occurs.

In Romans 15:4 and 5 Paul writes,

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus.

Here, Paul speaks of 'endurance' as provided by God. The word 'endurance' also suggests an experience in 15:4, as Paul is suggesting that something arises through it. 'Endurance' is a process which leads on to something else. In 15:5, 'endurance' is a quality produced by experience. This 'endurance' functions, along with the reading of scriptures, as an experience which brings hope. Paul attributes the quality of 'endurance', found within that experience, as a gift from God, as he does also in Collosians 1:11. So God is providing the ability to continue sustained effort, in spite of difficulties, as well as providing scripture, which in itself encourages them on occasions where their effort might otherwise dwindle.

There is no direct evidence that the Romans had to endure persecution at this time, and discussion of endurance need not allude to persecution. Paul has been discussing in his letter, the difficulties of setting up a new Church. There are disagreements among people in the Church as to how things should be done. These could easily lead to disillusionment and giving up. Endurance is not required only in the face of severe persecution.

In the second letter to the Corinthians 1:6 and 6:4, Paul suggests that endurance of suffering is a shared experience, common to many Christians. He says first in 2 Cor 1:6, "If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer." Here, Paul refers directly to the opposition to Christianity which is affecting the Church at Corinth. He compares it to the suffering which he has himself experienced. He describes it as 'affliction'. Which suggests that serious problems are facing the

Corinthians.

Paul suggests here that the Christian experience of suffering has produced, indirectly, this positive quality 'endurance'. The specifically Christian element of this suffering is its nature as shared experience, and arising from the sacred nature of this experience, is the ability to comfort others who suffer. So Paul is able to comfort the Corinthians, and from this ability he derives meaning for his own suffering. Shared suffering is of value.

We can see that 'endurance' by this description, has arisen from a changed way of understanding the difficult circumstances which have arisen. As these circumstances are ascribed meaning and seen as specifically Christian and shared in nature, the victims of trouble are able to keep going.

Later, Paul writes, "Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses". Paul suggests here that action taken during the times of hardship, is something by which the Christian might be judged. The actions of Paul and his companions indicate that they are truly good. He says that they commend themselves in times of endurance. 'Endurance' here appears to incorporate an understanding of the 'troubles, hardships and distress', which are then mentioned separately, as well as the action of sustaining effort in spite of these.

In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, 'endurance' is once again connected to hope. 1 Thess 1:3 tells us, "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." In verse 6 of Chapter 1, we are told that the Thessalonians have directly experienced persecution, and have coped with it in an admirable and inspiring way. Paul is now suggesting that the quality of endurance, for continuing labour in difficult circumstances, arises because of hope - or, more specifically, by hope in Christ. The sort of hope which Paul speaks of here is what might be called the 'faith' of the believer, in the sense that faith is a trust in an unknown future. So here the believer's faith leads to the quality of endurance, by enabling the believer to understand their present circumstances in the light of a specific future vision; a positive vision in which Christ is the central actor.

In the Letters of Timothy and Titus, we find endurance simply, without discussion or explanation, listed as Christian virtues. "But you, man of God, flee from all this, and

pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:11). “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance” (2 Timothy 3:10). “Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance” (Titus 2:2). In the introduction to the second letter of Peter, it is also a quality which the wise Christian will possess. The quality is explained in terms of participation in God’s nature.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The writer portrays endurance as a quality associated with moral goodness, and is one of a range of qualities which enable Christian knowledge to be beneficial for life and godliness. It is required for use in the escape from corruption, and the fight against evil desires. We can see that the writer believes that it is a strength required for the struggle which marks out the Christian life. The struggle, as he sees it, is the escape from sin. So the sustained effort required by the Christian is an effort against sin.

We saw above that in the Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus’ life was similar to, and also distinct from, an athletic contest. The struggle which the Christian faces, is also expressed in a running metaphor. The letter presents a metaphor of the Christian as an athlete running in a packed stadium. In Hebrews 12:1, all can witness the ‘endurance’ with which the race is run: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

The author tells us that the perseverance demonstrated by the Christian can be observed. Endurance has become a moral imperative which if demonstrated will set a Christian apart from others, as particularly worthy. We are told earlier in the letter, “You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised” (Heb 10:36). Once again, it is imperative that a good Christian person is one who ‘endures’. It is action which God wants to be undertaken by Christians. Success or

failure will be measured against a scale of the extent to which 'endurance' was demonstrated in the Christian life. It is judged in this way, because it is the will of God that the Christian should 'endure'. Hope in a future vision does not automatically lead to endurance, as the positive nature of the future depends on the manner in which the race is run. There is no suggestion in this text that a Christian might lead a life in which endurance is unnecessary, but rather that each Christian faces some sort of struggle, and endurance is the sustained effort mustered against the struggle. The verse also includes the idea of vocation - a particular calling to follow a set course, similar to that which is found in Paul's autobiographical writing. Here in Hebrews, however, it does not present us with the sort of dualism found in Paul's writing. There are two types of obstacle to the Christian following his or her vocation; the things weighing us down and the sins entangling us. Here, the entanglement of sin is not indicating specifically bodily things, as it did in Paul's writing.

The Letter of James portrays endurance as an aspect of the Christian life which arises because of suffering. The matter first appears in the introduction to the letter. Verses 2-3 of Chapter 1 encourage the readers, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." Endurance here is a quality, rather than sustained action. The quality of endurance will arise naturally as a characteristic of the Christians who have been facing testing circumstances. As the quality is perceived as having value, the circumstances which produce that quality are ascribed meaning, on account of their consequences.

The letter goes on, in verse four, to relate 'endurance' to Christian growth. "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." 'Endurance' is accredited the ability to act, indeed it is likened to an artisan crafting a product or 'work'. The end and goal of the Christian life - 'completeness' - is to be achieved through the action and experience of 'endurance'. The writer of James is making meaning of the suffering of the people to whom he writes, by expressing their suffering, and the experience of living through it successfully, as being worked upon and perfected by the craftsman 'endurance'. He exhorts them to keep going by encouraging them with this framework of meaning.

The victims of suffering are affirmed in 5:11: "As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord

finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.” The readers are to be like Job, unfailing in their faith and trust in God, who refuse to give up their understanding of God’s steadfast love, in spite of the lack of current evidence that God is making things good for them. When they are referred to as blessed, they must be aware that this does not refer to the time of suffering itself but a future time - they are presently blessed, but will experience this fully in the future. The reason for perseverance is that there is a delay in God’s bringing about good for them. In saying this, James makes it clear that suffering itself is not a good thing, but that it produces a good result. In contrast, the blessedness which they will experience in the future is good. This makes it clear that the trials are a bad thing as they are contrasted to a good future state.

The Book of Revelation, in describing visions of struggle also expresses an understanding of endurance as something which will be required during the period of waiting for the eventual arrival of better times. The speaker presents his own commendation in a similar manner to that which we saw in Paul. Rev 1:9, reads, “I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus...”. Suffering and related endurance are a shared facet of Christians, including the writer. They bring about companionship, and are instantly portrayed as possessing positive meaning by the Christological interpretation, “that are ours in Christ”.

In the visions for the Churches, that occur at the beginning of the Book of Revelation, Christ is portrayed as positively judging those Churches in whom he finds the quality of endurance: “I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance...” (Rev 2:2); “I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance...” (Rev 2:19). Such churches have demonstrated, in the action of enduring without giving up, that they are good enough Christians to be saved from the future suffering which will accompany the advent of the end times, as the reader discovers in Rev 3:10: “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.” God wishes to protect good people from suffering, and will save some of them from future suffering.

These end times, are themselves going to be a time of suffering. Rev 13:10 “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints” (Rev 13:10). “This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints

who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus" (Rev 14:12). John locates endurance in these end times, and equates it to obedience and faith in Christ. Rather than merely presenting futuristic vision, these words express something about the nature of endurance in this age, by making the meaning of suffering an overriding concern. Suffering has been given meaning, and endurance value, in the Christian story, a place in salvation history. The exhortation to future endurance gains effectiveness, because endurance finds a worthy place in the larger scheme of how things are.

The positive response to periods of difficulty, here in the Book of Revelation, is faithfulness. The specific content of endurance, as it occurs in the eschatological story, becomes this faithfulness to Christ. While in James we found the notion of faith as faith in God's love for the Christian. In this way, in these texts, to not endure would be to betray Christ during a time of difficulty and to lose faith in the relationship between oneself and God, or Christ. It seems likely that, in the context of Revelation, faithfulness means, not only continuing to identify oneself as a part of the Church, and a follower of Jesus, but also as someone who acts in a Christian manner - a lived out faithfulness. This type of faithfulness would be consistent with the moral visions for the Churches, at the beginning of the Book.

Each of these New Testament writers assigns endurance an important place in the Christian life. It is an action which takes the Christian through the contests of life in a meaningful and worthy manner, and it is also a quality which arises from facing difficulties, or sometimes from God. It is related to hope and is closely related to aiming towards Christ, often appearing to gain its meaning from Christ and what Christ experienced.

2.4.1 The interpretation of endurance in the Early Church

The theology of sport emerges from two millennia of theology which discusses many aspects of human life, but rarely discusses sport. The Early Church were, however, fascinated by a number of issues which can lead us to see what a Christian theology of sport might include. The discourse on human physicality and action were discussed in relation to the concerns arising from the Early Church context. Discussion of endurance was contextual and specific. Endurance was discussed in the specific context of

martyrdom.

In the Early Church context, a theological view arose in which the experience of extreme endurance demonstrated in martyrdom was viewed as valuable in the eyes of God. This value would manifest itself in the form of the post mortem rewards which martyrs were said to receive, and in the images of the martyrs as acceptable sacrifices to God. I shall look here at some of the writings of the New Testament, Acts of Martyrs and Early Church Fathers, looking first at the views found in accounts of early martyrdoms, then at views expressed in letters with pastoral concerns and finally at theological writing. The texts selected for discussion here demonstrate the type of interpretative work which was taking place at that time. (Further texts which reiterate these points may be found in Baukham, 1998.)

First and foremost, the suffering martyr was a witness to something beyond him or herself. Let us take another look at the word 'martyr'. The Greek word for martyr originally meant merely a witness. It appears that the concept of witness was extended over time to include death, and that the term "martyr" extended the meaning of the word "witness" rather than taking on a distinct new meaning. This concept of witness emerges in the New Testament to describe a distinctively Christian way of life. John frequently uses the term in his gospel. John the Baptist is described as a witness, who came to testify to the light. (*eis marturian ina marturese peri tou foton*) (John 1:6). The purpose of Jesus is to bear witness to the truth (*inamartureso te alhtheia*) (John 18:37). The concept of witness also appears in the mouth of Jesus in pericopes such as Matthew 10:17-25 (compare Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-17, 19). Matthew 10:18 reads "...and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles [*eis marturion autois kai tois ethnessin*]". These texts also include post-mortem reward and the concept of endurance. The Christian way of life gradually becomes interpreted as itself witness. Many righteous people are found described as witnesses and some of these die, like John the Baptist and Jesus. But the reason the word 'witness' is associated with these people is not because of the type of death they encountered. As the righteous way of living life was 'witness', the term also came to be used in the interpretation of the lives of some Christians to mean a way of living which was being towards martyrdom, and eventually coming to have the technical sense of specifically referring to a martyr's death.

2.4.2 Martyrdom accounts

The account of Stephen's martyrdom is found in Acts Chapter 7. Stephen was stoned to death for preaching his Christian views, but throughout the whole incident remains calm and focussed upon Christ. Luke tells us that Stephen speaks and there is furious opposition, but Stephen is filled with the Spirit. The phrase used is also used of Jesus in Luke's temptation narrative (Penney, 1996, p41). Luke is presenting Stephen as a parallel to Jesus in what he sees and reports, and in his action in taking on a painful death, Stephen is portrayed as a witness to the resurrection of Christ. We are told that Stephen sees Jesus standing before him in a vision. It is most likely that Stephen sees Jesus as present with him at the moment of his suffering (see discussion of the vision in Rapske, 1998, p251f. Nolland, 1998, p75f. Ton, 1997, p120). Stephen receives a vision of Christ in heaven, and then prays to Jesus as Lord, to receive his Spirit. Stephen's prayer echoes that of the dying Jesus (Luke 23:46). As Ton indicates, the understanding of a martyr is emerging here as one who suffers as Jesus did (Ton, p118). Stephen is one of the heroes of the book of Acts because he endured this painful act for his faith. The presence of Christ demonstrates to the reader that God supported Stephen, and that the experience of suffering which Stephen underwent was made possible by his knowledge of the presence of Christ. It also suggests that, as he endures the physical torture, he is already existing in a mystical heavenly dimension. His calmness and his focus on Christ render this a narrative of endurance rather than merely of suffering. Here, the attitude of a martyr to extreme bodily distress, is an attitude of endurance. This event of endurance is framed as a theological event, warranting a theological interpretation.

The Text of the Martyrdom of Polycarp is thought to be written around AD150. (Hill, 1992, p105). Here, the martyr is interpreted as a hero, whose last days become being towards martyrdom. In this text we find the words 'martyr' and 'martyrdom' appear for the first time that we know of referring to a kind of death (Bowersock, 1995, p13). We are told that Polycarp "...put a stop to the persecution by his own martyrdom [dia tes marturias autou]" (Martyrdom of Polycarp I).

The Martyrdom of Polycarp presents the martyrs as already in the presence of God during their suffering, communing with God as they are tortured. They are said to be "not present in the flesh", which is then clarified as "...the Lord was there present holding converse with them" (Martyrdom of Polycarp II). The martyrs look forward to the good

things that they will receive. God has prepared good things for those who endure [tois upomeinasin]. 1 Cor 2:9 is used to show that God has secret things prepared. As in the Gospels, it is the activity of the martyrs themselves, and in particular their endurance (upomone), which leads to their receiving these things.

The writer suggests that, in some way, the martyrs themselves have already become angels (Martyrdom of Polycarp II). In these moments of endurance their lives are interpreted as in some sense sacred. This description of the sacred continues in sacrificial imagery; Polycarp is said to be an acceptable sacrifice (dekton to theo). To interpret a martyr as an acceptable sacrifice, is to suggest pure intent and ontological purity. The whole person of the martyr as being towards martyrdom is interpreted as pure. In Polycarp's prayer, we find that he is glad to be found worthy (axios) of martyrdom. As Ton (1997,p330-331) notes, here, in the Martyrdom of Polycarp, there are three characteristics of a true martyrdom: the martyrdom is according to the will of God; the martyr endures to the end; the true martyr acts for others. God is seen to value the actions of the martyr, and the action of enduring purifies the person who endures.

Polycarp's prayer (which we can see to be consistent with Polycarp's own view, as we will see in his epistles discussed below) indicates that martyrs are guaranteed a place in a bodily resurrection. The martyr shares in the cup of Christ (en to poterio tou Xristou). The allusion to the Biblical use of 'cup' (Martyrdom of Polycarp XIV) to refer to the particular death intended for Christ, portrays Polycarp as taking part in Christ's suffering. This use of 'cup' is found in several places in the Gospels (Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John:11) to talk not just of the fact of Christ's death, but to talk of Christ's death as an event which it is almost impossible to bear. Polycarp is facing something almost unbearable, but in doing so he is sharing with Christ.

In Martyrdom accounts we have found that martyrs are portrayed as having an attitude of endurance. We have found positive images of endurance, and also positive images of the one who endures.

2.4.3 Epistles

In 1 Clement, Clement's theology of martyrdom situates the topic in the economy of God; on several occasions martyrs are referred to as gaining a reward (Ch VI). In Chapter V, Clement includes Peter and Paul in the righteous, who have been put to death, and he briefly details their struggles. For the endurance they demonstrated, they obtain the reward of going to the 'place of glory'; the reward they were due (Clement ch V). In this context, 'place of glory' appears to refer to the gained status of the hero. These, Clement tells us, were Christian witnesses, athletes who endured. These sports metaphors are Biblical, and build on Paul's own writing to the Corinthians. We can begin to understand from this something of Clement's perception of the divine economy. Willing participation in suffering, up to the point of death, earns something from God.

In Chapter XLV, with further scriptural examples in which individuals endured persecution and torture, the theme of reversal of fortune, already familiar from Jewish scripture, is accommodated into Clement's theology. The righteous character is brought low by the wicked, but later is raised up by God. The tortured are the righteous, and their status as those who suffered under the wicked is reversed by God - as they inherit, or are due to inherit, glory and honour. It is not clear, from the stories he presents, if the examples are people who inherited the glory and honour because they endured persecution, or if they would have inherited these without persecution, for their previous righteousness. The reversal of fortune theme, however, suggests that it is the interpretation of their lives as being towards martyrdom, characterised by endurance, which leads to the descriptions of their lives as righteous. Clement's view is of the type which is not helpful for a theological view of endurance, because if it were followed through into a way of life, the person following that view would be in danger of accepting persecution and oppression, rather than objecting to it, and striving to remove sources of oppression. This indicates the way in which the Biblical discussions have been applied to a context in which suffering is inevitable, and, in that context, have been read in such a way that suffering is almost desirable. In other contexts, such a reading would be harmful.

The theology of martyrdom expressed in the Epistle to Diognetus is a contrast to what was found in Clement. Knowledge holds a central place in the author's perspective. Death is no longer fearful for Christians, and is to be despised (chX). Instead he parallels what is thought to be death and what Christians know to be true death: the one who

imitates God, primarily by service to others, begins to speak God's mysteries, and to know what it is to live in heaven (chX), and by imitation of God begins to live a heavenly and eternal life before death. His discussion of martyrdom arises as he speaks of imitation of God. He contrasts true death, which is damnation, with the momentary death of a martyr by fire, and eternal fire. The time spent suffering is shorter for a Christian condemned to death, as martyrdom leads to the avoidance of eternity in hell. So we do not find in this epistle the view that suffering is a valuable experience for Christians. This view questions the value of endurance, by stressing the minimal and short term effort required by martyrs.

I shall now turn to the Epistle of Polycarp. In Polycarp's view, the divine economy functions on a pattern of God's promising and our attaining. The contribution of the Christian within the economy is to please God, entering into a transaction which leads to a receiving of a future world, which is equated with a resurrection from the dead. Drawing first on 2 Timothy 2:12, Polycarp explains God's promise that we shall reign with him, and continues to draw heavily on New Testament teaching, to express what should be done to attain the future world (V). A righteous life is the primary contribution of the Christian towards receiving God's promised salvation.

Polycarp, following the tradition we found in Clement, uses examples of previous righteous Christians like Paul, to exhort his readers to endure. He describes them as having run, alluding to athletic contest which requires endurance (upomone), and echoing and affirming Paul's hope (Phil 2:16; Gal 2:2). They were martyrs and are now in their due place, which is in the Lord's presence. Here, he adds 'with the Lord', to Clement's expression due place' (Hill, 1992, p79). Presenting a picture of athletes placed after a competition, Polycarp describes these Christians as having suffered with Christ, and links this to their present post-mortem situation or place (IX).

The Christian should respond to suffering by recalling the suffering of Christ and seeking to imitate him (VIII). This endurance was carried to the limit by Christ (IX). This is the ideal for Christians enduring until death. Once again we have endurance (upomonh) as an attribute of the ideal Christian, and being towards martyrdom as the ideal Christian way of being. The suffering of Christ we saw in Chapter IX, is suffering together (sunpathon). They do more than imitate Christ's life they actually experience his passion. These martyrs, Polycarp tells us, are due a particular reward, which may be a superior reward

to that of the other righteous Christians, although other Christians are due a reward of their own (XII).

I shall now turn to the letters of Ignatius (I here consider the seven letters of Ignatius generally considered as authentic in the short or middle recension). These letters were written by Ignatius as he awaited his own martyrdom, and the subject of martyrdom frequently emerges amidst his discussions of the pastoral concerns of the Churches to whom he writes. Ignatius world-view is dominated by a sharp distinction between Christ and his enemies, between life and death. For human beings there are two available choices; wickedness and death, or Christ and life. The choice for life, is the choice to bear the image (xaracter) of God, as a Roman coin bears an image of the Emperor (The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians chV). The Christian life is characterised by faith and love, which appear together frequently in his epistles. Love relates to the fellowship of love within the Christian community, while faith relates to the reality of God's revelation and the endurance of the Christian (Schoedel, 1985).

Knowingly awaiting death, Ignatius anticipates its result. He frequently describes his own martyrdom using phrases like 'attaining to Christ' (Ig Ron V; Ig Poly II; Ig Eph XII: Ig Trall XIII). Ignatius will soon fulfil his purpose, his place will be at the feet, or literally, 'in the tracks (upo ta ixne), of Paul (EphXII). He will be raised up (Trall IX) He will attain his portion (Phil V). In Romans II-VII, he speaks of longing for death, and explains what that death means to him. For Ignatius, his death is life, in which he will see the true light (Rom VI). He will be nourished by God who summons him (Rom VII), rising unto God (Rom II) and being free (Rom IV). He will emerge in the highest form of humanity (anthropos). (RomVI). Ignatius, in enduring a martyr's death, suffers with Christ (sunpatheo). Writing to Polycarp, Ignatius uses the metaphor of the martyr as a conquering athlete. The Christian must bear a burden for the sake of God, must run a course and suffer wounds. If this is done then God will bring this Christian into the Kingdom of God. The goal of a good athlete is immortality and eternal life (to Polycarp II, III). The Goal of Ignatius life is the point he will reach upon death, a point of union with God. When an individual chooses life and Christ, he or she is choosing goals which remain unfulfilled until death, the goal of being in the presence of God. So, we find in the writings of Ignatius the view that enduring a martyr's suffering is sharing in Christ's suffering. It is meaningful because it brings the Christian closer to God. Living a life in which we demonstrate the characteristic of endurance is a good thing. Endurance is an

aspect of a life that is faithful to God, and, as such, is related to love and intimacy with God.

Turning once again to Paul, I shall focus on the Thessalonian Epistles, and the Corinthian Epistles, in which there is useful discussion on the subject of martyrdom. In the Thessalonian Epistles, we find Paul accounting for the suffering which converts to Christianity would have to face. In Thess 1:6 Paul indicates that they suffer in imitation of Christ (*umeis mimetai... tou kuriou*). As Ton indicates (1997, p129), the Thessalonians were expected to be joyful at the sufferings they endured as these were all part of God's plan. In these Epistles, the notion of suffering is connected to the judgement of the parousia. In 2 Thess 1:5, Paul links the endurance of the Thessalonians with worthiness in the eyes of God. The outcome of being worthy of God, is post-mortem reward. In Thess 5:9, Paul talks of obtaining salvation, and in Thess 2:14 he talks of gaining the glory. These Epistles were not written for martyrs, but to discuss the Christian life which, at a time of oppression, required endurance. Yet, we find that the Christian life is framed by its ending in death, and that endurance is being affirmed by the promise of future reward.

Throughout the writings of Paul, we find the idea, discussed above, that the life of a Christian is a way of suffering. Paul develops this theology of the Christian life along with his Christology of suffering, particularly in the Corinthian letters. In 1 Cor 1:21-25, we find that God's weakness, is God's power. As God's fellow workers (1 Cor 3:9), Christians have a part in the pain and death of Jesus, (2 Cor 1:5; 4:10). In Romans 8:17 we the Christian and Christ suffer together (*sumpasxomen*). The most straightforward reading of the text is that this refers to mystical participation in Christ.

Because of the suffering and death of Christ, the believer is given power to face suffering and death for others (1 Cor 4:19-20). To suffer is to be already rich in this life (2 Cor 3:10). Post-mortem life involves reward, according to labour (1 Cor 3:8). Good things come to those who are worthy (1 Cor 3:12-15). Paul frequently refers to being tested (e.g. 1 Thess 2:4; 2 Cor 8:2) and found proven to be of good character (*dokime*, 2 Cor 2:9; 8:2 13:3 and Phil 2:2). Fellowship with Christ leads to sharing in Christ's glory (Rom 8:17, *sumpascomen*: 2 Thess 2:14). This glory is our hope (Col 1:27).

In these Epistles of Paul, it is the lives of Christians that are interpreted as being towards martyrdom, in the sense that they all aim to imitate Christ, and share in his passion.

Paul's theology of martyrdom is a theology of the lives of all righteous Christians, whose lives are seen as sacred, when viewed Christologically. Endurance is a central aspect of these lives and of the imitation of and solidarity with Christ. What could be negative is interpreted in a positive way. Paul presents a realistic impression of life as inevitably including suffering and difficulty, but does not go as far as indicating a glorified view of suffering, neither does he call the Christian to seek out suffering as a way of life.

2.4.4. Theological texts

Justin Martyr was born in the late first, or early second, century and wrote his first apology around 150 CE (Barnard, 1967). He is concerned with the Christian way of life. In Justin's theology suffering is undesirable. In the first apology he tells us "...those who are not living in accordance with his teachings, but are Christians only in name, we demand that all such shall be punished by you." (trans Barnard, 1967). He contrasts pagan life which is driven by lack of reason and mindless passions, with Christian post mortem existence which is without suffering or needs. For Justin, the event of martyrdom is a reasonable act (2nd Apology chII). Justin's argument, unlike many of his predecessors, is not situated within the divine economy but in categories of what is honourable behaviour: a Christian standard of honour is juxtaposed to the standards of his readers. Not all will reach the Kingdom of Heaven (1st Apology chXVI). In persecuting the Christians the Romans endanger themselves, whilst doing no real harm to those they kill (1st Apology chXLV; LVII). Christians undergo a life of suffering (2nd Apology chXII), like the suffering of a martyr. And those who are martyrs gain freedom through the action of their killers and look forward to the resurrection (1st Apology chXVI; LII; LVII).

Justin's distinction between the suffering life and the peaceful resurrection for Christians can leave the impression that death is a far more favourable condition than life for Christians, even to the extent that life is pointless to them. But he counteracts this impression by the historical and physical foundations of his theology. In Justin's theology, God's activity in creating the world had a purpose, so God affirms life. Christians, too, should not destroy life (2nd Apology chIV). Discussing the resurrection, he is also clear that the body is of value to God and is not to be despised. This affirmation of human physicality is helpful for us, as it indicates the possibility of taking

a positive attitude to our physical existence, while at the same time indicating that we are involved in a struggle against our needs. He perhaps differs from Paul in that, for Paul, the fact of having needs is negative, while for Justin human need indicates an absence of necessities.

We do not find in Justin the language of post mortem glory, or of participation in suffering, which we have found in other writings of the first and second centuries. Throughout his writing Justin demonstrates his awareness of the dangers of emphasising reward after death as the purpose of life, and is careful to insist on God's affirmation of life itself. His anthropology, which integrates body, soul and spirit, enables him to argue for a resurrection of the body, from logical as well as Biblical argument. The soul is immortal and the body dies but is raised (Fragments of the Resurrection ch X). The resurrection body will be much like the earthly body, differing only in that it will be healed of any earthly disability (Fragments of the Resurrection ch III-IV). Justin's theology understands suffering as undesirable and so does not give us an image of endurance as central to the Christian life.

Origen of Alexandria discusses endurance in the theology of martyrdom he develops in his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*. He presents a very positive view of endurance. At the start of ch30, Origen moves into a discussion of the forgiveness of sins, which, he says, comes only with baptism. The Gospel makes rebaptism impossible - if it is a baptism of water and spirit. However, the baptism of martyrdom is possible (baptisma emin didotai to tou marturiou) and is given for the forgiveness of sins. As Jesus the high priest offered himself as a sacrifice, so his priests offer themselves. This is why they are to be found, or more accurately seen, near the altar, which is their home, their own place. Origen turns to Leviticus, which says that the sacrifice of a blameless priest was unblemished, whilst that of a blemished priest was itself blemished (Lev 21:17-21). The martyr who holds fast to his confession is that blameless priest, offering a blameless sacrifice. It is the fact that martyrs held fast to their faith through difficulty, that allows Origen to portray them as holy.

In *Martyrdom*, chapter 39, Origen begins by invoking John 15:19, as a comfort to those who are hated by the world. They should endure reproach for Christ (pollous oneidismous dia Criston ... upomeinante), as the one who endures to the end will be saved. He discusses joy and suffering, suffering (lupe) which is not grief, but which, on

the other hand, is the mixed kind of suffering experienced in childbirth. He describes martyrdom as baptism by your own blood, a complete cleansing process. He finally draws us to Revelation 6:9. After dying the death of a martyr, we may spend our existence by the heavenly altar, with those who competed with us (ton sunagonisamenon). Origen is drawing once again on images that suggest holiness. He is using Biblical images of sacredness.

The overcoming of sufferings, and endurance to the end, is an element of ascent to God which has a specifically Christian dimension. These are favourite themes of Origen, not only in *Martyrdom*, but in much of his work. In his homilies on Genesis, he speaks of our embodiment as undergoing the struggles of this world, as going down to Egypt (Homilies on Gen 16:7). His Exodus homilies often understand 'Egypt' as a reference to contemporary human suffering (Homilies on Exodus VIII), and speak of it as something to endure (Homilies on Exodus XI). In chapter 39, he associates sufferings with the alienation of the Christian in the world, drawing on a Biblical understanding of suffering as being cut off from God. This is helpful for us as it presents the possibility of a strong view of the value of endurance, with suffering clearly portrayed as negative.

2.5 The interpretation of endurance in the Early Church tradition

There is an urgent sense of the importance of endurance in many of these Early Church texts. Although in Diognetes and Justine there was no sense of the importance of endurance, the other texts, in their discussions of martyrdom, demonstrated a theological understanding of endurance. What we have found has also raised unresolved questions. Some of the interpretations of endurance have come too close to a position of glorifying suffering. While in the teaching and action of Jesus Christ we find that God is seen to affirm the removal of suffering, these Early Church texts pick up on the themes of the difficulty of the Christian life, as it is found in the New Testament, and use these to stress the positive aspects of undergoing life-threatening suffering. The immanence of the impending death of martyrs, such as Ignatius, or faithful Christians in a time of persecution, created a conflict in which it was necessary to make sense of the circumstances, which included suffering as severe as torture.

We find suffering enabled by the presence of Jesus, in Stephen's martyrdom. We find, in

Polycarp, the sacredness, purity and worthiness of martyrs, which was echoed in Origen. The one who endures is viewed, in the work of these writers, in an extremely positive way. In Clement we find the martyr is viewed as a hero, but his view of the willing participator in suffering leads us to question whether Paul's views have been taken too far by Clement. Polycarp adds a dimension of solidarity with Christ, which enables his emphasis to be not on suffering but on active endurance. That solidarity with Christ was also found in the writings of Paul. We also found on several occasions that endurance was related closely to faith, to trust in God's love, and to living a life of faithfulness to Christ. We find that Ignatius talks about solidarity with God as endurance is linked to faithfulness to God, and suffering is linked to Jesus' suffering.

Paul reinterprets the negative aspects of life in a positive way, but comes close to presenting a view of suffering which could lead his readers to believe that they should seek out suffering. The Early Church writers who develop Paul's views do often tend to take his views too far. Paul stresses endurance as an aspect of solidarity with and imitation of Christ. By interpreting the Christian life in theological terms, Paul risks placing all life experience in too positive a light. But Paul's writing takes the form of letters to encourage those who are suffering, and he is discussing the details of their lives. When the encouragement is taken too far, all Christians would be seen to be encouraged to suffer. Origen also presents a very positive view of endurance, in which a person who endures is associated with holiness and with Christ.

What is interesting here is the impression that, in the Early Church, any form of endurance which was created by the suffering involved in living out the Christian life in a thorough manner, was witness to Christ and was, therefore, valued by God. The Christian life itself was made valuable by the response of that Christian to situations of hardship, for some writers living in the world seems to be viewed as suffering, while, for others, persecution was the primary cause of the difficulties of the Christian life.

We can see that there is a precedent in the theology of the Early Church for developing a theological interpretation of endurance, for looking at a positive response to difficulty and assessing its meaning and value in theological terms. Endurance was associated with holiness and heavenliness, and was also closely related to faith in, and relationship with, God. In these ways, it was clearly framed theologically. Although the Roman arena is no longer a source of human suffering today, human life itself still contains a series of

difficulties, and suffering of different sorts. The Early Church clearly believed that discussion of suffering and endurance were relevant, even in contexts outside martyrdom.

The theology of sport today, does not face a situation in which endurance requires the death of the person who endures but none the less, in talking about endurance, we must pick up where these more urgent discussions of endurance are left in the past. The theological interpretation of endurance in sport takes us to only one place in which endurance is occurring in the Christian life today, and there are many other discussions which follow from these early Church discussions of suffering and martyrdom. There is, however, one aspect of the theology of martyrdom and the role of endurance in that, which is similar to the theology of sport and the role of endurance in sport. Women who choose to push their physical body through physical difficulty for an extended period of time are already making choices about endurance. At first glance this would appear to be quite distinct from being towards martyrdom which involved a degree of passive suffering, yet the Early Church writers themselves do not write about accidental martyrdom, but about the conscious decision to be prepared to face the possibility of suffering and to endure that suffering without backing down. So at the core of being towards martyrdom is the conscious choice to be a person who endures.

Through the two thousand years of Christianity the theological interpretation of endurance had various popular forms, but became particularly unpopular in response to the Marxist critique of Christianity. Karl Marx described Christianity as the opiate of the people. Christianity was seen to prevent social action by glorifying suffering and a passive attitude towards social oppression. The Churches responded with liberation theology, such as that undertaken by some Latin American theologians or by Schussler Fiorenza, whose hermeneutic of liberation was referred to in Chapter 1. That theology takes Biblical models of social action and the fight for human freedom as the central aspect of the Christian faith. This response, however, has led to the neglect of a proper theology of endurance. What is needed is not a Marxist theology which responds by rejecting Biblical texts which express the value of suffering, but rather a response which turns once again to the value of a powerful response to human hardship.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at the Biblical texts which discuss athletics in metaphorical language, and have analysed the meaning of these texts in their original contexts. I have also drawn out aspects of these texts relating to endurance, so that these may be reapplied in the context of distance running in later chapters. I have then turned to the analysis of texts which directly discuss the subject of endurance. In this chapter, we found the New Testament interpretation of Jesus as a suffering athlete, with running and suffering leading to a transcendent sacredness which goes beyond earthly glory. We found also that Jesus is running ahead of us and that we are also in the race. Jesus death was portrayed as athletic victory.

We found also that, in the New Testament, death in the Roman arena becomes filled with the characteristics of Greek athletics. By using athletics metaphors to describe martyrdom the martyr became willing, victorious, well trained and prepared, honourable, even heroic, and primarily a sacrifice to God. The Greek athlete had come through a test of endurance facing the difficulties of the harsh environment, and many long physical contests and may in the end be victorious. The hardships faced by martyrs become this same test of endurance and passing through it becomes victory.

We also saw that Paul uses language of Greek athletics, and of the Roman arena, for engaging the imaginations of the early Christians, and provoking them to develop an innovative understanding of the Christian life. We found that what is honourable is struggle and humiliation, self discipline and the control of the body, willingness to suffer and acting in love in the face of opposition. These images of suffering are not passive but active to the extent of being athletic.

We have found that Paul's race contains trials and afflictions as well as tears and humility. The nature of his life as one which contains endurance is part of the metaphor of a race requiring sustained effort. Running the race is actively participating and enduring the race, rather than merely suffering attack and opposition passively. Paul interprets the race favourably because he is continuing to run it rather than having his life's purpose demolished by trials and afflictions, tears and humility.

Other New Testament writers were found to assign endurance an important place in the Christian life. It is an action which takes the Christian through the contests of life in a

meaningful and worthy manner, and it is also a quality which arises from facing difficulties, or sometimes from God. It is related to hope and is closely related to aiming towards Christ, often appearing to gain its meaning from Christ and what Christ experienced.

Finally this chapter turned to how endurance was interpreted in the Early Church context of martyrdom, which provides a precedent for understanding endurance theologically in the Church tradition as it occurs in aspects of the Christian life. There we found that the Early Church developed their understanding of endurance as a positive aspect of the Christian life which would ideally be lived as being towards martyrdom. The ideal Christian suffers and endures the suffering as solidarity with Christ and as leading towards a glorious post-mortem future.

Chapter Three: Women's Experience of Endurance as Expressed in Narratives.

3.1 Introduction and method used

This chapter looks at literature written on the subject of women's running. The aim of this chapter is to discover what that literature shows us about endurance. In this chapter, women's experience and the stories which women tell about their experiences are being brought into play. Although these accounts may be narrative or even fictional, it is important to distinguish the aim of this chapter from an entirely different type of research which might aim to find out something about women's writing. The assumption here is that women's writing will convey something true and meaningful about endurance. Our aim is not to describe the narratives or to comment on the number of times a certain thing is said, but to reveal what endurance is, how it is experienced and how it is understood. The aim here is to use the experiences conveyed in the literature to gain a more enlightened understanding of endurance.

In Chapter 1, it was indicated that this enquiry was approached from a specific stance, which included a type of feminist stance. Following the suggestion of bell hooks, the stance in this project is being called being an advocate of feminism, to indicate that feminism is not being allowed to overpower other concerns which are also being brought to the enquiry. As an advocate of feminism, I am turning specifically to women with the understanding that something similar might be found about men's writing, were I to look there, but that women's writing is worth looking at in its own right as it expresses something which has been neglected. The inclusion of women's experience can certainly benefit the theology of sport. Women's stories may reveal something distinctive. Women's experience of sport is different from men's, and many of the narratives of women's running tell stories of sexism and rejection from certain aspects of running. These stories are distinctive because the people who are telling them are women.

There are exciting possibilities for the theology of sport, as it begins to include women's stories. The inclusion of women's stories, draws this chapter close to much of the recent work which is beginning to emerge in pastoral theology. This work is bringing a deeper level of relevance to much theology. Theologians such as Carrie Doehring comment on the possible new shape of the theological quest. She argues for an interdisciplinary theology and she declares her ultimate goal of using her theological commitment to challenge and transform the marginalising structures which her post structuralist methods have enabled

her to identify. To do this, she looks at the subjective and specific experiences of women's lives (Doehring, 1999). Other theologians look less at the broader structures of society and use their experience as pastoral counsellors to examine the stories of the women with whom they have worked. The writers included in *Women in Travail and Transition* (Glaz and Moessner, 1991) fall into both of those categories, but are committed to making the Church's understanding of women's lives, and the Church's care of women more relevant. They do this by looking at the stories of women in particular life experiences and reflecting on them using psychology and theology. Similarly, in this chapter, I am looking at stories of women only in the particular context of running.

For this chapter, I read writing on women's running from a broad variety of sources and in a variety of genres. The pieces of writing which related to distance running were then marked and re-read. The writing which included any account or discussion of endurance was then marked and photocopied. Themes arose at this stage. The photocopies were arranged into groups of texts containing similar themes, with some texts being placed in more than one group. The most relevant parts of the texts were marked. As the texts and passages relating to each theme were reinforced by further examples, those examples were added to a group. When new passages no longer added anything to the inquiry, new texts were no longer added.

As I was looking for texts which genuinely related and discussed endurance in women's distance running, many texts were rooted out, and not included in the final sample. These were texts such as those which related only to shorter runs, those in which the runner was a man, or those in which the runner does not talk about running at all, but on some related area which bypasses the whole issue of distance running. When the final sample was collected into a series of grouped and marked texts, the final process of analysis began. At this point, although the focus was on the marked parts of the texts, the contexts of those particular passages were also taken into account. I continued to read any new books or articles that came to my attention. New work of this sort continued to be published as this project developed. Where these added force to the themes which were already selected they were included in the study. I was also looking out for any text which appeared to contradict what was already included in the study. This aspect of the study does not claim to provide information on subjects such as, what percentage of women's running texts discuss endurance, or to provide discussion on women's running

writing as a whole. The final sample is probably fairly representative of contemporary writing discussing women's running writing, but this chapter does not make any claims which are dependant on the writing as representative, but rather as illuminating what is being said. What is important is that enough texts have been read for themes to occur again and again in similar ways, suggesting that women who have not written their accounts of running, or had those accounts written, might, if provided with the opportunity, say fairly similar things.

Some writing on women's running is factual other writing is fictional, but on choosing to include writing I marked areas of the text in which each writer was conveying something relevant to endurance. This chapter presents a selection of these areas of texts under the sub headings of three main themes. The texts quoted here are fairly representative of the writing as a whole, rather than being outstanding examples in which unusual things are being said. Texts were selected for inclusion, and quotation, in this chapter, on the grounds of being representative of a common theme but expressing that theme in a particularly common, or a particularly clear, or a particularly insightful way.

This chapter will turn to the selected literature and look closely at what is being said or implied about endurance. Some of the texts will be examined in particular depth, in order that some deeper understanding of endurance may emerge. This will be done by a close reading in which I shall pay close attention to the structures of the language including the conflicts and oppositions which we find as experiences of endurance are narrated. Each theme which arises will also be discussed more broadly. The chapter will conclude by relating the discussion of the writing about women's running to the study as a whole, and our wider questions about the meaning of endurance for women runners. The selected themes arose naturally from the texts, and, once these themes had arisen, I then examined the text for the relationships which were being presented between factors arising in the accounts, such as between specific aspects of the environment and endurance. The three central themes presented here are: endurance and the environment, discussed in 3.2; endurance and transcendence, discussed in 3.3, and endurance and solidarity and isolation, discussed in 3.4. Within each of these themes complex relationships between the runner and the experience emerge, which shall be discussed in each of the following sections.

3.2 Endurance and the environment

On reading running narratives, it becomes evident that the location of a run is important. In some writing we read of the runner in harmony with the environment. In the poems of Grace Butcher (which could equally refer to distance running or a shorter run), for example, images of the runner and the environment, in an almost organic union.

I can run only where I am,
each step a new place of its own.
Nothing is more right than this:
the grass, the sky, and my body
in between, moving and beautiful. (Butcher, 1999, p102)

And in another poem she writes,

My hair is heavy with fog,
and my breathing is the force
that spins the universe. (Butcher, 1999, p108)

The experience of running has become cosmic in these poems. The runner has transcended ordinary life to unite with the cosmos.

The environment which the runner passes is often described as the running experience is narrated. The nature of running demands that there will always be movement through some sort of space, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Some narratives talk of circling the block. But often descriptions of the environment go beyond geographical descriptions and, as in Grace Butcher's poems, they include a sense of what it is to be running and breathing in that space.

Cate Terwilliger writes of two contrasting experiences of training runs in bad weather. In the first the bad weather intensifies the unpleasantness of a run. "By the time I hobbled to the end of that 21-mile run - under a grey sky, against a biting wind - I was ready to abandon the marathon entirely" (Terwilliger, 2001, p59). The physical tiredness which results in a sense of hobbling appears to be intensified by the greyness of the sky and the discomfort of the wind. As the sky and the wind are described in a negative way and placed alongside the abandonment the reader suspects that they were contributing factors in bringing Terwilliger close to no longer persevering. This, however, is not directly stated. The weather conditions are mentioned as an aside, as part of the experience leading to a state of mind. The distinction between being part of the experience and being

a direct cause is important here, if we are not to make naïve assumptions about causes of success and failure in endurance. We must also note that she did not abandon her marathon running, but persevered with her training.

In the second experience, she remains strong. "...I ran 11 miles of hilly blacktop through the Minnesota North Woods, the last three in a cold driving rain. But nothing touched me: I was warm and strong and, once again, sure." Terwilliger leaves the reader wondering why the second run appeared easier. By including the description of the hilly backdrop, she appears to suggest that it is not just the shorter length but the environment of the second run which enabled her to remain 'sure'. The environment is not portrayed sentimentally but is experienced realistically by Terwilliger as both unhelpful and as helpful to her running. Yet, in her description, we do find driving rain which should have caused her to feel cold, and might be thought to be a negative factor. This is suggested in the narrative as we read, "But nothing touched me...". Here, Terwilliger is presenting to us something of the paradoxical nature of the presence of varying landscape and weather factors affecting the runner.

Suzanne Case writes

I was excited to have 'discovered' this route for a long run. The trail wanders in and out of pine forest and open meadows, along the ever-present Lyell Fork. It goes out at least eight level miles with good footing before beginning to climb - a welcome change from the hills I usually ran in the Bay area. The whole stretch lay in that magical zone just before timberline thins out the trees to rock and snow, where the air is pure and the scenery spectacular at every turn. (Case, 2001, p64).

The visual spectacle, and the air quality create excitement for Case as she runs. The level part of the route creates a feeling of change from her usual route. The word 'magical' suggests that the experience felt removed from ordinary life. We might call this a transcendent experience. She felt herself to be running in a space which transcended ordinary space. The description of the run leaves aside any mention of moving legs or fatigue, giving the impression that Case did not feel tired but excited as she ran. She is almost floating through the magical space.

In Kris Whorton's narrative, we find a pleasant environment providing a sense of relief even on a 100 mile run. At this point in her narrative, everything in her experience is an aspect of her experience of endurance, as she is pushing on through physical and mental tiredness. Her description of events is useful for us here, as she expresses the feelings of becoming tired yet still persevering through that tiredness. Whorton writes,

We might be tired of running, tired of the trials, tired of our food and our shoes and our stink but still there would be too many miles and a whole dark night ahead of us. There would also be mountain laurel and wild azalea lining the trail, making clouds of sweet escape and cool streams to cross, to dip our bandannas in and be refreshed. (Whorton, 2001, p93).

We are beginning to see some direct links between the environment and endurance. In Whorton's 100 mile run many of the aspects of tiredness were experienced in relation to the features of the environment. She expresses her tiredness not just directly but also with the words, 'too many miles'. Whorton brings us into the experience and conveys to us the sense of moving forward by suggesting what it seemed that the future might hold. At this moment, she is tired of her situation and facing these miles and darkness. If Whorton stopped there, we would not feel we were reading about endurance but about suffering and despair. If she had collapsed with physical exhaustion and the mental experience of facing what really had proved to be too many miles and too much darkness, her narrative would have been one of being overpowered by the limits of her physical stamina and mental courage.

However, the tone of the narrative changes and aesthetic qualities of the running environment are brought into the description of how the run did continue. The miles and the darkness are counteracted by life and growth. The plants with their flowers are 'sweet escape', while escape provides the reader with images of liberation from suffering and difficulty, 'sweet' adds a pleasant aroma, in contrast to the stink mentioned earlier. The water provides refreshment, a relief of some of the unpleasant physical experiences which the couple are going through. The narrative presents more than merely visual images of these natural things and, by drawing a variety of senses into her narrative, Whorton is conveying an aesthetic experience that was physical.

Through her use of the expression 'tired of', Whorton has suggested more than a physical tiredness, but indicates that she and her husband had, at this stage, a feeling of being fed up by how things were, and by the oppressive number of miles and hours of night ahead. Her description of the environment provides a contrast to this which begins to tell us something of the mechanism of endurance which is being experienced. The weighty and oppressive experiences of physical suffering and hopelessness, are existing alongside opposing experiences of hope and life and beauty. The escape and refreshment is not just relief from physical difficulties but is also an absorbing experience which engages the senses of smell and touch and vision and taste in a variety of ways as the tired runners

pass through it.

As the narrative continues with the race, these contrasts also continue. Whorton contrasts, 'one foot in front of the other', with a repeated feeling that she would have liked to lie down in the grass and sleep. We find here a mechanism in which the experience of suffering occurs alongside hope and perseverance.

At the heart of Whorton's experience of endurance was the experience of the positive aesthetic qualities of the environment, and of passing through that environment into successful endurance. Once again there is no suggestion of a direct causal relationship between pleasant environmental factors and enduring tiredness. We find, on the other hand, that Whorton responds to, and experiences, the environment as part of endurance. Environmental factors, and physical factors are not entirely indistinguishable in her experience. But, in moments where there might be the possibility of despair, we are presented with the hope of continuity and even moments of joy.

Irene Reti also writes of the environment as it relates to the marathon which she was running. First she speaks of her nature as a natural part of the environment. Like everything around her, she is part of the natural world. She relates this to the pain she experiences as the running grows difficult.

My feet ached as they struck the hard road. My shoulders burned. Like my mother I knew I was of this earth.

And I ran. Pure creature I ran. (Reti, 2001, p235)

Later she writes

the miles flowed by. Nine. Ten. Thirteen. Fifteen. Eighteen. Grandma's Marathon was a hundred shades of green trees - dark fir, poplar, birch, aspen. mountain ash, spruce, red pine, cedar, tamarack, maple, jack pine, alder. (Reti, 2001, p236).

Here she contrasts our knowledge of how the miles really were with how they felt. She is not really noticing the individual progression of numbers. She does not describe an experience of not noticing that she is running, because she is noticing that she is moving forwards through her surroundings, but what she is passing is not distance, but environment. The way in which Reti provides a list of trees helps the reader to understand that a long distance is being covered. This indicates to the reader that demands were being placed on her body. It also suggests that she was absorbed by her interest in the types of trees she was passing, as well as their colours. Her intellect was engaged.

Reti was suffering. She was undergoing pain and there were heavy demands on her body,

but rather than relating despair and dropping out, she relates an experience of endurance. She portrays the experience as one in which she passed through a particular environment and was absorbed, intellectually and physically, by that environment. Her experience of endurance was of one which contained pain and difficulty, and a pleasurable absorption into the environment. Rather than a causal relationship, we read here of a paradoxical experience of perseverance.

So, we have found that the environment is related in much of the writing to the endurance as it is experienced. Each specific experience is moulded by a particular environment and the experience of passing through that environment. The environment is not presented as something which takes the mind of the runner away from the physical experience but is rather integral to that experience. The air is breathed and smelt, and felt around the body, flowers and trees absorb the intellect as well as providing escape or refreshing smells, mountains allow interesting views, and feelings of awe. The environment may hinder the runner, or may be beneficial, but it is impossible to run without a geographical location, and the selected narratives present it as a central aspect of the experience of endurance running. We can see that the environment is included along with the runner in the paradox of endurance, in which what could lead to despair, leads instead to life, hope and perseverance.

What is clear is that the environment does not cause successful distance running by creating a pleasant space for passing through. There have been a variety of views of causal relationships between the environment and athletic success in sport studies. These views are discussed in relation to running by John Bale and Joe Sang, in their book *Kenyan Running*. They are interested in disputing environmental determinism which, around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, gave undue prominence to environmental factors in explaining human behaviour (Bale and Sang, 1996, p142). As Bale and Sang find, elements of this remain, in what they consider to be racist attempts to explain Kenyan running success. They attribute unfounded claims about the benefits of training at high altitude to these views (p141-147). They also found similar claims had been used to explain the success of Finnish and Swedish runners in the mid twentieth century, where the climate and the beauty of the forests were given credit for middle and long distance running success (p144-145). So, writers have been, and still are, looking for unfair advantages that undermine the running success of national groups.

While Bale and Sang helpfully demonstrate the absurdity of presenting the environment as the dominant factor in successful distance running, they do not, however, reject environmental factors outright. Doing so, they say, would be “environmental blindness” (p146). Bale and Sang’s work is helpful for us here as they critique naive views of the role of the environment in distance running success, but accept the necessity of taking the environment into account when examining endurance, and other aspects of running.

We are finding the role of the environment in distance running to go beyond its physiological impact. We find aesthetic qualities, such as the beauty of the natural world, and spiritual qualities, like hope, alongside intellectual experiences of knowledge of the environment. In none of these cases have these factors been observed at a distance by the runner. For this reason, it is legitimate to say that the experience of endurance itself has possessed aesthetic and spiritual qualities and an intellectual aspect. (For discussion of the role of the aesthetic in the experience of sports performance see David Best *Philosophy and Human Movement*, 1978, p99ff.) This is still not a directly causal statement. We could not say that ugliness, hopelessness and dullness cause giving up before the end of a long run or race, while the opposite causes completion of a hoped for distance in a good time.

However, these factors may be important in our judgement of what endurance is. Could a woman who is suffering the physical stresses of a long run, and who is in despair, be said to be enduring? Or is despair similar to exhaustion in that its presence indicates a state of complete collapse? Hope and despair are factors which relate closely to the purpose of the running, with despair being closely related to a sense of pointlessness. Even if it were possible to complete an ultra-marathon in a state of despair, it would not be altogether satisfactory to label the achievement ‘endurance’, if the runner believed the experience to be purposeless. We find here that the positive associations of the word ‘endurance’ are vital when judging an experience to be endurance. Here, what we might call the meaning of endurance is not just the significance of endurance, which we spoke of initially, but also the use of the word endurance. The word endurance is being used, and we are happy with its use, in circumstances in which a positive attitude is taken. At the end of the previous chapter, we noted that women who run are making a choice to endure. That element of choice was also found to be present where the suffering was oppressive and involuntary. Where there is not an element of choice, it seems that the word ‘endurance’ would be inappropriately used.

As the environment in this running literature is the context of the type of the endurance which we are discussing, we are finding that in this instance the context of endurance cannot be separated from endurance itself. Endurance requires suffering, even where that suffering is monotonous and lacking in intensity, but the suffering and the endurance can be seen to occur in opposition to one another. Where the contextual description is largely positive, we find that the negative aspects of the suffering are masked by the strength of the endurance. The context of endurance in distance running is characterised by moving through space, and so is impacted by whatever also occupies that space. The negative and positive aspects of this experience appear to position themselves on either side of the mechanism of the struggling opposites - endurance and suffering.

We have seen that the experience of the environment is included along with physical factors in the paradox of endurance in these women's narratives of distance running. We have found the environment to be an essential element of endurance in these narratives. The role of the environment in distance running goes beyond its physiological impact. We have found aesthetic qualities, such as the beauty of the natural world and spiritual qualities, like hope, alongside intellectual experiences of knowledge of the environment. The experience of endurance itself has possessed aesthetic and spiritual qualities and an intellectual aspect. Examining the environment in endurance as it is experienced, has enabled us to see the paradoxical nature of endurance, in which there is no endurance without suffering, and in which, that which could lead to despair, leads instead to life, hope and perseverance. We have also seen that the importance of the environment in endurance reinforces the contextual nature of endurance, which was discussed in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2, we looked at endurance in contexts of people's lives in the Early Church, such as the life of Jesus, the life of Paul and the lives of the martyrs and others in the Early Church community. These contexts determined the way in which theological understandings of endurance came to be shaped. We saw, for example, that where severe suffering was inevitable, suffering could be over emphasised in discussions of endurance. We can see, therefore, that it is important to examine endurance in very specific contexts, such as in the context of female distance running, in order to most accurately capture its contextual nature.

3.3 Endurance and transcendence

Another key theme which arises from the narratives is the theme of transcendence. By this I mean references or allusions in the texts to something which is beyond ordinary life or experience. We looked above at Butcher's poems which connected the runner to cosmic forces.

My hair is heavy with fog,
and my breathing is the force
that spins the universe. (Butcher, 1999, p108)

We also found a sense of the transcendent in Case's mountain run, which was discussed above in relation to the environment. In both of these texts, the transcendent is related to the interaction between the runner and the environment. In some of the narratives the runner transcends everyday experience in thoughts relating to life and death. For instance, Case writes,

Then, to my rhythmic steps, I silently uttered the rhythmic words of what I could remember of the Kaddish, the ancient Aramaic prayer that Jews recite to honor the dead, yet which speaks not a word of death but only of the sanctity of life, the blessedness, the grace of life. Hallowed is life, transcending even the darkest moments of the soul. (Case, 2001, p66.)

As she runs, she affirms life, through the rhythmic prayer. The rhythm of running brings her to her thoughts of the transcendent nature of life. She is conveying an impression that she felt glad to be alive, and yet also something beyond that. She felt that life itself was sacred, and experienced a spiritual insight into the Kaddish prayer and the doctrine of the sanctity of life which continues from Jewish into later Christian thought. As she is reciting the prayer in time to her running steps, the reader is left with the impression that her activity is itself a part of that sacred vitality; that her life and movement is hallowed by God.

Sister Marion Irvine is a nun who began running marathons in her fifties and found herself winning. For her, the experience of running is secondary to her religious life, yet she writes of its spiritual impact. Like Case, Irvine discusses an association between running and the vitality of life. Both authors relate this vitality of life to holiness and God. "I truly believe God created us to be fully alive, to experience life. Prior to running, I wasn't experiencing life, wasn't alive inside" (Kislevitz, 1998, p145). Irvine relates this first to the wonderful scenery and wildlife which she has had the opportunity to be involved with through running. She goes on to say,

It gives a new meaning to the word spiritual. I'm not talking about organized religion here, I am describing the spiritual process of getting in touch with one's self, i.e. our spirit, our inner self, our person. You don't have to go to church to experience spirituality. Running can bring you to that place.

We find in Irvine's story a spiritual transcendence. She does say at another point in her text, not quoted here, that she has had out-of-body experiences while running, but we can also see that the experience of running itself has had a transcendent quality. While running she has felt more in touch with herself, as she believes God wants her to be. There is a sense of purity in her portrayal of being alive, as she relates it to creation, evoking the Judaeo-Christian notion of human beings created in the image of God, but spoiling themselves by behaving immorally.

In a different sort of transcendence, many narratives relate the stories of women who have gone beyond restrictive social structures through running. It is often the experience of prolonged training which has enabled this liberation, but it also appears to emerge as the runner is enduring a challenging run. Laurel Starkey expresses this sentiment in her poem, 'Women who Run'. As the poem begins, Starkey appears to be describing a particular race, but her description of the women begins to take on a broader significance. She writes,

...as women who run have breaths
in accord with the banners of triumph.
from many cultures, race and tongues
these free spirits
have found a common foothold
in womankind... (Starkey, 1999, p271)

Running women are portrayed as triumphant because they are free. This triumph is shared with women around the world, providing a solidarity between women who run. The poem finishes with the words, "freely and forever." Starkey's poem is a particular example of social transcendence as she speaks of women's freedom so that it takes on a global significance and even enters the realms of eternity. She does not mention what these women are free from but suggests that womankind might have a shared experience of lacking freedom, so that the sight of a group of women setting out on a race in the mountains would move the poet to reflect on the freedom which they are expressing.

Another sort of transcendence which arises in the literature is runners breaking physical boundaries. The women reflect on how they have become runners who can physically endure greater running distances than they could previously have imagined. Terwilliger,

for example, reflects on running a marathon: “this is what matters on the inside: The [sic]chance, during months of training, to know yourself in weakness and strength, and to persevere. As Benyo wrote, to confront your own lions, and be your own hero.” Terwilliger relates the experience of enduring to confronting your own weaknesses, and suggests that it is from that experience of confronting weaknesses and fears that your strength is able to arise.

Karen J. Hall also writes of her surprise at how she transformed her life through training and running a marathon. She has gone beyond her expectations, and beyond the expectations of those who knew her or people like her.

That my depression had lifted was empowering and frightening at the same time. I ran compulsively as if the depression was right behind me...
...And it's with the grace and faith running has brought me that I walk through each day, confident that all I need is in my legs and in my heart...
Who would predict that a chronically depressed, sedentary lesbian would summon her will to rise from the couch and within a little over one year complete a marathon? (Hall, 2001, ppl 10-113)

Shan Worthington, whose story is written by Gail Waesche Kislevitz, says, “I now know I have the stamina and the perseverance to do whatever I have to in life.” (Kislevitz, 1998, p281). This is a common feeling in the accounts of distance runners. Successful distance running has led to Worthington having a knowledge of how she responds to difficulties, and that knowledge has given her the confidence to believe that, if seemingly unsurpassable difficulties arise in other areas of her life, she will be able to endure them. Worthington, however, relates this sense of having the ability to transcend what might have been limits in her life to the experience of transcending life in distance running. We read, “When I run, I block out the world and everything I am feeling is centred in that moment in time. It's a different level of consciousness, I can become anything I want to be, I become one with myself.” (Kislevitz, 1998) Portrayed here is a change which takes place in Worthington's awareness of herself and her location. “[A]nothing I want to be” gives the impression that at other times she faces demands, from other people, to be other than she would want to be. Read alongside this, the phrase “block out the world” suggests that what is pushed from her consciousness is not her immediate surroundings themselves, but the complexities of her life, and the gaze of others upon her and her life. In this context, “I become one with myself”, can be read, not only as a sense of being one with the moving running body, but also becoming one with her own will for herself: how she will be, and what she will do.

Worthington's story of how she became a marathon runner describes how starting to run longer distances emerged from her unhappy divorce, problems with criminal activity by her boss at work, which ultimately led to the murder of her dog, and the resounding shock and grief. In contrast to those events, her running was sociable, pleasant and successful. In order to run, she had to be well organised with work and child care, so that even starting a run would be the result of overcoming hurdles. Through running, she made close friends. The last seven miles of her first marathon were extremely difficult. She remembers thinking that this was harder than anything she had ever tried to do, including childbirth. I found the comparison between running a marathon and childbirth to occur frequently in the writing which I read (it was not selected as a theme, as it occurred in the context of different themes, rather than indicating a distinct set of relationships). She writes, "I thought about how I had made it through my three deliveries, one push at a time. So, now... take this marathon one step at a time" (p279.) She completed the marathon with a good time and relates, "I felt God smiled on me that day. All the stress of the last few years lifted off my shoulders like a cloud passing by" (p280.) The mention of God is unexpected in the narrative. She uses God to refer to a sense that the unpleasant part of her life was over and the future would be more positive. The narrative suggests that by passing through the hardest thing which she had ever done she had changed the course of her life.

In theological terms, we could say that Worthington's narrative suggests that she had a sense of being reconciled to God, and that the reconciliation took place through passing through what she calls 'torture'. This passing through torture is not, however, a passive experience but active endurance. Before she mentions God, she remarks, "My efforts paid off, and I was rewarded." The use of the passive for 'rewarded' implies an Other who hands out rewards for effort. Worthington has undergone suffering, but was well-prepared and put in a great deal of effort. Through her effort, she had a sense of attaining a spiritual reward and being reconciled to God. The experience of transcending life, which she describes experiencing when running, suggests a feeling of autonomy, which contrasts with the demands placed on her in other areas of life. At the same time, her religious perspective suggests that that transcendence takes her beyond autonomy to a spiritual awareness of her life's journey, the positive and negative aspects of that journey, and the possibility of the role of God as a transcendent being, judging and intervening in her life.

No claim is being made here about the distinctiveness of these themes which are found in

women's running writing as compared to writing by and about men. Although we might find writing on men's running to express similar topics, the focus here is on women's writing and some of the themes which emerge could not possibly occur in men's writing, such as the comparison between women's experiences of marathon running and their experiences of childbirth. The other aspect of these experiences which may be of particular relevance to women is the transcendence of social difficulties. Social difficulties which may be small are faced by many women today, even in our liberal western culture. Whether these are caused by the biological circumstances unique to women, or to implicit or explicit sexism, they have been found, by psychologists, to affect individual women and their mental health.

We read frequently in women's running narratives that they feel free from personal and social burdens. Psychologists have also found that running can alleviate depression and anxiety in many people. There are claims that people derive a sense of mastery from their achievement which enables them to have more control over their lives. Although the word 'mastery' sits uncomfortably with discussion of women's experience, many women's running narratives also reveal some sort of strengthening of the will and regaining of autonomy emerging through running.

In the majority of accounts, it is the periods of training or leisure running which provide this enhanced sense of autonomy (we will refer briefly to this point in Chapter 4). We do, however, have good cause to relate this to endurance. In several of the above narratives, we found the runners discovering their strengths through distance running, and claiming that it was the discovery of perseverance which provided them with their new found autonomy. We have also found this sense of autonomy arising while experiencing long distance runs.

To refer to this autonomy as mastery is problematic here, not just because of the masculinity of the term but also because the idea of personal power appears to be in conflict with the images of a transcendent reality beyond the individual which have emerged in running experiences. We found that the runners were gaining a sense of authentic being but also of being reconciled to something greater, such as God. While this would appear to conflict with personal autonomy, there need be no real conflict. It would appear from the narratives that the experience of endurance often carries with it a sense of perspective on life, and that, rather than individuals coming to view their lives as

controlled by a transcendent being, the runners retain their previously held beliefs, but come to a more positive view of themselves. In this way, the runner gains a sense of power but also of responsibility.

Here, we find the active aspect of endurance. To passively experience suffering is not to endure. For instance, Worthington's sense of reconciliation with God arose from her having taken on the difficulties which she faced in the marathon and having overcome them; Hall contrasts images of herself as a passive recipient of life, depressed and rooted to her couch, with active images of herself as a distance runner; Terwilliger talks about confronting weaknesses and persevering. These and others are active images of the runner confronting and overcoming suffering. This brings us once again to the dichotomy between hope and despair and the sense of purpose which endurance appears to require. These runners are performing purposeful activities, and they are overcoming the suffering involved in endurance and are living with the positive legacy of this experience. In the context of this project, we can think of Paul, and his own active engagement with his tasks, and his exhortation to the Christian to actively persevere against difficulties rather than just accept them.

A recurrent metaphor in women's running writing is running as 'flying'. This flying metaphor expresses the feeling of liberation, along with personal strength and ability, while at the same time indicating transcendence. The metaphor also indicates to us something of the contrast which can be found between two types of running literature. One type aims to give objective scientific accounts of running which might enable improvement of performance and times. However, it does not provide an account of the liberating aspect of running which might cause women to use the metaphor of flying. The other type of writing tends to occur in a narrative format and allows room for interpretation and interpretative metaphors or poetry. As our examination of women's running writing reveals that the experience of endurance itself requires a context and many conflicting aspects of suffering and perseverance, we can begin to see that the scientific style of writing fails to present accurate accounts of endurance as it is lived through, because it reduces the running experience to fit within narrow confines. The scientific writing fails to understand that the experience of sport is related to the whole person, complete with philosophical foundations, which may be theological. Taking into account this nature of the person, is to consider the athlete to be a moral agent with beliefs, making choices and having experiences. We will see in Chapter 4, that sport psychology

does begin to touch on sport as something which is participated in and experienced, rather than just something which a physical body must train for and perform.

Here, in this poem the writer speaks of 'flying'.

The hill rises now,
but I am all
powerful to know it.
I reach the crest
breathing hard, two blocks left,
my legs kick in--
I'm flying. (Moore, 1999, pp272-273.)

While the scientific accounts of running are based on the assumption that the reader runs in order to achieve highly, many of the narrative, interpretative accounts portray running as a flight from any urge towards countable progress. It becomes a liberation from restriction to what might otherwise be failure to achieve or failure to share fellowship with other runners or the natural world: with success being understood as a pleasurable running experience.

"...I run
Past all my old failures and those yet to be
Past my moody, brooding temperament,
Past weariness of soul
I run...
For a time
I simply am
I run
Exquisite harmony
As I move with fluid motion
Blissfully
I run." (Seely, 2000, p175.)

So we find that endurance as an experience transcends the tendency of modern sports writing and thinking to be scientific and measured. We are finding indicators that the distance running woman may have the possibility of remaining autonomous and alive, and of gaining a broader perspective on life. In some of the writing this has included a broader perspective on God.

There have been many challenges to the reductionist tendencies in modern discourse on sport (For more on some of these critiques in the area of text see David L. Andrews 'Posting up: French Post-Structuralism and the critical analysis of contemporary sporting

culture' in Jay Coakley and Eric Dunning eds. *Handbook of Sports Studies*, Sage Publications, 2000, pp106-137). Writing about running in training manuals does, however, sometimes include a more realistic and well rounded picture of running. Cathy Shipton (in her book written with Liz McColgan) includes, in her marathon training manual, an element of that broader humanity which we have found in the narratives. In the introduction, she writes,

For me the key to successful distance training is a flexible balance between technical objectivity and personal self awareness... the aim of this book is not only to provide information but also to encourage each one of us to become our own very personal trainer. (Shipton, 2000, p.vii)

The mention of self awareness and of encouragement indicate the writer's understanding that to write about how to run must involve the psychological - or perhaps even spiritual - welfare of the woman who runs. While many women runners do write of hope for success in training and racing against others, this success does not appear to stand alone as representative of their running experience, nor does it appear to reflect their experience of endurance in particular.

In this section, we have found that endurance in running was associated with transcendence in several ways. There was the transcendence of life, which enabled a spiritual sense of reflection on issues of life and death; the transcendence of social boundaries; the transcendence of physical boundaries; the transcendence of the runner's own life, and the transcendence of expectations. These areas, in which runners experienced transcending the daily limits of life, were seen to lead to alternative senses of the runner's self and the world. We found runners experiencing a sense of reconciliation, a sense of autonomy and self-understanding, and also a feeling of flying. We have also found, in examining transcendence, the active aspect of endurance as something which requires the will of the runner and activity in the face of difficulty.

3.4 Endurance and solidarity and isolation

Another theme which arises from women's narratives on distance running is the theme of solidarity, and with it the related theme of isolation. For instance, Whorton was running with her husband and her sense of solidarity was with him. In other narratives, we read of runners feeling solidarity with members of their running club, or total strangers who are

running a marathon with them. Whorton writes of her thoughts and feelings towards the end of the 100 mile race.

My heart felt so full of miles, of night, and green, happiness and relief and success. I thought, 'How blessed I am to breath and run and live with all of my strength of body and soul and mind and to trust in myself that I am able. How lucky I am to have a love who is with me every mile, suffering and smiling, craving beer and a hamburger, a nap, a shower, sleep and peace, and clean clothes. (Whorton, 2001, p94)

As her run is ending, she uses terminology which alludes to the transcendent, she talks about being blessed and about the soul. She also has a positive sense of her own capabilities, and writes of this in the same spiritual tone. She moves from here into the joy of having her husband sharing the run with her. The solidarity of the experience is intensified in her writing by her choice of the words 'a love' to describe him at this point in the narrative.

It is the experience of shared endurance which brings her to this experience of solidarity. Whorton presents two images of endurance. She first reflects on her own strength, referring not just to the body, but to mind and soul, implying a continuous difficulty which she has overcome, and reminding us of the complete tiredness which she previously described. She then describes her husband as 'suffering and smiling'. Her husband passes through the suffering with a positive outlook. His solidarity in endurance has enabled their togetherness to pass beyond an everyday partnership.

Irvine, the nun who became a successful marathon runner, talks about a different sort of solidarity when she discusses the change that has taken place in her understanding through the experience of distance running. In Irvine's case, she does not share the running with those with whom she feels solidarity. They have distinct experiences from her, and perhaps she does not even know them.

Prior to running, I had little patience with people's frailties and shortcomings, never having experienced my own physical limitations. But now that I've been battered and bruised and stressed to the test, it's as if I've finally joined the human race, reached the level of humanity where I feel compassion for my fellow person. I know what it's like to suffer and hurt. (Kislevitz, 1998, p145.)

Irvine is directly relating endurance to solidarity. She has experienced hardships, and has endured them successfully, which has led to her joining 'the human race'. Solidarity has arisen from the experience of endurance. But, again, the relationship between endurance and solidarity should not really be described as directly causal. The solidarity lies in the

fact that other members of the human race have also experienced suffering. They are united in their suffering.

When Irvine talks about the test, and her own limitations, we find an impression, not of a victim of suffering, but of someone who persevered as far as possible. It is this aspect of the suffering that she highlights as the achievement which has enabled her to attain human status, both as a member of the human race and as having a particular level of humanity. Joining the human race and reaching a particular level of humanity are slightly distinct in this account. One is to do with being identified with a particular group, while the other concerns having a particular moral outlook. Solidarity in suffering has changed Irvine's moral outlook, rendering her more patient and compassionate.

We read above of Irvine's experience of running as spiritual - "...I am describing the spiritual process of getting in touch with one's self, i.e. our spirit, our inner self, our person... Running can bring you to that place."

Now we can see that that spirituality, does not begin and end with the self, although the reference here is to the self. Running marathons has brought Irvine to a place where she is a person in solidarity with others. We found above that she was presenting images of being alive in the way, in her view, in which God intended. Although we might expect a nun to be asking theological questions of her activities, and about herself. There is an implication in Irvine's narrative that she also had a sense of being reconciled to God. She indicates that before she became a runner, she had failed to have real compassion for others, and did not share the view that other people require compassion. Her endurance in running had led her to experience life as she believed that God intended. The idea of humanity and solidarity fill out that experience further, as Irvine has spoken of the experience of enduring in solidarity with other human beings as the same experience as that which brings her to life as God intended. She is alive and reconciled to God.

The sense of isolation which often appears in women's writing on distance running is not always distinct from the solidarity experienced. Helen Spriggs, whose story is told by Julie Welch, talks of the isolation of marathon running,

I always run marathons on my own. You're there. You're among thousands of people. You identify with everybody. But it's one of the loneliest of times because there's only you who can get you over that finish line, and I mirror that to my diabetes; you've got your family, health care team, friends, but it is only you who has the diabetes, it is only you who can control it. (Welch, 2000, p36)

Here, we find the isolation of endurance: Spriggs refers to the solidarity of the marathon experience when she says, “you identify with everybody”. Yet it is each individual who holds power and responsibility. The autonomy associated with running becomes the burden of isolation. Yet the phrase “...you who can get over the finish line” implies the strength of the runner as well as the struggle. The whole paradox of endurance is evoked in this portrayal of the isolated runner. There is a terrible physical struggle, mirrored by the diabetes, and the personal nature of that struggle. There is also the solidarity of supportive others who are also struggling. But ultimately there is the uniqueness of each runner’s personal experience with the personal difficulties and also the personal success of crossing the finish line.

The uniqueness of each runner’s struggle also comes in the emotional aspect of running and the other aspects of endurance which we have found to oppose one another in the struggle between suffering and endurance. Terwilliger for example reports that, “Struggling between miles 22 and 23, head down, I am beyond encouragement. My knees feel like bags of rocks, grinding and grinding.” (Terwilliger, 2001, p60) Case, in the same way, writes - “So on this day on the Lyell Fork it all came together- death, love, health, beauty, and nature.” (Case, 2001, p66)

Here we can note that these experiences are unique to each runner. They incorporate many of the aspects of endurance which we have found in other writing. In the suffering and in the joy, each runner is alone, whether she is surrounded by others or running by herself. In the same way Josie, whose story is told by Lynn Seely experienced deeply personal highs and lows associated with her running. Through running, Josie came to have a new understanding of life and of how it was possible to be. She says of people she has come to admire,

...They live every moment inside the *joy* of life even when that moment may be filled with pain.

‘I am able to run again...I try to live every moment inside the joy of what I am able to do now even though I am so much slower... (Seely, 2000, p72)

These examples demonstrate the presence of each woman’s unique story as she experiences running and as she experiences the difficulties involved in running. The joy and pain are directly experienced only by one individual, and (in the same way) the perseverance to cross the finish line is unique to each individual.

Jennifer Sage, as told by Waesche Kislevitz, talks about the positive aspect of isolation

as intensifying her sense of autonomy and achievement. Her perseverance was hers alone,

No words can describe what the marathon did for me. A sense of accomplishment, completion, and relief all rolled into one. It was my moment of glory and I soaked it all up. This day belonged to me. Will I do it again? Definitely. Why? Because no one can run a marathon for me. If I don't put in the time, the training, the pain, and the effort, it doesn't get done. I own it (Kislevitz, 2003, p150.)

The isolation of endurance in running is broken only by the sense of solidarity in suffering which the runners relate and the support of family, friends and strangers. The social context becomes a part of endurance in much of the writing. It is a context which is always isolating. For this reason, it is best described not as independent or dependent but as interdependent. The runner may experience endurance as an interdependent woman, aware of her solidarity with others, but is always alone facing the conflict between perseverance and difficulty.

In this section, we have found that both solidarity and isolation are experienced as aspects of endurance in women's' distance running. We found solidarity arising from the experience of the suffering inherent in distance running and from sharing endurance with other runners whether known or unknown. We also found a sense of solidarity occurring from a more mature understanding of the suffering and endurance of others arising from the distance running experience. Further, we have found a paradoxical sense of isolation arising as runner's each undergo a unique struggle, in which difficulties conflict with the possibility of persevering through those difficulties, and in which persevering through those difficulties is the choice and responsibility of each individual. Both of these themes were also found in the texts examined in Chapter 2. In the contexts discussed in Chapter 2, the solidarity was with other suffering Christians and with Jesus in his suffering. Isolation was also apparent in the contexts discussed in Chapter 2, in cases in which individual stories were told in which personal choices were made, as well as in the texts which indicated the idea that each person had a particular vocation to fulfil.

3.5 Endurance in the narratives and the broader study.

In each of these sections, we have found aspects of what it is to experience endurance for women who run. We have discovered the importance of the environment as the context of endurance and as an integral part of the struggle between the difficulties and the

continuity of perseverance that characterise endurance. We have discovered the transcendence that can be experienced as part of endurance, in which women may encounter God, or themselves, and in which many express a sense of redemption or liberation which takes them beyond the boundaries of their everyday lives. We have also found that endurance may be experienced as involving solidarity, a sense of companionship with others or deeper solidarity with those who suffer in other ways. It may also involve an isolation which affirms the uniqueness of each individual's story and of each individual's responsibility and challenge.

We are beginning to form a deeper understanding of how women who run portray endurance, and endurance as they experience it, as an event and as a changing experience of human life. The relevance of these experiences for a theology of sport is growing increasingly apparent as we can begin to see endurance in sport emerging as counteracting suffering, and as involving redemption, liberation, encounter with divinity, solidarity and compassion, isolation and responsibility. These narratives are reinforcing the messages of the Biblical texts when they spoke about the importance of endurance. For sports which are based on endurance, the forms of endurance we have found in sport are not unlike the forms which are expressed in the Biblical texts. This suggests that we could legitimately claim that endurance sports are more than play, but that they could have a positive role in the spiritual growth of human beings. We shall return to these points in Chapter 5. Although we are building this enlightened understanding of endurance, the direct relationship between the runner's theological foundations and these moments of endurance, will be helpful for exploring, more specifically Christian foundations in specific case studies. This will be done in the next chapter, in which I will also begin to indicate how the three prongs of this study, may be brought together, for a more fully enlightened understanding of endurance in the context of women's running.

Chapter Four: Women's Experience of Endurance in Four Case Studies

Part 1. Introduction and methods

We shall now turn to the aspect of the study which is more specifically empirical. In this chapter, I shall describe the methods used to develop the four case studies, and shall examine what arose from those studies, and what can be said about endurance from this aspect of the study. What can the experience of our four case study women contribute to our understanding of endurance? This chapter consists of two parts. Part 1 discusses introductory and methodological issues, including how the method used in the case studies was established. Part 2 has two sections. The first section relates and analyses each case study in turn. The second section draws out key themes relating to endurance, from these studies, and offers deeper thematic analysis of the moments of endurance.

In all, eleven marathon runners participated in this area of the study. The runner's thoughts were gathered in a variety of ways, all with the aim of finding out more about endurance. It was necessary in the design of the case studies to be aware that the aim was not to study the thoughts of the runners as an end in itself, but as an indicator of what endurance really means. The discussion below highlights both the key decisions made and their motivation, as well as discussing the methodology followed on by the methods deployed.

4.1.1 The literature: research into runners in psychology

One area of interest for researchers into the psychology of running has been the psychological characteristics and mood states of runners. Runners of both elite and non elite status have been studied in this way, as have runners performing at various distances. These studies have found a slightly higher degree of introversion amongst marathon runners, than in the general population. Studies involving mood state profiles have found elite marathon runners to score below average on tension, depression, anger, confusion and fatigue, while at the same time recording high on vigour. This is known as the iceberg profile. These states and personality profiles refer to the group as a whole, but the research does allow for individuals who do not fit with the profiles (Morgan et al, 1988, Morgan, 2000, p249).

Other studies examine the benefits of running to the psychological state of health of the runner. Levels of training and their effect on performance are also of interest to researchers, as are the related areas of exercise addiction and the 'runner's high'. In this way the research covers optimum performance issues, as well as the role of running in the lives of individuals.

Another area of interest for sport psychologists is the thoughts of runners as they participate in events, and the relationship between these thoughts and performance. This research has primarily investigated the attentional focus of the runners. Early studies differentiated specifically between the cognitive strategies of elite and non-elite runners, finding elite runners to use the strategy that was referred to as associative while non-elite runners used dissociative categories. These studies needed to divide thoughts into associative and dissociative (e.g. Masters and Ogles, 1998). These terms were first used in this way in a 1978 study by W.P. Morgan (Sachs, 1984). Morgan used the term 'associative' to refer to thoughts directly focused on bodily sensation, and the term 'dissociative' to refer to thoughts deliberately used to cut a runner off from bodily sensation (Sachs, 1984, p290). Research has also been carried out which investigates associative and dissociative thoughts as they occur in other sports (Couture, Jerome and Tihanyi, 1999; Scott, Scott, Bedic and Dowd, 1999; Clingman and Hilliard, 1990).

Since Morgan's original work, many studies involving runners have been carried out which use the terms more broadly. No real consensus has been achieved as to how such research should be carried out, and how runners thoughts may be effectively gathered, categorised and analysed. Generally, we can say that the term 'associative' refers to those thoughts to do with the physical reality of running, and the term 'dissociative' to thoughts about other things. Some researchers have criticised these categories for being simplistic, and have carried out studies in which they have split each of those categories into smaller groups. Although this presents a more realistic understanding of runners' thought processes, the differences between these studies prevents the studies from building upon one another to create a body of knowledge on the subject. Morgan, who also notes these difficulties, suggests that methodological differences prevent early work from being expanded. While this is certainly the case, it is also helpful to consider the reasons underlying the choices of differing methodologies which have been used to examine this subject area.

Distinct research designs in this area are leading to distinct findings, which at times have been contradictory. Stevinson and Biddle suggest that more complex classification systems will yield more satisfactory results (Stevinson and Biddle, 1998, p231). However, it would appear that, the more complex the classification system, the more the researcher is imposing his or her views on the data gathered, and on what might be related to what for each runner. At the same time the discourse on classification systems has obscured the important problems of incompatible methods. The incompatibility of methods has also been noted by Morgan, who has carried out several studies which combine qualitative and quantitative methods, and has correctly pointed out that purely quantitative studies remain inadequate for grappling with the nature of this problem (Morgan, 2000, p300-301). We will turn now to some of the categories which have been used for classifying thoughts and identifying cognitive strategies.

Stevinson and Biddle, for example, have differentiated categories of inward and outward monitoring, in both the associative and the dissociative categories. (Stevinson and Biddle, 1998). The inward monitoring category includes focus on task relevant bodily sensations such as, "fatigue, muscle soreness, breathing, perspiration, cramp, nausea, blisters". The outward monitoring category includes focus on task relevant factors to do with external conditions, "conditions, route, strategy, drinks stations, split times, distance markers." The inward distraction category includes task irrelevant thoughts not directly related to the surrounding environment, such as, "daydreams, fantasies, maths puzzles, imagining music, poetry, philosophy." The outward distraction category includes task irrelevant thoughts related to the runner's surroundings, such as, "scenery, environment, spectators, other runners, fancy dress, chatting."

These categories are still problematic, and represent the researchers' attempt to make decisions about which thoughts are and are not relevant or irrelevant to the task of a particular run. While several studies have used an expanded associative category, which includes thoughts about the environment which relate to the running terrain, a wide range of topics are still included in the category of dissociative. As the term 'dissociative' normally indicates task irrelevant thoughts, it is inappropriate to apply it to thoughts which are not generally immediately related to racing, but which, to a specific individual may have a direct relevance to the race. If we are to increase our understanding of how the runner's attention works during a race, then the crucial categories by which we divide their thoughts, should not be according to what the researcher constitutes as relevant to

the race, but what is relevant for the runner. While, on the one hand, imposing their own feelings upon the runners' thoughts, there are, on the other hand, areas in which Stevinson and Biddle, for example, appear to allow each runner to make important decisions as to whether he or she experienced 'hitting the wall', and do not explain whether there was any attempt made to substantiate runners' claims in a coherent way.

We can see, in the categories of Stevinson and Biddle, that they have assumed knowledge of what thoughts would be relevant and which would be irrelevant to running, for a particular runner. Let us imagine two elite runners running a marathon. One runner remembers a trip to the zoo in which she saw a jaguar. The moment of distraction might reflect wandering attention and result in a moment of slowing down. The other runner remembers her training sessions and the images she has been working on with the coach. She remembers the image of a jaguar smoothly moving in on its prey, and as in her training sessions, she uses the image in order to increase her leg turnover rate, and to encourage herself to quickly skim the ground on each step. By classifying both runners' thoughts at that moment as 'fantasy' and as dissociative, the researchers would be missing an important distinction. While the first runner is thinking about the zoo, the second is fully involved in her running. The distinction could only be picked up through awareness of the personal associations of jaguars for each runner.

In a useful study of runner's cognitive styles, Helgo Schomer has differentiated ten mental category sub-classifications. These are '1 Feelings and affects', '2 Body monitoring', '3 Command and instruction', '4 Pace monitoring', '5 Environmental feedback', '6 Reflective activity thoughts', '7 personal problem solving', '8 Work, career and management', '9 Course information', '10 Talk and conversational chatter' (Schomer 1986). Schomer's study has, however, also failed to take into account unexpected relationships between thoughts and the race, for specific runners. If a runner were to discuss with another runner, for example, the importance of that particular race in his or her running career, that would fall into category 10, and be counted as irrelevant to the race. As with our previous example, any affects of this potentially motivating conversation, would appear to the researcher to emerge randomly in a period during which the runner was engaged in chatter. The researcher would have missed a connection by failing to acknowledge the integrity of thought and action.

The struggle to find categories for the thoughts of runners has not been satisfactorily

concluded. One reason for this is that thoughts which might appear to be dissociative may, in a specific instance, relate to a central aspect of a runner's view of his or her own purpose for running, and the opposite could occur in thoughts appearing to be associative. This is problematic where the researcher generates a theory about which types of thought are relevant or irrelevant to runners as they run. Without a much broader picture of an individual runner's understanding of a particular run or race, it is impossible to know what type of thoughts would bear on that individual's performance as 'distraction' or 'monitoring' (dissociative or associative).

As there is no adequate agreement as to what would be and what would not be a particular category of thought, discussions of what kind of cognitive strategy is being used at what moment become impossible. The terms associative and dissociative are being used to discuss subtly different things in each investigation. This occurs because these classification systems require researchers to impose their own feelings upon another person's thoughts. We can see by the nature of the terms associative and dissociative that links between actions and thoughts and experiences are being explored. The idea that these links would be identical for each runner is fundamentally flawed. These struggles with categorisation are taking place before these, and other methodological difficulties with investigating this area, have been adequately resolved.

As with any area of study, the thoughts of distance runners raise specific research problems for the investigator. In this area we find that entirely quantitative methods are being attempted when the issue being studied involves the linking of meanings. This is the case in Stevinson and Biddle's study. The problem of how to gather data in this area is related to these questions to a degree, but is also caused by the nature of endurance events as long. The length of these events means that retrospective material may be unreliable because the runner is asked to remember what thoughts he or she had at different times. The alternative of gathering thoughts from runners during a race may be intrusive, to the extent of also making the data unreliable as the experience of the runner is changed by a recording device or researcher.

These problems need not be as great if the researchers acknowledged in which specific respects their data could be said to be reliable and in which unreliable, and limited their claims accordingly.

The problems of reliability were addressed in a study by Sacks et al. who questioned

ultra-marathoners at intervals during a race (Sacks, Milvoy, Perry, et al., 1981). The runners were directly questioned during the race in order to avoid retrospective reports. The researchers were not attempting to answer the same type of questions about associative and dissociative thoughts as previous researchers, but did raise questions about these cognitive strategies amongst other questions. Two of the points which they raise are helpful for our discussion. One is that runners appeared unwilling to report on the contents of their daydreams. The second is that the runners had periods of time during which they reported not being focused on anything, and so were engaged in neither associative nor dissociative thought. These two factors led to more reports of associative thoughts, than appear to have really occurred. Although these findings emerge from an ultramarathon context, they do suggest that secret daydreams, and moments of drifting thought, may occur in marathon runners. These thoughts would not be counted in a quantitative study, while associative thoughts, which are easy for runners to report and admit to, would be counted. In such cases the researchers would get a false impression of the amounts of thoughts of different types which had occurred.

We have primarily discussed research which examines the cognitive strategies of distance runners, and in particular marathon runners. One aspect of this body of research that is of interest to this particular project is the frequent tendency to focus on the moment at which a runner hits, or potentially hits 'the wall'. The concept of hitting the wall is referred to as an experience of runners and is of interest to physiologists as well as to psychologists. The psychological research into hitting the wall, has largely aimed to examine associative and dissociative strategies in relation to these moments. Hitting the wall is a feeling of extreme tiredness, weakness and mental confusion said to occur to marathon runners towards the end of the race. This fatigue can come on suddenly, particularly at around 18 to 22 miles into the marathon. Physiologists suggest that muscle glycogen depletion is partially responsible for this sensation (Wilmore and Costill, 1999, p146). Glycogen stored in muscles is the primary energy source used by muscles in running. When the supply of glycogen is low, a runner will feel as though he or she is fatigued (pp145-147). Because of the importance for distance runners of maintaining the liver and muscle glycogen levels, distance runners are advised to eat a high-carbohydrate diet. However, the depletion of glycogen levels are not the only causes of fatigue in distance running (Noakes, 1991, pp57-103), and the phenomenon of hitting the wall is still largely a mystery.

The difficulties that have occurred in the process of researching this area make it difficult to judge what actually occurs at these moments, as a runner experiences it. This study aims to examine that moment using qualitative interpretative methods of inquiry to overcome some of the problems which occur when thoughts are categorised without attention to the specific associations which are held for each runner.

4.1.2 Psychology in the Theology of Sport

This section will look at the role of psychology in theology indicating, as it does so, the benefits of a case study approach. Pastoral theology is concerned with the realities of people's lives and the ways in which the Church can assist those people. It is primarily linked to therapeutic psychology and employs counselling at the practical level. For example, the academic discipline of pastoral theology (which may be incorporated into the wider discipline of practical theology) would concern itself with the issue of bereavement, in order to inform ministers of the Church how best to carry out funerals and to assist people who are bereaved. Pastoral theology is also concerned with the realities of people's lives on a broader level and includes reflections on the social conditions in which people live and the personal experience of being a part of a wider social group. Pastoral theology frequently includes reflection on social situations, and draws upon sociological research. This is done, for example, by Gebera in her profound, yet well grounded, study of evil, suffering and salvation, *out of the depths* (Gebera, 2002).

Pastoral theology is, to a large extent, the theology of pastoral care, including pastoral counselling. In the words of Nancy Gorsuch,

Pastoral care is the help and nurture offered in a relationship between a representative of the church and persons seeking care that reflects, as much as possible, the justice and compassion of God. *Pastoral counselling* is a more specific and structured form of care involving an intentional process of identifying problems and discerning and implementing possibilities for change and healing (Gorsuch, 2001, p2).

At one point discussion of pastoral care had come to rely too heavily on psychology and on psychotherapy, and was keen to show its validity in a broader setting by adopting the language of those approaches. Campbell rightly objects to this phenomenon and presents, in his work, poetic images, to aid the practitioner in retaining a theological position in his or her approach to practice (Campbell, 1981; for discussion of his method cf p98ff).

While his images are very helpful for maintaining a strong theological element in pastoral care, a more systematic approach which involved case studies, reports of practice and suggestions for practice, would enable practitioners to use his ideas more directly. This approach would also enable his work to hold its own in inter-disciplinary discussion, in which the role of the counsellor is of great interest. Since Campbell wrote, pastoral theology has used psychological insight in a more balanced way. Rather than accepting psychology as something superior to which writing on pastoral care could aspire, pastoral theology now frequently uses psychology in an integrated manner which acknowledges some of the inadequacies of psychology, and some of the areas in which psychology can benefit from the insight of theology and theological practitioners.

Pastoral theology has found it helpful to use narratives of pastoral care, for the reflection process. These narratives tend to be case studies from the experience of ministry. This approach can be found, for example, in the work of Lyall, and of Jacobs (Lyall, 2001; Lyall, 1995; Jacobs, 2001). In these approaches insights from psychology are drawn on in order to deepen reflection and improve care. The same is true of pastoral theology undertaken from a feminist perspective. Stevenson, Moessner and Glaz point out the lack of integration of psychological theories about women by women in pastoral care texts. They point out that pastoral theology, while heavily influenced by psychology, has been primarily informed by a male-normed psychology, and rightly indicate that a more critical attitude to current psychology will better enable that psychology to inform pastoral theology. In this way, psychology informed by women's experience, is a particularly appropriate dialogue partner for theology (Stevenson, Moessner and Glaz, 1991, pp33-60). Feminist pastoral theologians are beginning to explore how a feminist position might influence research and practice in pastoral theology.

The theology of sport is concerned with a specific aspect of people's lives and so could benefit from considering the input of sport psychology in the understanding of sport in people's lives. This could be of benefit as pastoral theology is required in which ministers, with an understanding of theology and sport, minister to sports professionals and participants. Books hoping to instruct Churches on how sports ministry might be carried out, such as Steve Connor's helpful text *Sports Outreach* (Connor, 2003), would benefit from further sport psychology input. Sport psychology could inform the theology of sport in the reality of people's experience of sport, and this would also enable more accurate development, on a theoretical level, of concepts relating to sport and

theology and to sport and Christian ethics. When the theology of sport has become more fully integrated into ministry, then reflection, informed by sports psychology, on case studies and case notes gathered through practice, will enable the two disciplines to develop in dialogue with one another. Practitioners in sports ministry could benefit particularly from insight into the theological foundations of the women they encounter, and into the way in which women experience and respond to sport, as women's experience has not yet been discussed to the same extent as men's.

Pastoral theology, as we saw above, makes use of case studies to understand the psychology of those in need. One of the benefits of the case study approach is that it attends to the particularity of specific locations. This is important for the theology of sport as insights from other areas of life cannot necessarily be transferred to a sports setting. We have seen, for example, the contextual nature of endurance in which endurance is experienced as closely related to the environment in which it occurs. Case studies have often been achieved through reflection on practice, so that, for example, the minister might reflect on her intervention in the case of a bereaved mother. In the same way a case study approach could be of benefit to the theology of sport. In this way, for example, a sports minister could reflect on the response of a youth group to a summer Christian football camp, by making detailed notes of individual's responses to events and by reflecting on those notes with the help of material from the disciplines of sport psychology and the theology of sport. In the same way, a case study approach, allows this project to reflect upon and relate to the particular and contextual experiences of women involved in distance running. Here, case studies are used in such a way as coheres with the aims of this project to allow me, as researcher, to act as an advocate of feminism, and at the same time as a pastoral theologian.

Sport psychology, as we have seen in the area of the study of runners, requires a broader understanding of the associations and beliefs of individuals. Hardy, Jones and Gould have undertaken a comprehensive study of sport psychology, as it relates to preparation and performance, and conclude their work with two chapters outlining the implications of their study for research and for practice (Hardy, Jones and Gould, 1996). They rightly conclude that study of the athlete at present includes study of personality and motivation but fails to include the philosophical foundation of the athlete. They believe that research into sports performance requires the inclusion of a new emphasis on the philosophical foundations of the athlete. This holistic approach could be encouraged by the inclusion of

a greater number of qualitative case studies in the study of athletes (pp239-248).

This study emphasises the philosophical foundations of the athlete, where these are theological, and does this using a qualitative case study approach. The qualitative approach is not only helpful because we are looking at the philosophical foundations of the athlete, but is also helpful because we are examining the experience of the athlete. Susan A. Jackson asks "What does it mean then to give primacy to the experiencing qualities of an individual? ...the concern becomes one of seeking to understand athletes 'subjective states' in different sports situations, and the processes by which athletes make choices, and make and find meaning in their participation" (Jackson, 1992, p162). She terms her investigations into the study of human experience in sport 'interpretive enquiry'. She argues that the study of human experience in sport requires an interpretive stance and a qualitative methodological approach. She adapts the idea of purposeful sampling for use in the study of the experience of sport, in a way that is helpful to us here. Sports experience is best examined not through a statistical and representative example but through the selection of information-rich cases. Information-rich cases are cases from which a great deal of centrally important information can be learnt (p165). Lincoln and Guba indicate that where two groups of such purposive samples are used in studies based on a hermeneutic methodology, then information from the first group can indicate the type of respondents who would be particularly informative and articulate in the second group of responses (Lincoln and Guba, 1989, pp177-178). This study is designed in this way. A first sample was selected with looser requirements, and a second sample of four women, fitting very precise requirements, was used for the next part of the study.

One helpful case study, which looks at women's running, is a study by Bonnie Berger and Marlin Mackenzie which looks at a woman jogger from a psychoanalytic perspective (Berger and Mackenzie, 1981, pp99-111). They also suggest that a case study approach is a useful step in leading to more accurate experimental studies of sport (Berger and Mackenzie, 1981, p100). This is a particularly helpful insight, as it suggests that qualitative enquiry in sport need not stand in opposition to quantitative enquiry, but that the two can build on one another. Berger and Mackenzie used a psychodynamic paradigm to study a woman jogger using a psychiatric interview technique, and a personal journal filled in by the jogger on returning from her runs (Berger and Mackenzie, 1981, p101f). They discuss four propositions in relation to what arose from the interviews and journal.

Each proposition is aimed at making suggestions for future studies based on the findings of the case study. They present the results and their interpretation of those results in four sections based on those propositions. Although much of the analysis presented in the study could only be persuasive to someone already persuaded by a Freudian paradigm, Berger and Mackenzie do make some useful points as they analyse the method used, points which have a bearing on the case studies here.

They recommend clear procedures for filling in a journal, and indicate that the journal was helpful. I have taken up this recommendation for this study as I am also interested in gathering material over a fairly extended time period. They also indicate that an interview technique in which points from previous interviews may be expanded upon or clarified is useful. They urge that the type of research which they have carried out, "...will undoubtedly obtain new kinds of data that will serve to illuminate the significance of sport to athletes." They declare,

We believe that it is necessary to postpone and also forego absolute scientism for a non-reductionistic, humanistic understanding of human behavior in a compelling and obviously meaningful part of human experience (Berger and Mackenzie, 1981, p110).

The case study has both reflected and supported its authors' belief that each individual has a complex understanding and experience of running. In the same way the theology of sport can usefully forego a purely experimental method for a non-reductionistic, theological understanding of human behaviour, belief and experience in a, "compelling and obviously meaningful part of human experience." In this way Hardy, Jones and Gould's call for an understanding of the philosophical foundations of individual athletes will be answered in the case of athletes whose philosophical foundations are theological. Our task in this study will be to examine the philosophical foundations of runners whose philosophical foundations are Christian.

In this section, we have seen that a case study approach can help us to attend most directly to the experience of sports performance, as well as to the specific and individual nature of runners' theological foundations. The case study approach enables us to select cases purposively and to avoid some of the reductions which are necessary for quantitative enquiry. In this way, I shall allow this project, as an example of the theology of sport, to bring the theology of sport into the position of being grounded in specific and particular human experiences.

4.1.3 Establishment of the method

Before the case studies were carried out, the method which would be used was established with the help of an establishment questionnaire. This first sample group and questionnaire was only a first small step into this aspect of the enquiry, and from the point of view of the hermeneutical approach to this enquiry, occurred at an early stage in the research process before the theological and narrative prongs of the enquiry were carried out. We will look first at the procedure of establishing the method to be used for the case studies. We shall then turn to what was discovered by this procedure and what decisions were made about the method to be used for the case studies.

The runners who participated in answering the questionnaire, were a purposive sample, but at this first stage a loose sample. They were selected partly for convenience (Lincoln and Guba, 1989, p178). The runners were all selected because they were both Christian and marathon runners, and it is the perspective of such runners that is of interest. The runners were volunteers who responded to announcements in local churches, or who were told of the study by contacts who heard such an announcement. The group of volunteers were not ideal because they were not all female or all reflecting on the same race. They were an adequate group for the establishment of the method. This is the case because that study was not carried out with the intention of making broad claims based on a representative sample in controlled conditions.

The overall purpose of the establishment questionnaire was to test a method of questioning which might be used in the study, as well as to test the usefulness of specific questions. For this reason, I shall look briefly at the development of the questionnaire.

A questionnaire was used, at this stage, rather than diaries or interviews, in order that this stage of the study could be contained in a short period of time, (which was essential for the overall success of the project), and that minimum commitment would be required of the initial sample group, thus encouraging participation. The aim was to test the suitability of the questions for gaining information in the following three areas: the distinct theology of a runner; what that runner was thinking at the moment of potentially 'hitting the wall'; and how the race was affected, from the runner's perspective, by those thoughts. Several decisions were made about the type of questions to be included. It was decided that fewer questions which were more open in their nature, would enable the participants to be more fully responsible for defining the themes and topics which would

emerge. At this stage it was particularly important to avoid leading the participants towards areas which were not really a part of their experience or of their underlying foundational beliefs, while, nonetheless, encouraging them to articulate underlying theological foundations which they had previously not expressed.

Some of the questions in the questionnaire were closed, such as, 'what was your time?'. However, the majority of the questions were open ended. This also enabled me to find out whether or not open ended questions would provide suitable material for analysis in the case studies. Testing of these questions would indicate whether or not more specific questions should be used in the future of the study, and if so, what questions would need to be asked in a specific way in order to learn the appropriate information. Different question types were also used.

While most of the questions were not explicitly theological, some more explicitly theological questions were included towards the end of the questionnaire, where they would not influence other answers. Some questions asked for descriptive information, while others asked for information which clearly required interpretation on the part of the runner, such as, "Basing your answer upon your own experience as a runner, please say, as best you can, in what ways do you think Jesus was/is an athlete."

Some questions were also included which asked whether or not the runner would be willing to participate in the study in future, and in what types of procedure the runner would be willing to participate. This was to discover whether these and other runners would be willing to participate in such things as recording thoughts and times, before, during, and after future marathons.

The written questionnaire, shown in Appendix A, was sent to the volunteers who had come forward when the study was announced and volunteers requested in churches. As requested, they were all marathon runners who were Christian. As there are not large numbers of female marathon runners who identify themselves as Christians, a male volunteer was accepted. A small number of questions with large spaces was chosen, in order to stimulate deeper answers. As we saw above, some questions were closed, such as "what was your time", and "are you a member of any religious group?" Others were left open, including initial questions in which the runners were asked to identify themselves.

A style was chosen for the covering letter which was formal, provided broad reasons for the study, but not the specific aim of the study, and presented some personal details of the researcher, in order to encourage the disclosure of personal information by the participants.

Eventually, there were five marathon runners in the study, three of these were women who were running the London marathon that year. One was a woman who intended to run this year but was injured. She filled in the questionnaire based on memory of her experience last year. One runner was a male, writing about a previous year. This part of the study was in many ways different from what was hoped for in the case studies, in that one participant was male, and two of the accounts were from memory. This was helpful to the overall study as it enabled inclusion of five runners rather than just three, and it tested the use of questions outside the boundaries which would later be expected, indicating the flexibility of possibilities for the study. Having five runners was useful as it is large enough to enable us to examine the responses as a group of responses from similar runners who were testing the questions and the concepts behind them, and it is also small enough for us to attend to the distinctions between the responses of individual runners. It is these distinctions which can become lost in large studies, and which enable us to claim to be able to carry out rigorous case studies based on the method established.

The answers to the questions were helpful in what they revealed about the experience of endurance, as well as what they revealed about volunteers and question types.

Each runner's own reasons for participating in the marathon, tended to correspond with the answer to directly theological, and interpretative, questions "...in what way you think Jesus was/is an athlete?" This was unexpected, as the theological question could have been found to cohere with the runner's running experience in an indirect and possibly uncomfortable way.

Given the diversity within the Christian communion, it seems important to begin from the runners' self-identification within that communion. One runner identified himself as Roman Catholic, two as Anglican, two as Baptist or evangelical. The view of the Roman Catholic runner was found in relation to running, in the description of Jesus as someone who endured a lot of suffering. One Anglican depicted Jesus in fairly secular terms as having mental and physical stamina. Both these portrayals are fairly passive images of Jesus, as someone who has developed (or demonstrated) toughness as a result of

circumstances. Both these runners described their reasons for running the marathon as related to physical challenge. One of these runners describes feeling extreme fatigue between 18 and 20 miles, the other denies feeling any tiredness at this point, yet during this period she experienced an unintended reduction in speed.

The two evangelical runners, and one Anglican runner, portray Jesus as having a purpose. One uses the terms 'goal', 'purpose', 'focused' and 'priorities', to describe Jesus. Another says, 'concentrate on goal, don't get side tracked'. Another includes the phrase, 'inner strength and perseverance against all odds', which suggests that these qualities are related to, and certainly employed against, specific aim. These portrayals of Jesus suggest someone who has deliberately taken control of circumstances.

One of these runners indicated that her personal goal and initial reason for running is an escape from difficult life circumstances. Another of these runners included, 'inspired to try', which suggests an active stand against an obstacle. The third had an ambition to run the London marathon for a long time. The link between the second of these, and the portrayal of Jesus as taking on circumstances, is made clearer by her comment at another point, that she completed the race by 'perseverance'; the same word she used of Jesus. Jesus did not develop this as a result of what he had to face (that is, enduring suffering), as it appears that, in her view, perseverance is already a divine characteristic and gift, as she portrays herself as given this quality by God, at the moment at which she required it.

One of these runners mentioned several times that Jesus' goal orientation required him to give things up in order to serve others. The same runner listed serving others as one of her helpful thoughts at the time of fatigue. This also appears to relate to her current personal difficulties, which include a current lack of goal. Another mentions that Jesus and the runner must give some things up.

So, the runners appeared to fall into two groups theologically. The first could be described as 'catholic', the second more 'evangelical'. These labels indicate a first group who saw Jesus as a passive sufferer, and suffering as something for the Christian to take on as a challenge, and a second group who saw Jesus as having a goal and purpose for which he had to give things up. It would appear that, for the first group, suffering in itself is a worthwhile purpose, while, for the second, the suffering aspect is a consequence of focus on a goal. This draws our attention to the importance of establishing each participants view of the role of suffering in the Christian life.

Three of the runners reported experiencing extreme fatigue. One experienced some fatigue which was exacerbated by a tendon strain. These runners provided accounts of the factors during the race which assisted them in overcoming the problem. These occurred in the questions directly on that topic and in other question responses. These fell into the following categories: reasons relating to avoidance of shame; reasons relating to knowledge of running as involving psychological hurdles; reasons relating to the presence of others; having already gone so far (pointlessness of failing after so far); the benefit others would gain from the runner continuing at a good pace; direct intervention from God.

We can see that it was possible to discover some things about each runner's beliefs from asking about the moments of fatigue, and also something about how those beliefs impacted each runner's endurance, in his or her view. This indicated that the next stage of the study could also gain something from asking about attributions related to the moments of endurance. It also indicated something of the type of response that might be expected from the case study runners. Awareness of the possible ways in which runners might relate their theological beliefs to their continued running while tired, allowed me to decide on questions in the next stage of the study which I now knew might be in the minds of the runners, rather than being foreign ideas, imported by me. This was important, as this type of study involves underlying and possibly unarticulated ideas, and there is only a subtle distinction between uncovering unarticulated reflections, and leading a respondent to a particular place.

In response to the attribution question, some members of each group attributed their continuation beyond fatigue to their own deliberate psychological strategy. Some members of each group attributed this to the presence of others. The desire to help others, and direct intervention from God, were two reasons found exclusively in the evangelical group. One member of this group also mentioned fellowship with other unknown self-identifying Christians to have been helpful, but she was unable to recall at which point in the race this was, and did not recall feeling tired at that point. We can see from this that it would be useful to look in the case studies at the complexities of the moments in the marathon when the runner is aware of facing specific difficulties and enduring them, and at how each runner's views of suffering and purpose in the Christian life contribute to how that runner experiences the most particular moments of difficulty and endurance, as well as looking at how relationship to God and to other groups of people are seen in relation to endurance as it is experienced by the runners.

The process of establishing the method, demonstrated that runners are able to express aspects of their theology in an open questionnaire, and that their theological views do appear to be related to the attributions which they make about their continuation during the time of potentially 'hitting the wall'. That is, that the runners experience endurance in a way that is particular to their own theological foundations, and their own views of the Christian life and suffering. It appeared here that the more evangelical runners are more likely to attribute continuation and 'success' to direct intervention from God, and the desire to help others. This procedure also found that it was helpful to prompt the runners into expressing theological views by providing an appropriate setting for theological reflection.

It also demonstrated that, in this small sample, 'catholic' runners perceive the value of running in the experience of suffering, while for evangelical runners the value of running lies in the pursuit of a goal, a pursuit in which suffering is involved. It may be, therefore, that 'catholic' runners would be found to use a higher percentage of associative thoughts during the marathon than 'evangelical' runners, in the sense that associative thoughts focus on the body and any pain experienced, while 'evangelical' runners may be found to have more of the type of 'dissociative' thoughts which relate to elements which that runner associates with her goal and purpose in running. While it would be inappropriate to make that type of claim from such a small sample, this indicates an area of interest for future studies in which a larger group of Christian marathon runners might be studied. What it demonstrated for the purpose of the case studies, is that careful selection of both Catholic and evangelical protestant cases would produce an interesting diversity of perspectives, which would be not entirely distinct, but rather complementary, in their inclusion of aspects of the Christian faith highlighted and experienced. We can see here that philosophical foundations do impact upon the experience of running, and more particularly that, the specific content of faith shapes a runner's understanding of suffering and endurance.

It can also be seen that the case studies would also benefit from open ended questions, and a mix of secular and directly theological questions. Most of these subjects provided very full and personal answers. This could be increased with the provision of a writing environment which promoted a sense of security at revealing theological beliefs which can often be experienced as intimate personal knowledge.

One was clearly hampered by the questions leaving the runner with a choice of answering in the categories of either fatigued or tired. A more general question was added for those who did not suffer either, but one runner appeared to have decided at that point that the questionnaire was for lesser runners. She clearly had felt tired as she had considerably slowed and could not speed up after 19 miles. She did not, however, indicate this in the appropriate question. Several of the runners demonstrated that admitting to anything which felt like, 'hitting the wall', or to giving the impression of being seriously hampered by it, would be shameful. It would appear that some runners who did suffer tiredness which hampered them, and involved them in a struggle to overcome it, would provide useful information about their experience, only if they do not have to directly admit to any weakness. This indicated that a distinct space should be provided for those who might claim to have suffered no tiredness, so that they would be able to express their thoughts about why they would consider this to have been the case, or at least how they had managed to complete the course in a reasonable time.

Three of these subjects expressed an interest in participating in this study in the future. All of these would be willing to fill in diaries while training, wear a recording device and speak into it while running, and record their time at six intervals. This suggested that diaries could be used in the case studies as a useful way of providing an intimate space for writing and a longer view of the events, as well as suggesting that taking part in case studies would be likely to be experienced as positive by the volunteers involved.

The 'before, during and after' characteristic of future aspects of the study would enable fuller study than was possible as the method was being established. Further theological information would have been useful, to draw out distinctions between each individual's views and to discover what individual understanding lay behind the words used. As the length of the questionnaire seemed to have functioned effectively, adding this in would have hampered the establishment of the method but would be important for case studies, where this information could be drawn out over time. Another gap which would be filled by the nature of the case studies was the lack of distinction between what each runner really thought at the time of the race, and what the runner thought in retrospect. So it made sense to try to add these elements to the case studies.

The participants would have liked to write more about the practical problems which were hindering and worrying them. Several mentioned worries and emotion over needing to go

to the toilet. These practical worries, as well as emotions over being in a crowd, had an impact on the whole of their experience. In the future, further information on these issues could be gathered, so that a fuller picture of the experience of endurance could be built up, and so that we could gain understanding of the mechanism of endurance in which all difficulties come together to be overcome.

The question requiring participants to discuss the similarities between Jesus and an athlete yielded particularly full answers. The question was not just requiring Biblical interpretation but specifically interpretation of metaphor. This does appear to have stimulated the imaginations of the runners. The question unexpectedly provided participants with a way in which to talk about themselves. This is possibly because interpretation of metaphor enables imaginative examination of both of the components of the metaphor, so that the runner was able both to see Jesus in an athletic light, and to see her or himself as an athlete, in the light of Jesus. This suggests that the interpretation of Biblical texts could be included, in the case studies (and particularly in the diaries), and that some of these texts should include metaphor.

4.1.4. Method for the case studies

Next, we turn to the case studies themselves. I shall look here at the method used for these, based on the indications from the procedure above, of establishing the method used. At the centre of this aspect of this study was the examination of the moment at which selected Christian female distance runners potentially “hit the wall”, and the connections between that moment and the runner’s perception of a marathon before, during and after the race. The participants began eight weeks before the marathon and final interviews, where they were carried out, were carried out approximately one month after the marathon. It was hoped that the analysis of the results of such an examination would show such things as: how these women’s theologies relate to their running in their own view, by discovering how they perceive endurance, before, after and during the event; to whom or what they attribute their continued running; how, if at all, distinct theologies affect running performance. By carrying out and analysing the case studies in this way, we should be able to achieve the eventual aim of the case studies, which is to ask what these women experienced, how they interpreted their experience, and what we can learn from this about endurance.

The case studies were carried out so that the complexities relating to the moment of endurance would provide material for a theological re-examination of endurance, as experienced by women in distance running. The case studies and the interpretation of material provided by the studies, should be seen as only one prong of the three-pronged approach taken in the project as a whole. Although this chapter of the study is longer than the chapters relating the other prongs of the study, that is because the practical details of the method, and the data involved take longer to say, and not because this aspect of the study plays a more central role. Each aspect of the study also lends an element of validity to the other two as they join together to form one single interpretive inquiry.

Researching endurance in Christian women's running using a method which involves psychology and pastoral theology implicates the researcher in the research. This research process brought life and work together, particularly in this empirical aspect of the study, as the research required one to one interaction between myself as researcher and the women taking part in the case studies. Because the aim is to explore what women think and feel about their running and their faith there is potential for a deep level of intimacy in what they reveal. Anne Oakley, who explores women's experience of health from a sociological perspective, talks about forming relationships with the women involved in her research through the time of their pregnancy and birth and through the period during which they had a new baby in their home. Her involvement with the women differed from the conventional sociological model of interviewer involvement. She portrays herself as entering into their world as another woman, who has shared something of their experiences herself, and who is willing to answer their questions as well as ask them (Oakley, 1990, pp219-242).

In the same way, this project design has required me to share a period of time with the women involved in this study. During this time, I communicated with the women in letters, telephone calls and in person. The communications were all recorded on index cards. Like Oakley, I found myself in the position of being asked questions by the women, and (again like Oakley) I answered them. As a minister, it would not have been morally justifiable to ignore direct questions relating to God or prayer. As a feminist pastoral theologian, and as a researcher approaching the women from that perspective, I was able to listen to their comments and encourage them to develop their views without abandoning them when they required help. Over an extended period of time, a deep

picture of each woman's views could be explored by using several methods of data collection. It would be quite wrong to suggest that the women involved wrote and said what they would have written and said in just any circumstances. It was necessary, however, to implement a research design which enabled the free expression of views which might otherwise be kept private.

The treatment of material arising from the subjects is similar to the dialogue model offered by Anne Oakley in her reflection on her relationship with interviewees. She saw herself as entering into a relationship with other women in order, not to exploit them for data, but to uncover their hidden views- to do sociology 'for' women (Oakley, 1990, pp234-236). In the same way, the aim here is to uncover the hidden views of the runners and to find a theology of endurance 'for' women. For the interviews and conversations with the subjects, I wanted to relate to those subjects as an advocate of feminism. It would, therefore be inappropriate for the case studies to be carried out in such a way that the researcher placed herself aside and took up a distinctively 'objective' role when speaking to them and reading their writing. The aim was, on the other hand, that I should engage with the runners and their lives as a woman listening and talking to women. The aim was that this aspect of the study should take into account the importance of building rapport and encouraging creativity and imagination, following a model of pastoral counselling, which would enable more openness of expression on sensitive issues. (Pearson, 1997 and Lyall, 1995.)

Here also, the aims of a feminist informed pastoral theology came into play, in which theology might be done in dialogue with the subjects of case studies. In Gorsuch's practical discussion of the application of feminist theory to pastoral care, she suggests that the feminist approach leads to an encounter between the ministry professional and the one ministered to, in which both of these people, in any encounter, work together towards accurate and effective reflection. She does not suggest that the pastor and the one ministered to should become merged together in an equal partnership. What she actually finds, is that the pastor becomes very much responsible for fostering positive and healthy theological understandings. While it is not the role of the researcher (but of the pastor) to take the responsibility for fostering particular views in the subjects, the work of building theology together is central to this overall project and emphasises the importance of respectful listening (or reading), in the presence of the participants. Gorsuch writes,

As caregivers and careseekers work with the intrapsychic, interpersonal, and

systemic dimensions of sin and appropriation of salvation, suffering and movement toward healing, brokenness and efforts toward coherence and wholeness, we revise our theology again and again as we learn more of how God is manifest (Gorsuch, 2001, p62).

In this study the approach to the participants was an approach which respected the role of the runners in building a theological understanding of endurance. They were approached with respect, and at each stage of the study were asked if they wanted to proceed. They were, for example, all asked if they would like to wear a recording device during the marathon. They all declined this possibility. They were also, as were the initial group of participants, discussed above, sent an opening letter in which I described who I was and my involvement in the project, in order that the disclosure of personal information would not be uncomfortably uneven. This is a stance which is derived more particularly from pastoral care than from psychology (particularly in the images of Campbell, 1981).

The criteria for participant selection was limiting, as a specialist sub group was required for the study. This is the type of purposive sample discussed above. I was searching for subjects who would identify themselves as Christian women, and who were intending to run the 2002 London Marathon. Rather than a representative sample of a large group, the study required unusual cases who would be pronounced examples of what occurs when a precise category of person encounters a specific situation.

Ideally, the subjects would have represented diverse theological stances. The establishment of the method questionnaire had indicated that a sample consisting of both evangelicals and Roman Catholics would have presented views with the greatest contrast in this case. Had such a diverse sample existed for the case studies, an interesting breadth of insights might have been obtained. I had contacted Christians in Sport, which is an evangelical organisation, and the London Marathon office of the Roman Catholic charity, Cafod. In the case of each of these organisations, I had spoken several times on the telephone with women who had functioned as gatekeepers. These two women had sent out a letter from me to potentially relevant women, explaining what participation in the research would involve. In addition to this I also sent letters to the women who had filled in the pilot questionnaire and indicated that if they were running the marathon again they would like to take part in further research. I also contacted a woman who had been a possible participant in the pilot but had been unable to run in the 2001 marathon. She

was from the United Reformed Church and so would represent the evangelical part of the Christian tradition.

We discussed earlier the advantages of using case studies to explore the issues relating to endurance. Case studies are the most appropriate method of gaining deeper levels of material for analysis, where they are information-rich cases. The method of acquiring cases depended heavily on subjects volunteering to participate. As the population of Christian women distance runners is small, all possible subjects would be accepted. There are disadvantages to using only volunteers as subjects, in that they are not a representative sample of a population. There are however also advantages of this kind of sample for this type of case study approach. Volunteers are willing to examine their views. The aim was that the study would uncover theological models, which the runners would not necessarily be aware of holding and may not be familiar with articulating. In order for these models to become clear, the subjects would have to be able to reflect on their thoughts and experiences, and to articulate them with some clarity. They would also need to be open about their theological beliefs.

The cases were to be women who had experienced a type of physical suffering with the intention of overcoming it; women who were interested in improving their own capacity for endurance; women who had taken on a challenge. The study needed these women because they would be in a good position to enable us to discover what endurance is, and how it relates to faith.

In order to find out how the women's experience of the difficult moments of marathon running, are located within the women's wider views and experience, each of the women involved in the case studies were asked to participate in the study from eight weeks before the marathon, until possibly two months after the marathon. The aim was to uncover a theological model held by each woman, and to ascertain how endurance was situated within that model. The model would be expected to change to a certain extent through the experience of the marathon training and the marathon. The experience of participating in the study was also likely to affect the theological model held by the subjects. This would not invalidate the study, but rather enhance the richness of the responses obtained from the women as they grew in their ability to reflect theologically on their running, and discovered more about their own theological foundations.

Four subjects joined the study. Letters were written to the subjects and they were also

spoken to, on the telephone, and sent training diaries to fill in. The initial letter introduced me, and explained their role in the study.

The training diaries began eight weeks before the marathon. These diaries were A5 size, and were intended to feel friendly, and to a certain extent intimate. They were modelled on notebooks and journals which I observed, in shops, to be clearly marketed for women. Observing the small size and soft colours of these logs, I constructed diaries from A5 paper which contained coloured pages. I also used these pages in a way which would be helpful to me as I collected the data. I did this by using different coloured pages for each week, so that each diary had the same coloured pages for each week. This was useful for cross-referencing the diaries from each case study.

The diary began with some initial questions. Following the recommendation of Berger and Mackenzie (discussed above), it also contained clear instructions of how it should be filled in. The initial questions were to be answered as soon as the diary was received. They were questions concerning the identity of the runner, and reasons for marathon running. They were: "Say as much as you like about who you are"; "If you attend a Church, what type is it?"; "If you have previously run one or more marathons, why did you run your first marathon?"; "Why are you running the London marathon this year?"; "What time are you hoping for?"; "How is your training going so far".

In each week of the diary, I asked the same questions and left large spaces for replies. The first question was: "Please log here the runs you have done this week. Include place, distance, time, terrain, weather and the state of your body and mind". At the end of each week they were asked, "What do you now think about the running you have done this week", and they were provided with a page headed "any other notes or comments". In the final week they are also asked, "any other notes or comments on the past week or on the marathon". Each week a different Bible verse was selected by me, and the runners were asked, "Drawing on your experience (rather than commentaries) please write what you think the following verse means, and in what way, if any, it could be significant for you." The Bible verses will be discussed as they arise in the case studies related in Part 2 of this chapter, and are listed in Appendix B.

The diaries were filled in during the final training weeks before the Marathon. They were sent a few questions about the diary and the future interviews to fill in a few weeks before the marathon, both in order to encourage them to fill in the diaries and to check

that they were filling them in. This provided me with important feedback. Three of the four reported that filling in the diary was an interesting and enjoyable experience. For the fourth woman, filling in the diary was a 'chore' in her busy life. This was the point at which I asked about the possible use of recording devices.

My aim was that the process of 'data analysis' should be a natural one, based on the reading and rereading part of the hermeneutical circle. The diaries were read and reread until a fuller picture of the world view of each subject emerged. At this stage it was possible to begin to sketch out the theological models which each woman expressed. The aim was that I should also allow myself to read from an involved position.

The notion of engaging with the material within a hermeneutic methodology, and from the position of a pastoral theologian and an advocate of feminism, allowed reading with greater compassion, attending more fully to the indications which they gave that they were involved in nurturing others, or that they were experiencing difficulties in their lives. This is reading from the middle of life, rather than from the edge. In this sense, the reading is as a pastoral theologian rather than an experimental psychologist, as the reader has a more deliberate role in the interpretive aspect of the reading process. As the psychoanalyst or therapist must always be aware of his or her presence as interpreter, so must the pastoral theologian, as pastoral theology is often primarily a therapeutic task. The therapeutic element can never be directly from the counsellor to the woman receiving counselling, but is also present in the interaction between the two people, as we discussed above. In these case studies, the women provide a therapeutic element by offering correction and enlightenment to the interpretation of the researcher. In this way, I, as researcher, entered into a relationship with the women and the material which they provided, in which my response, as well as my interpretations, were shaped by the material received.

The participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire about the marathon, after the marathon had been completed. Two of the participants were then selected for interviews. The questionnaire was kept brief, to encourage participation, although laid out on four pages of A4. Blue paper was used. The first question was, "What kind of things did you think about during the first 15 miles of the marathon?" The other questions related to times, feelings of tiredness between 18 miles and the end of the marathon, what was thought about during the period from 18 miles to the end of the marathon. The final

question was, “Did anything of interest occur during the marathon which you have not had the opportunity to write about above? (e.g. physical pain, strong emotions, “religious experience”, conversation etc.)”

Two participants were also interviewed, one by telephone and one in person, depending on the needs of the runner. The interviews were constructed according to the demands of a hermeneutical methodology. That is to say, the questions arose from the diaries and questionnaires. The responses of the runners, indicated areas of interest which could be built on, developed, and clarified through further discussion. Interviews were prepared for and recorded on index cards which were stored with the other case notes. During the interview, I used the pastoral counselling method, of repeating back to the runner, at regular intervals, what I thought them to be saying, for clarification. The interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes.

The data was analysed using content analysis in a similar way to Jackson in her study of the experience of figure skaters (Jackson, 1992). The content analysis is shown in Appendix C. Themes were first identified directly from the words of the runners and from the paraphrases of the runners’ words from the interview stage. These themes were organised according to what was said about theological themes, with particular attention to the key moments in the marathon. Ideographic profiles of each runner were constructed, which laid out the theological model of that runner, before the marathon, and followed through aspects of that model as they were manifest during the key part of the marathon. Each profile can be seen below, as each case study is discussed. The aspects of the individual profiles were then related to the broader themes uncovered in the previous chapter. This process is reflected in the presentation of results and discussion in Part 2 of this Chapter, in which each case study is discussed first in turn, and then each theme is discussed in relation to the case study material and the material gathered more widely in this project.

Part 2 Case studies: results and discussion

4.2 Case 1: Meg

The diaries begin by asking the runner general questions about themselves. Meg describes herself as in her forties, married with no children, and playing hockey as her central sport. She attends a Church of England which is evangelical. She has run the London marathon five times, and has run no other marathons.

Meg was the runner who used the word “chore” to describe her response to writing in the diary when asked for feed back, and so she was not selected as one of the studies which were taken to the interview stage. Her handwriting was unusually neat and she wrote in small blocks on the pages of the diary, which added to the impression, given by the content that Meg tended towards perfectionism. This was clearly problematic for her as she appeared to want to please me by writing perfect comments in a legible hand, where at times rambling reflections may have been more appropriate.

In answer to, “...why did you run your first marathon?” she writes, “For the challenge - I ran on my own for relaxation after work - and to raise money for charity...” This time “Because I want to and to raise money for the British heart foundation.” Here we can see that she wants to run the marathon both for herself and for others. At the same time, the inclusion of ‘on my own’, to describe her initial motivation to run, suggests that escaping from others enabled her to experience relaxation. This is supported by other areas of her writing, in which we find the aim to carry out duty to others contrasted with an irritation at the imperfections which other people possess.

She logs: “My usual run...takes a similar route. It is on pavements -Chiefly built up and lit areas. Includes a few worthwhile inclines.” As a woman running on her own, Meg’s experience of training is shaped by the need to remain safe, as well as to consider what environment would best build the type of strength and stamina required for the marathon itself.

She likes to do well: “Brighton Half Marathon. Decided to go for it even though felt a bit wobbly at times during the past week. cold and quite windy Good run - did a PB [personal best time] (1.27.57)... and 3rd woman home.”

Commenting on 1 Cor 9:24 which discusses the crown from winning a race, and the crown that will last for ever, Meg writes, "...It is an encouragement and inspiration when one is inclined to focus too much on the materialistic aspects of life. We are all running our own race and should not compare it to others'."

It is interesting that Meg speaks of "the materialistic aspects of life" here as there is nothing else in her diary to suggest that materialistic aspects of life were of any interest to her at that time, nor are they clearly suggested by the text. It appears that she is suggesting that there is something materialistic about competition with other runners. She perhaps intends "materialistic" to mean "not spiritual". As a runner who wins competitively, she is concerned that beating others should not be one of her aims, as it detracts from spiritual concerns.

Various runs were logged in the diary. A typical week would include, "10 miles... Very wet at times... Really good run." and "6 miles... painful toe more painful than usual! Late home from work." We often find that Meg runs six days a week and plays hockey on the seventh. She is training hard and appears to be becoming constantly tired. She does not report any rests to help her sore foot.

One training week was not very good. Monday's run was 'uncomfortable'. On Tuesday, Meg writes, "Frustrating because late back from day trip... for a meeting. 20 minutes to get rid of the cobwebs." On the Wednesday, Meg's state of mind is slightly helped by positive news about sponsorship money. On Thursday we read, "Felt pretty tired mentally and physically which made the run harder." And the week goes on with physical difficulty. In her summary of the week, Meg writes, "Less good week but that's life. Probably thrown by Tuesday when I'd got a head of steam going!"

For Meg, having been late appears to have added a significant degree of stress to her training week. Meg does not appear to be in a good state of mind, and the physical and mental stresses of training for distance running here appear to counteract any positive aspects of her endurance capacity. It was difficult for her to persevere with her running because of all the tiredness which she felt.

Meg is very positive about Habakkuk 3:19, the verse provided for discussion at the end of her bad week. The verse reads, "God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer and makes me tread upon the heights." Meg writes, "A great verse - in

God's strength, but not our own, we can do things we probably did not think were possible." In the context of her training difficulties, we can see that, where her own capacities did not seem to be enough to counteract the stresses which she was experiencing, she is enthusiastic about the possibility of drawing strength from God. She talks about doing things we, "did not think were possible." What God is portrayed as providing is the possibility of great strength. When we read Meg's writing, we can see that it is the realisation of what may always have been possible that was brought by God.

One week of Meg's training concludes with a half marathon, run alongside someone else. During the week, Meg writes of feeling nervous about racing alongside this person. We noted above that she appears to appreciate the opportunity which her training affords her of spending time alone. Here she gives the impression that she is concerned that her own progress might be affected by this person and that she is expecting to experience irritation during the race. Of the race itself, she writes, "...Always find this a tough course. Good experience having a companion - a Christian and a friend of my father's. Not a bad time 1.31.32 and pleased to come 8th female. Encouraging Church support at a number of points on the course."

Here we can begin to get a more sociable impression of Meg. There is an element of Christian fellowship to her experience of this race. For the reader, the expression "Good experience" comes as a surprise in the story of her week. Meg has made a new discovery, and speaks about this runner in a pleasant tone. It is not so much running companionship which we read of here as Christian fellowship with the description of the runner as a Christian coming alongside the description of the spectators as 'Church support'. Presumably it might have been possible to refer to the same people as friends or acquaintances but it is their identity as members of the Church which is recorded in the narrative.

In response to 1 Timothy 6:11 she writes, "we should not be tempted by things that are not of God and should be determined to stay on the straight and narrow road even if it is hard (like the last 6 miles of the marathon!)". While the verse itself has an encouraging loving tone, Meg has interpreted it in a harsh and threatening way. Her experience of having run marathons has directly influenced her interpretation of the verse. The verse does not mention running. On the other hand, she may well generally hold this harsh view of the Christian life as one requiring determination and hardship, and this could have an

affect on her view of her marathon training and running. We certainly find here that the things that are not of God are contrasted with the things that are of God, and that the things that are of God are a struggle. Endurance in the Christian life and endurance in the marathon are not just being compared for literary affect but are being portrayed as genuinely alike and requiring the same response from Meg.

In her log of the weeks runs, Meg frequently mentions that she was thinking about a situation at Church or was praying. This suggests a serious attitude to her involvement with the Church community and her real belief that prayer has a purpose. There is an impression in her writing that she has a strong sense of religious duty to the Church and its community which is related to her harsh view of the Christian life. At the same time her attitude to prayer appears to arise from a sense of faith rather than a religious sense-where faith arises from a sense of a personal relationship with a living God, and religion arises from an urge to carry out tasks to please God or others.

One Sunday she ran a 20 mile race about which she had reported feeling apprehensive. She relates the run as, "Flat 4 lap course - lovely morning. noticeable but not too strong wind - slowed us a bit when running in to it ..." She came in as the first female over forty in the championships. In the tiredness and the struggle of her heavy and uncompromising training regime, Meg is having success in her distance running. It is, however, difficult to classify this as successful endurance as Meg appears to have had such an unpleasant training period. The unpleasantness which she experiences appears to arise from the serious role which she gives to her training. There is an impression that she does not feel the joy of taking on a challenge, but rather the weight of taking on a challenge and the irritation with anything which gets in the way of her success. At the same time, these are feelings with which she struggles, as she longs to look at things in a less competitive way.

In response to one of the Bible verses, Meg says that difficulties and suffering are for, "...a purpose. Not only for endurance but so that we can help others through our suffering." Here, it is our suffering itself which provides help for others. Endurance is related to helping others as they are both contrasted with suffering, but they are also set in contrast to one another. Endurance has become almost selfish, and it is our suffering, rather than our endurance, which is providing help.

This is an interesting interpretation as in reality it is, for example, the sponsorship money which benefits others in a marathon, and so in fact the endurance and not the suffering is

of benefit. If there were suffering that were not endured and Meg failed to complete the marathon, she would not benefit anyone. Endurance has become, in Meg's interpretation of the verse, a selfish gain and is not acknowledged as the true conveyer of any alleviation of the suffering of others. So we are finding that the meaning of endurance for Meg is of something distinct from the other benefits of suffering, as something which benefits an individual. This, for Meg, is problematic given her sense of duty to and concern for the Christian community, and her determination to gain endurance.

As the marathon approaches, Meg reports her dream, "Dreamt I was running a marathon - so was our church warden and we stopped in the middle to cook salmon fritters!" In the same week, she is asked to comment on Colossians 1:11 which mentions enduring everything with patience. She writes, "This verse is again a great encouraging exhortation. It is one I should read often particularly the bit about patience!" It appears that the Church warden represents the observing gaze of the Church community, and the cooking represents her sense of duty to that community. She does not write about how she felt at stopping in the middle of the marathon to attend to these Church matters. The exclamation mark suggests amusement and surprise, while her comment on the Colossian text suggests that she is experiencing impatience with others.

Meg is becoming increasingly more open in her response to the diary, as she includes a dream and a light-hearted criticism of herself. It would appear that the diary is not seeming as much like a chore to her as time goes on, and she is responding to it in a friendly way.

As the marathon gets nearer, Meg reports her foot getting increasingly painful and she is told to rest. It was possible that she would not be able to run the marathon. She has complained about her foot all through the diary but does not rest until told to by someone else. She almost succumbed to the negative affect of determination and perseverance by putting in more training than her body could bear. Here, we can see the negative side of endurance, which should perhaps not be called endurance. Rather than getting through suffering and overcoming suffering, we find Meg deliberately struggling onwards almost to the point of not being able to continue. This is coming close to a worrying glorification of suffering such as we found in Clement's theology, where the choosing to suffer was encouraged, rather than an attitude of active endurance.

From Meg's diary, we can build up a sketch of her theological foundations, in so far as

these are relevant to the context of her training and racing. Her image of God centres on God's strength. Christian fellowship is important to her. The Christian life should involve the Christian being determined to stay on the straight and narrow, and the Christian has a duty to the wider Church community. Prayer is active and purposeful and at the core of a relationship with God. The Christian should be willing to suffer on behalf of others. This vicarious suffering is good, while the pursuit of personal improvement through gains in endurance is not good as it is selfish.

Meg comments on her marathon performance in her diary and also in the questionnaire. M ran a personal best time in the marathon of 3hrs 13mins 42seconds. She also reports feeling pleased to have raised £2500 for charity and comments, "... that is the object of the exercise!" Although she is trying to convey the impression here that the real object of the exercise was to raise money for charity she did not need a personal best time to raise the money. The effort which she put in to her preparation for the marathon was no doubt aimed more specifically at running at a fast pace over the marathon distance. Once again her sense of wanting to alleviate the suffering of others appears to be in conflict with her competitive urge to have completed the marathon in a good time. Here, theological foundations are causing a struggle with her performance goals.

During the first fifteen miles of the marathon, as recorded in her questionnaire, Meg thought that it was good to be running. She reports, "a lovely day and not running in soggy conditions," and "...making sure I saw a work colleague at 8 miles".

In the later part of the race she tripped over and was irritated by what seemed to be other people's lack of consideration. Tripping in these circumstances was, "...a bit scary!" She was still putting in a good pace. Her advice to other Christian women getting through the last eight miles of the marathon would be, "...to keep persevering and to try not to stop running." What she had to persevere through was her irritation and her fear, as well as the physical affect of the distance she was running. We have seen that she likes to run to be by herself, and that she finds it extremely difficult when other people hamper her personal success. This would probably have been magnified by the tiredness at this point in a marathon.

Meg reports feelings of companionship associated with the marathon. The feeling of companionship with other runners occurred, "...without necessarily talking." She also briefly notes in her diary, "I felt the power of people praying for me. Could not have

done it without the support and encouragement of my husband.”

Meg’s view of the importance of Christian fellowship impacts how she experiences endurance in the marathon, as does her understanding of the importance of prayer within that community. Her marathon experience includes the positive aspects of companionship with the Church community and with her husband. We know that she feels the last part of a marathon to be hard and that she believes that determination is needed to complete it. She gets her determination through her competitive urge for a fast time, but also through a willingness to suffer as a way of helping others. We have also seen that she has faith in prayer and in the power and strength of God. It would seem, therefore, that when she refers to the ‘...power of people praying...’ for her, that the power is God’s power, and that the relevance of the people are the Christian fellowship who support her.

Meg’s experience of endurance in this marathon was of God’s power and Christian fellowship, of persevering through physical struggle, irritation and fear. It was also an experience in which perseverance through suffering led to personal gain and benefit to others. In Meg’s terms her suffering led to her own endurance and the alleviation of the suffering of others. Although her beliefs in the importance of determination and perseverance are expressed as she articulates her experience of endurance, the clearest way in which Meg’s theological beliefs impacted her performance is her notion of the activity of prayer in the Christian community, as something powerful and felt by her as she ran.

4.2 Case Study 2: Leah

Leah came to hear of the study late but was very keen to take part. She joined the study in the fourth week of the diary. Leah is a 36 year old web developer, who took up running in order to run the London marathon. She is involved in a Church of England Church. In her initial description of herself she places her running and her Church involvement in tension. She writes - “Problem of Sunday racing! Church!” She says she is running the marathon to raise money for the Church. She wanted to run the marathon for many years but managed in 2001 for the first time to be well and get a place.

She appears to feel a greater sense of control over her marathon training this year than she did the previous year. This year she describes it as her choice, and she is not suffering from a lot of bad night sweats as she did previously. She mentions her height and weight, and is underweight for her height. She also mentions that she is eating a strict diet. Through the diary she mentions food several times, and appears to have difficulty eating enough to keep energetic for her training.

The majority of Leah's training took place on country lanes and foot paths. She is concerned that people do not understand how much is involved in training for a marathon. She writes of the training period, "It is a time of great discipline, and all for good reason. One can so easily hurt the body and therefore the emotions if not careful. 26.2 miles is a long hard battering on the body. One needs to prepare properly." She writes of the people at work as unsupportive, and shortly afterwards discusses the support which people at church have given her. The placing of these two points presents an underlying contrast between the communities at work and at Church. The people at work are "...a load of lumps." The Church provide her with an important fellowship community. She portrays members as warm and interested in her and what she is doing.

As she logs her runs, she notes where bad days at work affect her training. She also laments the lack of support at work, where the awkwardness of others prevents her from overcoming her tiredness and getting home for training.

During her training she ran a 21.2 mile race. She writes: "...Gasp where will I find the energy for another five miles. Uphill a lot - don't remember the downs. mud for a while, which was awfully dangerous... So delighted with my body. Strange stiffness in hip area..." The phrase "delighted with my body" stands out as unusual. She has separated her body from herself and is proud of what it has done. In doing this, she has almost disowned it, as though talking of someone else, yet is proud, as though of a child. She is delighted with her body because it has endured something particularly difficult. She came through fear, hills, lack of energy and stiffness. These things were the sufferings which she underwent, and to have endured these is experienced as a positive achievement. The week culminating in the race was tough and she felt her running to be beneficial, as it helped her to realise that she could achieve something.

Leah discusses 1 Timothy 6:11, provided by the diary, which reads, "But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance,

gentleness.” Leah writes on the passage at length, including,

I feel this is a warning about [?] to focus on things that are not to do with the soul. Running... can lead one away from other things such as worshipping God...

At the end of the day, we all die and it is God who will take care of us, but we must prepare ourselves for this.

We find Leah’s running clashing with the attention she would like to pay to God, and things to do with the soul. The surprising reference to death is perhaps related to a belief that the soul and not the body will survive death; and that, by giving too much time to running, she is building up something which will pass away. She has already mentioned the practical difficulty of fitting in Church and running. And here they seem to come together once again, this time in a theological opposition, of body and soul.

Her portrayal of God is loving and the expression, ‘take care of us’ suggests concern for each person’s well-being. She is perhaps thinking of death because she participated in a tough 21.2 mile race. There are possibly other factors which she does not mention, but it is clear that the race and the text have provoked a sense of the fragility of the body and the existence of the soul.

The week after the long race Leah’s log shows that tiredness has set in. One day she writes , “...a bit tired so just plodded.” The following day, “...Absolutely no energy, dizzy, nauseous, stopped, had a drink and then walked slowly... What a horrible experience...”. A few days later she is still tired, but can write, “...Did however enjoy running slowly, short distance in the brightness and warmth. Roll on Summer.” Reflecting on that difficult week, she writes that she came as close as she has ever come to ‘hitting the wall’, and she draws from this experience a lesson on what she might do were she to face such difficulties during the marathon.

It may be that being underweight is also having an affect on her running, or her struggle with eating enough food. Although we cannot claim that Leah’s relationship with food is disordered, it is none the less important. Women’s distance running does not have a happy relationship with food (Thompson and Sherman, 1993, pp57-59; Clark, 1993, pp141-147). Leah is experiencing this in her training and in her long runs. She is aware of the importance of adequate nutrition for distance running. She identifies her experience as similar to ‘hitting the wall’, noting that she had the symptoms of low muscle glycogen. Her body did not appear to be adequately refuelled after the long race which she ran on Saturday.

The Biblical passage which was put in the diary for the end of that week was James 1:2-4 which includes "...the testing of your faith produces endurance... let endurance have its full effect..." Leah reflects, "sometimes a difficult time or situation is for a good reason..." She discusses this in relation to raising sponsorship, to her work and to her training.

All this training is so tiring, so demanding, but I can see the point of it. It helps me understand how to run well, how to cope with discomfort, and provides wonderful rewards.

It is the same with a relationship with God, One must never give up when things go wrong, as he is there for us and always [will] be to help us get through and become more wise.

Here we find that Leah is interested in the idea, presented in the James text, of growth through difficulty. She talks about the benefit of enduring suffering as understanding and coping and being part of a greater purpose. The point of it, and the rewards, appear to be the delight which she has expressed and the endurance which she now possesses - as spoken of in James. She discusses the relationship with God separately, as though she is suggesting that the hardship in running is not quite the same as things in the rest of life going wrong, or at least running may be only a part of it. Her view of the Christian life is of life in personal relationship with God, rather than of being bound to a series of ethical imperatives.

Leah's training improves and her running feels stronger. She writes, "glad to be enjoying the running a lot more after... 21.2 mile race. Gosh it was tough... Felt today's run was good. Actually enjoyed it..."

The pleasure which she is gaining here from her running appears to be related to running without too much struggling. She enjoyed the pleasure of the run. This contrasts with the more extreme accounts of endurance in which a runner might enjoy the struggle. As we read of the enjoyable run contrasted with the tough one, it is perhaps having overcome that toughness of the previous run which makes the less tough run more enjoyable.

In response to one of the Bible texts, she writes, "I will succeed as I believe in what I am doing and I believe in my God." She is not attributing her success itself to God but to her faith in God. Given her view of faith as a personal caring relationship with God, we find her to be suggesting that the importance to her of this relationship, and her sense of purpose will contribute to her success.

As the marathon gets nearer, Leah reflects on her pre-race nerves and on how much more she will enjoy running after the marathon. She reflects, "Think I have definitely discovered the distance for me and it is not 26.2 miles. 10/13 is quite far enough. Rather looking forward to summer, running early morning and being able to do a comfortable 1 hour run when I want..."

She is finding that the training is a struggle and these comments suggest that she would not consider it a struggle worth pursuing a great many more times. The struggle seems to be beginning to outweigh the pleasure of running. Yet her sense of purpose is preventing her from giving up on her training at this point.

In response to Colossians 1:11 she writes,

This is a time when it is necessary to pull on all the resources. Your friends for support, but most of all God. It is He who has got you this far, it is He who has guided you, stood by you, got you up at 6.00am in a wet cold morning. He is not going to leave you now. This is a week to give thanks for what has been experienced in the training months and to pray for continuing guidance in the big week to come.

God is portrayed once again in a close personal relationship with the runner. God is not portrayed as within her or above her but next to her, encouraging her and providing support. Prayer is the medium of this relationship and the means of calling on God's support. She can be confident in her training decisions as she believes them to have been informed by prayer.

On reading Hebrews 12:1 she writes,

There are many others in the same boat... with the same concerns. You are not alone. So get out there... Concentrate on the finish, the achievement. Go enjoy the race, trust in God's guidance and love. He, the crowd and you will succeed.

Here we find her theological model once again applied to her running the race. She is suggesting that the runner will run in fellowship with others and in relationship with God. By 'succeed' she appears to mean finishing the race, which is enduring. This endurance is something which will be achieved through the love and guidance of God.

In Leah's diary we have discovered something of her theological foundations, as she finds them to be relevant to her running and racing. Her image of the Church is of a warm fellowship community. Her image of God also involves God's warmth. The Christian may enter into a relationship with God in which God should be worshipped. This

worship is to do with the soul. Things to do with the soul are seen by Leah as better than other things. God is there for us, helps us get through, is present with the runner in training and will ultimately take care of the Christian when he or she dies. Faith will enable the Christian to succeed. We do find that these theological beliefs impact her performance in the marathon as she experiences it.

During the first part of the marathon itself, Leah reports in her questionnaire response, she was thinking about the pleasant weather, enjoying the crowd and looking out for her parents who were waiting to see her. This was reported in her responses to the marathon questionnaire.

At nineteen miles, she slowed to a walking pace, feeling unable to cope with the noise of the crowd. She writes, 'I enjoy tranquil running'. She had cramps and blisters in her feet. She would advise others in the same position to remember that they are not alone and to relax. As we have seen, for Leah, 'not alone' refers to other people who are having a similar experience as well as to God. She is facing the physical difficulties of tiredness which leads to her walking and finding the noise difficult and of cramps and blisters. This is the suffering which she must go through to achieve finishing the race.

She also writes, "concentrate on where you are going and why. If you have a verse or happy thought, think it. Most of all. Remember God is with you. He understands." Although Leah does not at any point mention Jesus, much of her image of God appears to be informed by Jesus and his action. The image of God as understanding human life is often incarnational. God understands human life because God experienced human life and suffering in Jesus. Leah's theological views do not include any powerful images of suffering, and this absence becomes important here in the race. It is the warmth and positiveness of God which is used to mask the presence of discomfort and difficulty, in the advice she would give to other Christians.

Leah notes that she did not think of God during the race. Interestingly, her views of the warmth of fellowship are equally at home in a secular context. "...but my first thought on crossing the line was, thank you Lord, and I could have cried with joy. He was so with me there, I really felt he was with me." Reflecting on the marathon, she writes, "I feel God has guided me through both marathons. He gave me the get up and go. So did friends and family, but something from within [sic] put one foot in front of the other. It has to be my belief in God."

The intimate presence of God has been an important part of the experience of endurance during the marathon for Leah. Although she did not think of God during the race, her trust in God's guidance during her training helped her to believe that the marathon was possible for her. That sense of its possibility seems to have enabled her to believe in the real possibility of her crossing the finish line. In this way we can see that her foundational beliefs influenced how she experienced the marathon without being clearly expressed in thoughts at the time. When she says that her belief in God helped her to endure the marathon, we can see that she is referring to her relationship with God and God's caring love for her. For Leah the warmth of God and the warmth of human fellowship are interpreted as enabling endurance for the Christian runner.

4.2 Case Study 3: Tina

Tina is a married 51 year old woman with two children, who works part time and also does work for charity. She was originally a hockey player and took up running after giving up hockey. She is a member of a United Reformed Church. This means that she belongs to a Church at the evangelical end of the protestant spectrum.

She was keen to run the London Marathon this year after being unhappy with her performance the last time she ran that marathon. She is training with a friend who did not get a place this year. This suggests she is running not just to finish the marathon but has a serious goal in mind for how she will run the marathon.

Tina was in the study from the start and her writing was articulate and reflective. For these reasons, her case was taken into the interview stage. As the interview discussion fills out the meaning of what Tina experienced and narrated during the period of filling in the diary and during the marathon, the interview will not be presented as a separate account but used to inform the case study of Tina where it is appropriate.

An initial impression of the material from Tina is that there is great depth of meaning attributed to the physical struggle of the marathon. Tina speaks frequently of her suffering benefiting the children for whom she is raising money through sponsorship. When this was discussed in interview, Tina said that her running does not directly benefit them, but she feels that if they knew she was going through some small amount of suffering for

them, they would be glad. The feminist theologian Susan Dunlap discusses the importance of taking the physical into account in theological research, "...our bodies can be sources of *solidarity* with the suffering... The body at risk is a profound point of connection with the powerless of the earth" (Dunlap, 1999, p145). In this way Tina also found that her experience of suffering became a point of contact for her.

Tina writes about the area where she does her training runs,

The weather was dry but very windy which made some sections of the run much harder than normal. Also at this time of day there is a lot of traffic around and the air is a bit 'fumey'.

The terrain - is road running. My running partner and I have built up various circuits from our houses that cover specific distances. Apart from when I run on the treadmill at the gym then there aren't any softer surfaces around here for distance running.

In response to 1 Cor 9:24, she writes,

...The training and keeping going I think helps in your life and spiritual self control and self discipline even though the actual achievement (in terms of world matters) is basically frivolous...

She talks about 'keeping going' in running and the qualities it builds in the runner. The training and the endurance quality which long distance running builds in the runner provides useful qualities for the runner's life. Running a marathon provides a frivolous achievement. Tina does not suggest that running the marathon is a frivolous achievement because it is a material rather than a spiritual thing, but because there are other people and events in the world which are not frivolous. By placing of spiritual self control and self discipline next to the frivolous achievement, Tina indicates the contrast between these two qualities and frivolity. Spiritual qualities take on importance as an aspect of the Christian life.

One week she is unable to train as she has a virus. She writes, "you have to rest until your body has recovered... The trouble is, with a job and 2 children and a husband who works shift hours - I don't get much opportunity to rest!"

The following week she is still too unwell to put in a full week of training. The text which she is asked to comment on is Habakkuk 3:19, "God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer and makes me tread upon the heights."

She writes, "This is very significant for me. I need the strength to get me through the

difficult times - both in terms of running and the fund raising. Also, at present, in trying to maintain my lent disciplines.”

Her emphasis on self discipline once again becomes important to the Christian life as she has taken on a Lent discipline. This is unnecessary and unusual in the reformed Church tradition to which she belongs, and so is a personal choice which Tina has made based on the importance which she gives to self discipline in the Christian life. She feels in need of strength from God at this point to ‘maintain’ her discipline and also to help her to get through difficult times. We can see here Tina’s model of endurance. The difficult times are the suffering to be overcome, and getting through them is endurance. The suffering is counteracted by self discipline and self control, which are important spiritual qualities. The strength which God provides can be drawn on to make it easier to endure the difficulties.

The autonomous picture of the individual may appear at first to be contradicted by God providing strength, but this is not the case here. God’s provision of strength appears to be a building of the discipline and control needed by Tina, rather than removal of the difficulties or making life easier.

After being unwell, Tina builds up her training gradually. When it has been built up she completes a long Saturday run, and logs, “Jasmine and I met up to complete an 18 mile run this time. We followed our usual course... I could not believe how good I felt right up to the end - I was a bit concerned that I had peaked 3 weeks too soon!” That week, the text is James 1:2-4, “My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Tina writes, “This is a very inspiring verse for the challenge ahead - I must try to remember it.” Tina’s running feels good after resting, but she is looking ahead to the marathon with anxiety. Having run well for 18 miles is seen almost as if it is a bad omen, as though each person is only allowed one good run. As she writes, “...for the challenge ahead”, she echoes the verse as it reads, “...whenever you face trials”. These trials are to be of any kind, and so this verse lends itself to being read as significant by Tina at the time at which it appeared in the diary. Tina’s attraction to this verse demonstrates once again the importance which she attaches to building spiritual qualities through facing

difficulties and overcoming them.

After her next long run, she writes,

On my own for the first time with a long run. I had worked out a course of 18+ miles. Jasmine had lent me her little radio to help keep me going. I found this run very hard... It took me 3 3/4 hours and my legs felt as if they would drop off at the end. The weather had been good...

As the marathon gets nearer, we read in the training log,

I ran our usual 6 mile run and tried to keep up a reasonable pace. My breathing wasn't very good and I was pleased to finish. I think I am suffering a bit with hay fever. I ended up being late for work. I was feeling fairly stressed with the running that day and nervous about the 'big day' and managed to fall out with both my children. I had to stop and talk things through with them before I could leave home.

Nerves and tiredness are affecting Tina's response to her family, yet it is significant that she places a good relationship with her children more highly than arriving at work on time. She also appears to place that relationship more highly than her marathon training, as she does not assume that falling out with people is her right as a marathon runner, but views it as a wrong which requires putting right.

Throughout her diary Tina refers to raising the sponsorship money. She writes, "...People have been very generous..."

In response to Colossians 1:11, which talks again about strength from God, she writes, "I have been praying for the strength to complete this. I feel that it will and should be difficult and hope that in going through this I am in some way helping the children who suffer in addition to the money I raise."

God is again not seen as someone who should intervene by removing the difficulty of the race. The suffering itself is important. God, in response to prayer, is, however, expected to intervene by providing extra strength. This is a relationship with God in which God can be asked for things in prayer. Tina speaks of her own suffering as vicarious, in the sense that by suffering on their behalf she is benefiting them. The benefit arises from the solidarity. They are the purpose of Tina's suffering, but also the purpose of her enduring that suffering.

She talked in her interview about the suffering of the children around the world. She is

familiar with the suffering of children in places in, for example, Africa and the Phillipines. She felt helpless in the face of the abuses which the children suffered, and frustrated at being unable to help. Running the marathon enabled her to actively help and to gain solidarity in the experience of suffering. She was able to feel a little bit of what they experience, through her own experience.

The diary provides us with an impression of the relevant aspects of Tina's theological foundations and this impression is further developed by the interview. Tina's theology of Christian activity centres on solidarity in suffering. It is a theology of compassion for others. God's role is as a provider of strength. The Christian may pray for strength and finds this provided by God, who builds a person up so that they gain strength. The Christian life involves qualities which are seen as spiritual, such as self control. It is important to nurture these qualities. Tina does not appear to contrast the spiritual with the bodily, but appears to imply that the positive qualities of a person, such as strength and self control are an aspect of the whole person who is ultimately spiritual.

During the first 15 miles of the marathon, Tina reports retrospectively in her questionnaire response having thought about "How brilliant the crowd was... I felt like a star! I was very conscious of trying to pace myself... By 14 miles I was starting to feel weary and achy." Tina is absorbed both by the environment and by awareness of the practicalities of running.

From around 17 miles, onwards Tina felt unpleasantly tired, "...very achy legs and feeling physically exhausted." This is the suffering aspect of endurance for Tina. She feels as though she is too tired to proceed, yet continues.

In response to "what did you think?", we read, "Although I was positive and determined I was a little concerned that my legs would not hold out. I prayed and I imagined I was on a regular run with Jasmine so that I knew how far was still to go and help me get there." Here, we find that where Tina's theological foundations indicate that God will provide strength, she is drawing on those foundations to inform her actions.

Tina deliberately employs two techniques to help her to overcome her tiredness. The first of these is prayer. From our knowledge of Tina's theological model, we can see that it is not the act of praying itself which is intended to overcome difficulties, but that the prayer is a request to God to provide the strength required by Tina to keep going. The

second is to imagine that she is running in different circumstances. She imagines she is on an ordinary run and that she is with her friend. This way she can imagine what it is like to run that distance when she is not as tired and when she has her usual companion. She is using both a visualisation technique and a theological technique to enable endurance.

Among her experiences of the race, she notes, "In terms of religious experience. I felt God was with me throughout and on the 3 occasions when I prayed... I did gain added strength." God was with her as a companion and as a provider of strength. God's presence is experienced as a feeling as well as through the evidence of gains in strength. She experiences endurance in a theological way, she is open to interpreting the experience in this way and finds God providing for her needs.

In her explanation of how she got through this low point, she includes,

I had prayed for strength and felt I was not doing this on my own... I knew so many people were supporting me and wanting me to succeed... I felt that whatever I suffered was very minor in comparison to so many of the children that my charity helps - and hoped that in some way my little bit of suffering could help them... if I persevered the sense of achievement would always be there... I knew that the more difficult it was the greater would be the pleasure in completing it... My husband and children were there and following me along... This was all very encouraging and I couldn't face the thought of disappointing my husband.

In the interview, Tina looked back on the marathon and saw the central reason for her successful completion of the marathon as being her determination not to give up. During the marathon, she had a picture in her mind of the finish line which helped her to aim for something. She perceives herself as a person driven by goals. In the light of the theological model which she has presented in her diary accounts, we can see that by determination she is referring to what she considers to be the spiritual qualities: self control and self discipline, aimed with perseverance towards a particular goal. She recalled having a sense of purpose as she prepared for the marathon. The marathon increased in its level of importance: it took on a greater purpose. Will and determination would help her succeed and through faith she could ask for greater inner strength.

Tina reflects in the discussion on Jesus who was not "swayed from the course... from what was expected from him." God had certain expectations of how Jesus should behave and Jesus was not swayed from that. Tina is portraying Jesus as an example of the qualities of self control which she sees as central to the Christian life. It is the earthly life of Jesus as an example which is important to her understanding of the experience of

endurance.

Although it is pleasant to finish an easy run, there is a great sense of achievement in completing a run in which you have had to push yourself. Tina does not see herself as having will power in other areas of her life and struggles to meet other goals, achieving them only if they are short term. She perceives herself as not possessing in great amounts the qualities which she appears to consider central to the Christian life and to endurance. We can see that the sense of achievement which she feels must be greater than it would otherwise be as she perceives herself as lacking in the qualities which she sees as vital in the context of endurance.

Tina reflects that she does not believe in God as a supernatural presence changing circumstances, but she does gain inner strength from God. She feels that she has a struggle having enough faith and believing in God. She has none the less experienced getting inner strength from God. God provides the mental strength needed. So, for Tina, the experience of endurance is one of relying on God to assist her by strengthening her in areas in which she is lacking. She can face suffering and endure it because of her self control and determination and because of her sense of purpose, yet ultimately it is God who strengthens those characteristics where she is weak. Tina's theological foundations indicate that the qualities and actions of the Christian are central to her faith. Her understanding of how these are best manifest impacted on how she responded to the marathon, and how she interpreted her experience.

4.2. Case study 4: Barbara

The reflective and imaginative aspect of Barbara's diary meant that a great deal could be gained by taking this case into the interview stage. The interview took place in person two months after the marathon. Where the interview discussion affords a deeper understanding of Barbara's views and experiences, that discussion will be drawn on.

Barbara is a married woman of 50 with two children in their early twenties. Her husband is an aircraft engineer working in Nigeria. She has been Church of Scotland, which is a reformed denomination at the evangelical end of the protestant spectrum, but now attends an Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church is similar to the Church of England. She and

her husband attended that church because of its proximity to their house, but have appreciated being part of a fellowship there. It involves, "...home groups; prayer and ongoing Christian events, all of which has been enriching to us." So the first thing we learn about Barbara's theological perspective is the importance of the possibility of involvement and fellowship.

Barbara began running marathons in 1986, and writes, "...Have always set myself academic challenges in the past... and thought I would have a crack at a physical challenge." She has frequently run the London Marathon since then. In the interview, she expands on what she means by 'challenge': "In taking on a challenge, you expect pain and you meet it, knowing that you can rise above it". This indicates that it was endurance itself which attracted Barbara to marathon running, in the sense of the overcoming of suffering.

Her 2002 training has been hampered by setbacks. Near the start of the period logged in the diary, she has to travel to Nigeria where she will be spending some weeks with her husband.

She logs,

...slight covering of snow... but deeper as ascend hill. Feel very ploddy; have to drop to a walk... Quick stop to take in the view... Terrain is v. uneven and have to watch out for slippery treeroots/branches... Take longer than normal <60 mins. Still, good to get out at last... and I think I caught a glimpse of my old friend the capercaillie fleeing through the pine tops.

Two days later, she is in Nigeria: "There is a treadmill thankfully and other gym equipment. There is nowhere to run outside. The compound is small and outside... it would be unwise." Reflecting on the week she notes, "This is NOT a typical week in a MARATHON training diary!"

In response to 1 Cor 9:24 she writes, "...I relate this verse to the 'training requirements' for a sound faith and an alive relationship with Christ. The training for a race requires discipline as does spiritual training; the outcome of which has far deeper implications." Adding comments to her reflection on the weeks running Barbara thinks about when she lost her path in the snow. It seems to her to be similar to our relationship with God. She reflects on spiritual 'losses of direction'. So for Barbara, a personal relationship with Christ is central to the Christian life.

In the interview discussion Barbara writes of the importance of the outdoor running environment to her experience of distance running. In the outdoors she experiences a sense of awe which she interprets also as a sense of the severity of God. God is like the mountain landscape. This image of God emphasises God's transcendence and also provides her running with a theological motive of reflecting on God, and experiencing God's awesome presence.

Training in Nigeria of the treadmill is filled with setbacks, as there are powercuts and the treadmill itself is unreliable. She reports feeling frustrated and thinks about the long runs which she will complete when she returns to Scotland.

At the end of her first week in Nigeria the text in the diary for comment is Hebrews 6:20, "We have... a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, the runner who runs ahead on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Barbara writes, "Jesus has gone ahead and has set the pace for us, so to speak; the ultimate pace-maker. And following the pace he has set means he knows all the tough bits and we ourselves can run through them knowing there is nothing we will experience that he hasn't already experienced." She also comments that week that while she is running she is able to think reflectively of situations which she has observed. B is able to interpret the metaphor by using her experience of running marathons to understand that Jesus can identify with her because of his experience of the difficulties of life and of endurance. He is the historical Jesus but is also relevant now because he is still involved in our lives.

As she continues her treadmill training in Nigeria she logs more powercuts some tendon pain, and runs during which she imagines that she is winning a race. In her reflection on the text, she writes about assurance that God is real. She writes, "And when I am aware of his presence its like I could run forever and I'm on top of the world." The reality and presence of God come to her as she runs. God's presence makes running easier because of the sense of transcendence associated with God's presence.

Experiencing the shocking contrasts of Nigeria, she refers to the treadmill as, "a bolthole where I can escape with my thoughts and mull over happenings and observations." She begins to adapt to the difference between the training opportunities available and the way she would like to be training. Barbara is imaginative and reflective and all this has an

impact on how she experiences her running. She experiences her running as a different space from the rest of life when she is in Nigeria, a space in which she can escape from the injustices and suffering which she witnesses at other times of the day. This escape however is not a running away to forget, but reflecting to try to understand meaningfully what she has seen.

In her interview she refers to St Cuthbert who used to sail out to a tiny island off the Northumbrian coast to be alone for prayer and reflection. She sees her running as similar to this. She is talking about the reflective nature of his isolation, but we can also see that St Cuthbert endured dangerous and harsh seas and had enviable levels of self sufficiency. In this way he was also building endurance. The Nigerian running environment does not spark off the same type of thoughts as the mountainous Scottish running environment, but does offer reflective possibilities.

By the time she returns home to Scotland, she is surprised by the running environment, writing, "Along by the river - the air feels clean and fresh. And its so quiet. Still can't get used to the wonderful feeling of no noise..." In response to James 1:2-4 on her return from Nigeria Barbara writes, "In times of trouble instead of giving way to negative feelings, embrace the experience and use it as a learning process to draw nearer to God and deepen your faith."

For Barbara the Christian life as well as running offers the opportunity of, and indeed the responsibility to, participate in a process of maturing and growing nearer to God. The Christian is an active learner. She speaks more of this in the interview. Her view is that training runs enable the runner to feel confident about her abilities to endure difficulties. In this way the training runs and the marathons also provide an experience of endurance which trains the runner for experiencing difficulties in other areas of life. The runner can mature in life through having experienced and endured. Although maturing in life is not restricted only to those who have endured suffering and challenges, Barbara believes that the runner opens herself up to the possibility of greater maturation.

She runs a 10K race and writes,

Get into a good pace from the start line - steep forest tracks for most of the course, so difficult to compare times with 'normal' 10K times... Slight cramp in left foot, but consciously tell self to relax. work hard. Feel in control. Knees fine; no undue soreness considering 18miler on Monday. At 8K begin to recite Isaiah 40v.31 ...will renew their strength...will run and not grow weary. Really dig. Hurts. Good finish.

She looks for hope in her knowledge of God, reciting a verse in which God intervenes, providing strength to those who need it.

She continues to log training runs, tired legs, daffodils, red squirrels and roe deer. She is not running as a bolthole from life at home, but to enter fully into it as a participant in the natural environment, affected by its surfaces, its sounds and its sights.

She writes in response to Collossians 1:11, "Inspiring stuff. God's limitless power will sustain us in the strength that we need to endure anything that life throws at us." Here she contrasts God and human beings. God has limitless power, while we are in need of power. Endurance is said here to require the sustaining of strength. Life 'throws' difficulties and suffering at us and success is enduring these. Our strength needs to be sustained, and so the Christian life requires God's power to provide this sustenance. Barbara is attracted to images of God which are transcendent and powerful. In the interview she tells me that God is above and at the same time deeper than us, like a mountain.

As the marathon approaches she comments on Hebrews 12:1, which includes, 'let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely'. Barbara writes of different weights of running clothing, and the hard work of running, then she turns to faith, "... You have to strip away... anything that gets in the way of focussing on Christ Himself... So faith is hanging in with the pace, even if it might seem impossible, because the end result will be a race well run."

She uses the running analogy once again to talk about Christ. Her experience of endurance running is informing her interpretation by providing an understanding of the contrast between the impossibility which appears to be there and the reality of the possibility of not just finishing a race but finishing well. In this theological model the Christian life is single minded focus on Christ, and living according to Christ's example: endurance appears to be impossible but because of the possibility offered by God, the Christian who has put in the effort has the possibility of successful endurance ahead.

Barbara's theological foundations centre on relationship with Christ. This is not surprising as her image of God is that God is severe and awe inspiring. God's presence is like a mountain, deep beneath us and high above us. God has limitless power, while human beings, in contrast, require strength. In Barbara's theology, human beings and God

are brought closer by hardship. Jesus understands our experience, because of his own personal experience of suffering, while the difficulties which we experience draw us nearer to God and deepen our faith.

We find Barbara's theological foundations impact her marathon experience. The marathon itself goes fine for the first fifteen miles. Then Barbara calls the second part of the race the zone, where you "meet your demons". This is an interesting phrase because although it is a light-hearted metaphor, it nonetheless evokes images of the temptation of Jesus, in which Jesus' spiritual journey required him to face the evil which opposed his personal purpose. The suffering aspect of endurance is, therefore, here being portrayed as opposed to God. In the interview she talks of the demons as things, "you thought you could handle but can't" and as 'niggling thoughts' about inability to succeed. The runner's own potential inability to endure is experienced as a part of the marathon experience and as an aspect of endurance which is hostile to God in Barbara's interpretation.

During the last eight miles of the marathon she began to feel irritable and realised that this was due to tiredness. Her concentration was poor. During the race she did not converse with other runners. She writes, "...I didn't feel lonely. Probably too focused on job in hand. Running the marathon is probably a very 'self-centred' experience. I suppose it has to be." Endurance itself is experienced by Barbara as a unique experience to each individual. There is solidarity in the suffering but isolation in the endurance.

At 18 miles she tries to recall encouraging verses from the Bible and recalls, "the sovereign Lord is my strength." At 20 miles she finds it difficult to remember even the time on her watch just after looking at it. She writes, "The brain is getting scrambled." At 21 miles she makes a conscious effort to speed up and writes, "seems like I'm flying". She draws both on spiritual and physical resources to speed up. It is interesting that she could only remember the sovereignty of God and the strength provided by God. These appear to be the central aspects of her theological model, and here become central to her experience of endurance. They represent the interaction between the transcendent all powerful aspect of God, and the possibility of the human being as provided with strength. In the interview she talks about our inner strength and God's strength as related, as not entirely distinct.

She talks also in the interview of the experience of feeling irritated with people and with God at the most difficult point in the marathon. These feelings made her uncomfortable as

did her prayer to God which she describes as ‘narky’ and ‘demanding’. But she is optimistic about the discomfort of these things. She portrays the discomfort at her own attitude as part of the distance running experience. She has experienced the worst of herself, and has endured that as an aspect of suffering, and in doing so matured and become a person who is of more benefit to others. The experience of endurance in running has been a part of the Christian life in which she has taken responsibility for an aspect of her own maturation and of growing closer to God.

Barbara’s foundational views focused on the awe inspiring nature of God, and her willingness to face difficulties as she experiences endurance, appears to draw on those powerful images. The strength of God was used to inspire her own strength as she ran, and her understanding of the existence of suffering in human life as something which is understood by God, enabled her to interpret her difficulties not as a negative thing, but as an opportunity to grow into a stronger person. There is an image here of God’s enormous power as something on which human beings need to draw but also something to which they can aspire, because that power contains an unrelenting compassion.

4.2.5 Endurance in the marathon in the case studies.

We have looked in detail at each of the case studies and analysed their theological views and how those interact with their experiences of training for and running the 2002 London Marathon. There are clear similarities between the experiences of the case study participants which can help us to say more general things about how endurance was experienced by the runners as a group of individuals who were all Christian female runners participating in the 2002 London Marathon. There were also distinctions between each runner’s views of the purpose of the marathon, the Christian life, relationship with God, the role of God in the marathon, and other such things.

We shall now look at endurance as it appears in the case studies by picking up once again, the themes which we found in women’s distance running in the previous chapter, and seeing how the experience of the runners here, can begin to illuminate our understanding. These themes were endurance and the environment, endurance and transcendence, and endurance and solidarity and isolation. These themes should assist us in the process of drawing out the experiences of endurance which were specific to the moments of

tiredness in the London marathon 2002 as they occurred to the case study participants.

4.2.5.1. Endurance and the environment

In the previous chapter we found that the experience of the environment is included along with bodily and mental factors in women's narratives of distance running. We found the environment to be an essential element of endurance in those narratives. We found aesthetic qualities, such as the beauty of the natural world and spiritual qualities, like hope, alongside intellectual experiences of knowledge of the environment. Examining the environment in the experience of endurance enabled us to see the paradoxical nature of endurance in which there is no endurance without suffering and in which what could lead to despair, leads instead to life, hope and perseverance.

We remember that, as Meg tripped over, her marathon experience changed. She felt irritated by what seemed to be other people's lack of consideration. She found the situation "...a bit scary!" She was still putting in a good pace. She was aware that she had to put in an effort to persevere after that experience. She did not experience the presence of other people hampering her progress as a positive one. As Meg tires and struggles to maintain her good pace, she no longer finds the running environment pleasant.

The environment was experienced by Leah in a similar way. During the first part of the marathon she was enjoying the pleasant weather, enjoying the crowd and looking out for her parents who were waiting to see her. The running environment was stimulating and was absorbing her interest. At nineteen miles, however, Leah slowed to a walking pace. By this time she is tiring considerably and no longer appreciates a stimulating environment. She attributes her slowing to feeling unable to cope with the noise of the crowd, and writes, 'I enjoy tranquil running'. She is contrasting her experience of running the marathon to running in a pleasant environment which in this instance is interpreted as a quiet and peaceful one.

Tina also records enjoying the stimulating aspects of the running environment. She had her name written on her top and was enjoying the sound of the crowd cheering her on. She writes, "How brilliant the crowd was... I felt like a star! I was very conscious of trying to pace myself... By 14 miles I was starting to feel weary and achy." Tina is

absorbed both by the environment and by awareness of the practicalities of running.

We read above of Stevenson and Biddle's study in which they suggested two categories of thought which would be relevant to the environment. These are the two outward categories. The outward monitoring category includes focus on task relevant factors to do with external conditions, "conditions, route, strategy, drinks stations, split times, distance markers." The outward distraction category includes task irrelevant thoughts related to the runner's surroundings, such as, "scenery, environment, spectators, other runners, fancy dress, chatting." When we read of the experiences and the thoughts of Meg, Leah and Tina, in the light of what we know of their views from the whole case studies, we can see that there might be some use in categorising their thoughts into task relevant and task irrelevant factors, but we can also see that to do so would be imposing a possibly unnecessary degree of artificial division of their thoughts.

The dichotomy is not so artificial at the start of the race. The runners report their thoughts as though they are of two different types. The nice weather and the feeling of enjoying the crowds make the running easier. This would appear to be a clear example of the runners being distracted by the environment. When the runners grow tired the distinction becomes less clear. Meg trips and attributes this to the other runners. Thoughts about the presence of other runners could no longer be classified as distraction, but become an important part of how she functions as a runner. In the case of Meg we can see that this is particularly relevant as we are aware that Meg feels a strong sense of impatience when other people hamper her running and that these feelings can in themselves slow her down and increase her sense of tiredness for a considerable time, as they did during the week in which she was late home from work on the Tuesday.

Leah attributes her slowing down to the noisy environment, indicating that her thoughts about the crowd are intensifying her experience of struggling. Her thoughts about the crowd and the other runners, now cease to be outward distractions and become thoughts which could slow her progress by counteracting her will to persevere. The negative side in the conflict of suffering and endurance is intensified. This is particularly so as we know that she is a runner who already believes that she is suited to a shorter distance.

Tina is aware of having two types of thoughts about the environment at the same time some relevant to the task and others not so relevant. Yet, feeling like a star, which appears to be related to the external environment could draw attention to the physical

task of running, in the same way that Meg reported being conscious of the road surface as an aspect of the pleasantness of the weather. What we find here is that the outward and the inward are not necessarily easy to distinguish.

While it is important for larger studies of runners to distinguish between categories of thoughts, and can assist in understanding those thoughts and the relationship of those thoughts to the environment, it is important here for us to go beyond that point, as our case study approach has shown that with deeper knowledge of the individual runner's views and experiences we can gain a more specific understanding of how that runner is interacting with the environment and how that runner's thoughts are interacting with the environment.

The environment of the marathon is not the type of natural environment which we read of runner's gaining strength from in the previous chapter. The surroundings are built up and the runners are surrounded by people. Tiredness appears to intensify the running environment, and has, in these examples, made the environment contribute to the experience of endurance in a primarily negative way. In the theological foundations of these runners the marathon environment did not really play a role. In the previous chapter we found runners engaging with the beauty of the natural world as they ran. The natural world was in many cases clearly meaningful to the runners, and that meaningfulness was able to contribute to the hope of running. In the New Testament texts and the Early Church texts we found some writers reinterpreting the environment. One striking example is Paul's reinterpretation of the Roman arena. In this way, he was able to transfer the meaningfulness of one environment to another environment. This could be an interesting strategy for women who run.

4.2.5.2 Endurance and transcendence

In the previous chapter, we found that endurance was associated with transcendence in several ways. There was the transcendence of life which enabled a spiritual sense of reflection on issues of life and death, the transcendence of social boundaries, the transcendence of physical boundaries, the transcendence of the runner's own life, and the transcendence of expectations. These areas in which runners experienced transcending the daily limits of life were seen to lead to alternative senses of the runner's self and the

world. We found runners experiencing a sense of reconciliation, a sense of autonomy and self-understanding, and also a feeling of flying. We have also found, in examining transcendence, the active aspect of endurance as something which requires the will of the runner, and activity in the face of difficulty.

Chapter 2 provided alternative accounts of transcendence in endurance, as it presented images of the person who is enduring, sharing in the experience of Christ, and perhaps even seeing the risen Jesus, as Stephen is reported to have done. While these images are highly theological, the sense of the reversal of understanding of suffering and victory also provided an account of transcendence. Social oppression was transcended by the interpretation of hardship and humiliation as victory and honour in the sight of God.

In no context is endurance guaranteed to provide an experience of transcendence. The suggestion that the experience of flow should be sought in sport is perhaps an indication that people seek out experience of something beyond their everyday experience, as they participate in sport. Experience related to God does not necessarily take the form of religious experience of the spirituality or oneness of things, of a sense of something supernatural, but may take the form of reflecting theologically in a way specifically enabled by particular circumstances.

When Meg makes some brief notes about the marathon in her diary, she notes, "I felt the power of people praying for me." We found that she stressed the importance of the Christian community, and of prayer within that community. Her experience is both impacted and shaped by those ideas. Here in the marathon she is experiencing endurance as occurring in the context of the Church community and of God. The prayers are active support for her, occurring as she runs. The power of God is present with her, and is no doubt a positive feeling for a runner trying to maintain a good pace in a marathon.

For Leah, her feeling of transcendence in the sense of God's presence occurred after she had finished the race. "...my first thought on crossing the line was, thank you Lord, and I could have cried with joy. He was so with me there, I really felt he was with me." She writes, retrospectively, "I feel God has guided me through both marathons. He gave me the get up and go. So did friends and family, but something from within [sic] put one foot in front of the other. It has to be my belief in God." Her interpretation of her experience is highly theological, in the context of her being provoked to ask theological questions about the experience. We found her theology to centre on the warmth of God and the

Christian community, and we can see here that her experience is set within that context.

Tina, like Meg, thought about prayer during the marathon. She notes, "In terms of religious experience. I felt God was with me throughout and on the 3 occasions when I prayed... I did gain added strength." In her explanation of how she got through this low point she includes, "I had prayed for strength and felt I was not doing this on my own... I felt that whatever I suffered was very minor in comparison to so many of the children that my charity helps - and hoped that in some way my little bit of suffering could help them..."

Tina experienced transcendence in two ways during these moments of tiredness in the marathon. God was with her as a companion and as a provider of strength, and this is experienced as a feeling as well as through the evidence of gains in strength. Her sense of transcendence also includes the concept of her suffering in solidarity with others. The running enables her to cross boundaries of personal suffering into other people's suffering so that she could take onto herself the suffering of children in places in, for example, Africa and the Philippines. She is using prayer to enable a positive experience of transcendence because she already believes that that will provide her with extra strength to enable her to persevere. During the marathon Tina has transcended both her image of her own strength of faith and her impression of herself as a weak willed person.

Barbara also transcends herself. At 18 miles she tries to recall encouraging verses from the Bible and recalls, "the sovereign Lord is my strength." In the interview, Barbara talks about our inner strength and God's strength as related, as not entirely distinct. The strength and power of God become an important part of her experience. Like Meg and Tina, Barbara also prayed as she ran the last part of the marathon. We saw that during the marathon she felt a sense of closeness to God that made her behave as though she were a close member of God's family. She experienced not only transcending the secular circumstances of the London marathon in her praying and turning to God, but also transcending her understanding of her relationship with God in which prayer should be respectful.

Stevinson and Biddle's study included the category of inward distraction. The inward distraction category includes task irrelevant thoughts not directly related to the surrounding environment, such as, "daydreams, fantasies, maths puzzles, imagining music, poetry, philosophy." This would perhaps be the category into which thoughts

about God, or the feeling of others praying, or the runner's own prayers would be placed. This, however, would not be particularly helpful for these case studies. The category is clearly intended to refer to genuine distractions. If a theologian were running while pondering the Trinity, this might help the theologian to be distracted from aching legs. However, these women are involved in a relationship with God which means that for them their prayers are changing how they experience running. Helgo Schomer included a category related to reflection on activity. This is more helpful for us here as the prayers are very closely related to the activity being performed.

Schomer's category, however, still does not adequately include the interaction between prayer, physical sensation and perception, which we have found in some of these case studies. Experience of transcendence, whether of God or transcending personal limits of suffering or of faith can be seen to have influenced these women's experience of endurance. It has been an integral part of the experience rather than a distraction from the experience or a reflection of that experience.

As we related the case studies we saw how the theological foundations with which they started the marathon appeared to impact on their experience. Here we can see that the marathon did not merely reinforce the theological foundations of the runners but in some ways changed their perceptions of themselves and their relationship with God. Barbara became uncomfortably familiar with God whom she usually perceives as rather distinct and awesome. Tina found stronger faith than she had expected. Leah had a powerful experience of the presence of God which nearly moved her to tears, which she had not expressed expecting to have. Meg finds a warmer sense of being on the receiving end of prayer, than her emphasis on her duty to others might lead us to expect.

The New Testament texts such as James indicated that the difficulties of life can strengthen the person who experiences them. Here, we find that enduring the marathon has been a transformative experience for these runners, in a positive way. They have not been dramatically changed, but have a slightly altered perception. We find here the closeness, presence and warmth of God and the Christian community, and that the women experiencing these things were different from the women who originally perceived them. Focusing on these points we find that the women's original theological foundations were focused most noticeably on difficulty, challenge and vicarious suffering, apart from Leah. After the marathon, they are reporting a sense of being nurtured.

4.2.5.3 Endurance and solidarity and isolation

In the previous chapter we found that both solidarity and isolation are experienced as aspects of endurance in women's' distance running. We found solidarity arising from the experience of the suffering inherent in distance running and from sharing endurance with other runners whether known or unknown. We also found a sense of solidarity occurring from a more mature understanding of the suffering and endurance of others, arising from the distance running experience. We have also found a paradoxical sense of isolation arising as runners each undergo a unique struggle, in which difficulties conflict with the possibility of persevering through those difficulties, and in which persevering through those difficulties is the choice and responsibility of each individual.

Meg reports feelings of companionship associated with the marathon. The feeling of companionship with other runners occurred, "...without necessarily talking." Her marathon experience includes the positive aspects of companionship with the Church community and with her husband. She gets her determination through her competitive urge for a fast time, but also through a willingness to suffer as a way of helping others. when she refers to the '...power of people praying...' for her, that people are the Christian fellowship who support her.

Meg is experiencing solidarity of different forms. She feels the support of people who are concerned about her and so portrays herself as a part of a community. While her training runs are enjoyed because they get her away from others, she here experiences being a part of a couple and a part of a Christian fellowship, as well as being a part of a large group of runners running together.

During the marathon Leah had cramps and blisters in her feet, and so she was struggling. She tells us that she would advise others in the same position to remember that they are not alone and to relax. For Leah, 'not alone' refers to other people who are having a similar experience as well as to God. So, we can see that here she is experiencing a sense of solidarity with the other runners and with God. This sense of solidarity is what she believes could encourage someone to endure when faced with the pain of cramps and blisters.

From around 17 miles Tina feels as though she is too tired to proceed, yet continues. In response to "what did you think?" we read, "...I prayed and I imagined I was on a regular

run with Jasmine so that I knew how far was still to go and help me get there.” Tina deliberately imagines that she is running in different circumstances. She imagines she is on an ordinary run and that she has the companionship of her friend. This way she can imagine what it is like to run that distance when she is not as tired and when she has her usual companion. During the interview she reports that her friend is a social worker and that she and her friend absorb themselves in discussion of social issues as they run. In her diary she reports finding a long run without her usual running partner to be a daunting thought. She evokes this sense of companionship to add a sense of normality and achievability to the last part of the marathon. This image of the solidarity of regular running together benefits Tina and provides her with the perseverance which she needs. We can see from this that the marathon itself did contain an element of isolation which Tina wanted to counteract.

Tina also experiences solidarity in her experience of the marathon in her sense of suffering alongside the suffering children, as I discussed above in relation to transcendence. This was on her mind during the last part of the marathon and also enabled her to put her own suffering into a more accurate perspective.

During the last eight miles of the marathon Barbara began to feel irritable and her concentration was poor. During the race she did not converse with other runners. She writes, “..I didn’t feel lonely. Probably too focused on job in hand. Running the marathon is probably a very ‘self-centred’ experience. I suppose it has to be.” Barbara’s feeling of isolation is not one of loneliness but is one of facing her own task alone. She has the unique responsibility of getting herself through the challenge of the marathon. We noted above that the experience of endurance in running has been a part of the Christian life in which she has taken responsibility for an aspect of her own maturation and of growing closer to God. This experience of self becomes a positive side of isolation which leads to the development of the quality of endurance in the runner.

These women provide us with a strong sense of the importance of the Christian fellowship, as well as of family and other friends, to endurance. We have also found ideas about the solidarity of suffering for others, which impact the marathon experience. These ideas are similar to those expressed by Paul when he talks about Christians suffering and in their suffering sharing with other’s who suffer. We discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3.5, Paul’s view of shared suffering as something of value, as the fact that the suffering

may produce patient endurance. In Paul's letters, he is able to link together communities from different places by informing them of the experiences of people whom they do not know, and in this way enabling them to understand their difficulties as shared with others. This type of solidarity can also be expressed and strengthened in prayer, as we saw above, as we looked at our runner's experiences of endurance as transcendence.

The sense of isolation found here and in the narratives of Chapter 3, is an isolation related to personal responsibility and action. We get a strong indication from some of these reports of endurance running of the uniqueness of each individual's challenge and responsibility to that challenge. Tina imagined her friend with her, to help her to persevere, while Barbara felt that she was centred on her own task. Each of these women had chosen to run the marathon, and had specifically trained for it. In this way each had committed themselves to enduring whatever difficulties would arise.

The New Testament was found in Chapter 2 to contain discussion of the same sort of choice. Although the New Testament is talking about endurance in other life contests, we find it to contain the idea that the choice of a Christian lifestyle is a choice to be a person who endures. The choice to become a Christian is the choice to follow Jesus. As we saw, in Chapter 2, that is a choice to participate in his suffering with perseverance. The choice of Christian lifestyle was also, in some places, as we saw, a choice of taking on oppression and even martyrdom.

We can see from the experiences of the women who run, in the narratives and in the case studies, that endurance has to be a choice, it cannot be done accidentally as it is active and requires effort. In spite of the personal responsibility of enduring difficulties, the isolation may, from what we have found here, be counteracted by a sense of solidarity: either the solidarity of fellowship with others; or the solidarity of finding meaning through taking on the suffering of others in such a way that the suffering of others is alleviated.

The New Testament talks about the Christian sharing suffering with Christ. We found this concept in Hebrews and the Book of Revelation and in Paul's 1st letter to the Thessalonians. Because Jesus was a person who persevered with his own task even although it was leading to his humiliating and painful death, the Christian may experience solidarity with Christ in the endurance of suffering. The women in the case studies have, taken collectively, shown that the idea of God as someone who understands and has

experienced far greater suffering than they will, helpful as they tackled the marathon. It is perhaps openness to this image of God which enabled them to produce the surprising images of warmth and acceptance which the previous section discussed. This is certainly something that is worth stressing in a Christian theological view of endurance, as it has been useful for the experience of endurance in the case studies.

5.1.1 Introduction

We have looked at the moments of endurance in distance running, and have found examining the philosophical foundations of the runner to be helpful for understanding the moments of endurance that occur when that runner runs. Here, this has been done in the specific cases of women runners whose foundations are Christian. We looked at the meaning that endurance held for the runners in the case studies, and we saw the impact of that on their experience of the marathon. At the end of Chapter 4, above, we interpreted the material from the case studies in the light of the themes arising from Chapter 2, and began to see how the content of faith impacts, and is impacted by, endurance. The content of each runner's faith played some role in her experience. Taking the runners as a whole, we have found that the sense of solidarity with others (including the reality of prayer), and of personal responsibility for the task, and the idea of the strength, closeness and understanding nature of God, played a role in the moments of endurance, by contributing, in a positive way, to the whole experience of enduring the marathon. We found that ideas about the toughness and demanding nature of God softened through the moments of endurance. We found the environment of the London marathon played a negative role as the runners became tired, while ideas about what was meaningful and worthwhile were required to counteract that negativity, such as imagining a different environment, or feeling suffering to be something shared.

In this chapter, I shall lay out a framework for a theological interpretation of endurance relevant to the specific context of women's distance running, by drawing together what has been disclosed through the analysis of the materials, and interpreting endurance in the light of that disclosure, according to the hermeneutical model developed in Chapter 1. At this point, the hermeneutical circle, having opened up to texts and empirical experience, will lead towards a more illuminated understanding of endurance, which will be able to develop our philosophical foundations, ready to influence endurance once again.

5.1.2 Disclosing meaning through the hermeneutical model

Having examined the moments of endurance, and found that study of Christian theological foundations has been helpful in providing a deeper understanding of what the moments of endurance involve, in the case of runners whose philosophical foundations involve their Christian faith, we are now in a position to sketch out an illuminated framework of what meaning endurance might hold for Christian women who run. The aim of this chapter, is to answer theological questions about what we might say about endurance in the context of the theology of sport. This does not mean that we abandon the insights brought by sports psychology, but rather that here, we will see how the psychological aspects of this study contribute, alongside the other aspects, to an understanding of endurance which is specific to the theology of sport. This section will look at the hermeneutical model suggested in Chapter 1, and will see how that model enables us to progress further in our understanding of endurance and what we might say about it.

The hermeneutical model suggested in Chapter 1, enables us to claim a contextual understanding of what endurance might mean in theological terms, through having asked theological questions of endurance and awaited a transformed understanding of the meaningfulness of endurance. We can use the word 'meaningfulness' because we have found that the importance of endurance has been affirmed by the portrayal of endurance as holding meaning in a variety of situations for many people, in the Early Church, in secular running narratives, and for the women in the case studies. The hermeneutical model also suggested that what we might look for is a way of being, which coheres with what we have discovered. In the light of these points, what we now must ask is what we might say about endurance that can be brought to those moments of endurance as we experience them. What type of transformed way of being arises from the developing understanding of endurance emerging in this study?

The model provided us with a holistic understanding of the reading of texts. The hermeneutical circle is completed (ready to begin again) as those texts are lived out in the world. This project brought the empirical together with the theoretical and is asking what it is about endurance that might be worth living out. The model is specific and contextual and so is this project, in that it has studied the context of distance running, and specific problem moments within that context.

The model presented a holistic portrayal of the reader of texts, by indicating that the

reader can be understood to be someone who is active in the world rather than merely a thinker. The reader comes to the text as a thoughtful agent and brings his or her life experience and conceptual framework to the text. The individual is transformed by encounter, not only with text, but also with the world. This suggested that discussion of texts along with study of experience would lead to a deeper reading of the texts. Where the Biblical texts present themselves as containing illuminative material to guide the reader in life, the narrative and empirical elements enable this study to bring endurance, as it is thoughtfully experienced, and interpreted, into contact with Biblical and other theological and secular texts. The holistic understanding of the reader, enables us to progress in our interpretation, by asking questions about what might or should be done, as the interpretation continues to the point of future activity.

This hermeneutical model provides an account of the formulation of right theological thinking, which allows the Biblical text, as well as other texts, to come together with the physical experience of living in the world. In this way, theory may be generated, and may also be allowed to be constantly changed and corrected. This study has honoured that by allowing the interpretation of the Biblical material to be changed and corrected as it comes into contact with the material from the chapters examining narrative and the case studies. In this way, I have begun to bring the Biblical material into contact with what has arisen in the three themes which arose from the narratives, and continued to be relevant to the case studies.

The model with which this project began, acknowledged the presence of God in life experience, and, in this way, changed the meanings which might be attributed to that experience, by understanding those meanings as interrelated to experience and to a faith perspective. Here, what is being carried out is the theology of sport, and it was, therefore, essential to ask if the presence of a faith perspective impacted endurance itself. In this way, what we hope to discover is also theological, and we need to ask what can be said and done in relation to endurance, in the light of the theological context.

The procedure, used here, allowed the study to move towards theory that is illuminating, clarifying our perception of specific areas of life. This project included Biblical texts, attending closely to the metaphorical language and contradictions which are found there, and also brought a specific problematic element of human life as something which requires illumination and clarification. The illumination for which we are looking, is an

opportunity for readers of the text to discover a way of being in the world. The reader 'appropriates' the world of the text, and with that, the reader appropriates a new mode of being in the world. This led us to draw together the three types of material and now we must ask what it suggests about how Christian women might best be in relation to endurance.

In the analysis of women's running narratives and in the analysis of the four case studies of Christian marathon runners we found three central themes arising. In section 5.2, these themes will be used in the discussion of the theological interpretation of endurance. The section will be divided into three parts, looking at; endurance and the environment, endurance and transcendence, and endurance and solidarity and isolation. The following section (5.3) will draw out specifically theological themes, to illustrate the theological position which we have found will be helpful for discovering a transformed way of being in the world, in the specific case of women's distance running, and in the context of the theology of sport.

5.2.1 Endurance and the environment

Endurance must always occur in a particular context, which is why the environment arose as a frequently occurring theme in the narratives and case studies. Chapter 2 looked at Biblical and other theological material written on the subject of endurance to discover what we might find out about the meaning of endurance from the Biblical literature, and to find out how the Early Church interpreted that tradition in the specific context which interested them.

Biblical discourse and the writing which the Early Church wrote on endurance were brought into play, as the first aspect of the three pronged approach of this study. The Biblical accounts were narrative or metaphorical or exhortative in nature. The world of the Biblical text was the world of the first century Mediterranean, and in that respect the history behind the text was important as it sets the context of the discussion of endurance, the environment in which endurance was expected to occur, and enabled us to understand aspects of the metaphorical language which allowed the authors to express their meaning in particular ways.

Chapter 2 looked at the Biblical texts which discuss athletics in metaphorical language, and analysed the meaning of those texts in their original contexts, in the light of the history of sport. Texts which directly discuss the subject of endurance were then examined. The examination of the history behind the metaphors, revealed the environments of the Roman arena and Greek athletics as the locuses of endurance. We found that, in the New Testament, death in the Roman arena becomes filled with the characteristics of Greek athletics. By using athletics metaphors to describe martyrdom the martyr became willing, victorious, well trained and prepared, honourable, even heroic, and primarily a sacrifice to God. The Greek athlete had come through a test of endurance facing the difficulties of the harsh environment, and many long physical contests and may in the end be victorious. The hardships faced by martyrs become this same test of endurance and passing through martyrdom it becomes victory.

We also saw that Paul used the environments of Greek athletics, and of the Roman arena to engage the imaginations of the early Christians, and to provoke them into developing an innovative understanding of the Christian life. Through evoking these tough environments in which endurance is required, and by applying the positive qualities of the Greek athletic environment, to condemnation in the arena, Paul conveyed the honour involved in struggle and humiliation, self discipline and the control of the body, willingness to suffer and acting in love in the face of opposition.

Chapter 2 also included discussion of how endurance was interpreted in the Early Church in the specific context of martyrdom, which provides a precedent for understanding endurance theologically in the Church tradition, as it occurs in aspects of the Christian life. There, we found that the Early Church developed their understanding of endurance as a positive aspect of the Christian life which would ideally be lived as being towards martyrdom. One of the dominant ideas found in these writings is that the ideal Christian suffers, and endures the suffering, as solidarity with Christ, and as leading towards a glorious post-mortem future. We can see, from this kind of example, how endurance in one specific context may relate to other contexts. Yet our study of the environment and endurance in women's running narratives and in the case studies, indicates that caution is required when reapplying understandings of endurance in alternative contexts, as the experience of endurance is so specifically shaped by interaction with the surrounding environment.

In Chapter 3, I turned to literature written on the subject of women's running, to discover what might be discovered about the meaning of endurance in that literature. Women's experience and the stories which women tell about their experiences were brought into play. We saw that the experience of the environment was included alongside other factors in the paradox of endurance in these women's narratives of distance running. We found the environment in distance running to involve aesthetic qualities, such as the beauty of the natural world and spiritual qualities, like hope, alongside intellectual experiences of knowledge of the environment. We saw, here, the paradoxical nature of endurance, in which there can only be endurance where there is suffering, even if that suffering is coping with the monotony of a long run, and in which, what could lead to despair, leads instead to life, hope and perseverance. The positive aspects of the environment could be seen to enhance a sense of hope and counteract despair.

In Chapter 4, we turned to the case studies, using a method based on the indications from the procedure of establishing the method, which was described and discussed at the beginning of the chapter. This aspect of this study was the examination of the moment at which selected Christian female distance runners potentially "hit the wall", and the connections between that moment and the runner's perception of a marathon before, during and after the race. By carrying out, and analysing, the case studies in this way, we were able to achieve the eventual aim of the case studies, which was to ask what these women experienced, how they interpreted their experience, and how their theological foundations impacted on the moments of endurance.

While it is important for larger studies of runners to distinguish between categories of thoughts, and simplified categories of thought can assist in understanding those thoughts and the relationship of those thoughts to the environment, we noted the limitations of that approach. This study demonstrated that sports psychology would benefit from taking into account the philosophical foundations of runners, in order not to be working on misleading data concerning runners thoughts in the area of attentional focus, and showed the benefits to psychology, of going beyond general thought categories, into case studies which present more holistic understanding of individual runners. Our case study approach showed that with deeper knowledge of the individual runner's views and experiences, we can gain a more specific understanding of how that runner is interacting with the environment.

We found that the environment of the London Marathon was experienced by these runners as stimulating and enjoyable, during the first part of the marathon, and that, for two of the runners, tiredness, and aspects of their generally held views and feelings towards things, led to the environment intensifying the difficulties which they faced when running. The suffering aspect of the experience was intensified by environmental factors as they grew tired, because of attitudes which they already held. These attitudes affected how they experienced and responded to the environment of the marathon. For example, we know that Meg is a person who does not like her progress to be hampered by others, and so she experiences high levels of frustration in the later parts of the marathon, when the crowded environment interferes with her progress at a point at which perseverance is difficult.

Examination of how the environment functions, in the experience of endurance, has enabled us to understand the conflict between difficulties and perseverance. In the case studies, we saw that in that conflict the environment played a part, for two runners in particular, in intensifying the difficulties, and making more demands on their endurance capacities. We saw, in the New Testament discussion of endurance, that a specific environment of endurance can be used to reinterpret another specific environment, so that the humiliation of the Roman arena could become infused with the hope and victory of Greek athletics. Turning once again to our narratives and case studies, we find that a similar phenomenon has occurred as the experience of endurance is interpreted by the runner or writer, and is expressed as narrative. The particular experience of endurance in one context is used to give meaning, and to provide hope, in another context.

This transference of context could be helpfully used for women who are involved in distance running, where one marathon could be thought of as significant in the wider context of a collection of marathons, or as a part of the training for a significant marathon, or an exploration of a new city. The runner could pass through one space, in the context of other spaces which she finds to be more significant. By doing this she could view each feature of the running space as also significant in the context of that other space.

Another example of this transference of context, is the tendency of many running narratives and case studies to relate their experiences of enduring distance runs, to experiences of endurance in the rest of their lives. This tells us something about the reflective process in which the runners who do this are involved. They are developing

enlarged understandings of endurance in their lives, through the experience of enduring in the running context. While the Early Church developed their understanding of endurance as a positive aspect of the Christian life, which would ideally be lived as being towards martyrdom, so women who participate in distance running, suggest to us that endurance is a positive aspect of the Christian life. The way of being an enduring runner, is taken into the rest of life, and the runner engages with the other parts of his or her life as an enduring person. In the same way, the runner discovers a way of experiencing and understanding suffering, and may live that out as a more compassionate person.

The enduring runner runs in interaction with the environment. The physical, moving body interacts with that environment; this involves the weather, plants, animals, the air on the body, water on the body, breath, other runners and spectators, hard roads, snow and hills among other things. The Biblical exhortation to endure, therefore must be understood to involve endurance in the context of the environment, to not be put off and stopped by the difficulties which the physical environment places before us, but to retain an attitude of hope and activity in situations in which the environment is contributing to suffering and difficulty. Discovering the significance which might be attributed to a specific running environment, might enable a runner to persevere with greater strength and hope. This would be different from using the environment as a distraction. The runner could, on the other hand, use the environment to enhance his or her focus on the task of passing through that environment.

Although Paul had a negative view of the body as a hindrance to endurance, other Biblical material and the other material explored in this study indicates the importance of human physicality in enduring. There has been no indication that endurance should be seen as a purely psychological phenomenon which carries the runner through physical difficulties. On the contrary, here there has been a strong sense of the physicality of the enduring runner, interacting with the world around her as she runs, and understanding that environment as her philosophical foundations lead her to understand and interact with it. If the runner reflects on why she hopes to run well through a specific environment, then the whole experience of running through that environment, has more scope for being a hope-providing (and therefore meaningful) experience, in which that runner has reason to persevere.

Because the exploration of the environment has indicated the paradoxical nature of

endurance, it has drawn attention to the importance of hope, which counteracts despair, and to the role of the environment in contributing to both hope and despair. If the running environment is viewed as a difficulty in itself, an obstacle to be overcome, then the runner is in danger of despairing. We know that the Christian is to be an example of endurance and that endurance is spoken of positively in the Bible. This means that we need to take seriously the environment as a provider of hope. If the environment in which running takes place is to be associated with hope then it will contribute to the positive aspects of endurance.

The environment as the locus of difficulties which might be overcome, is often lost in recent Christian theological discussions of the environment, which tend to stress the destruction of the world caused by human beings, and to forget the difficulties for the human being of living in the natural world. These difficulties might be forgotten by people who live in pleasant environments and inhabit good quality homes and workplaces, but are not forgotten by people who are living in less favourable circumstances, or whose jobs involve them in interacting with harsh aspects of the environment. We find, as we read of women running through difficult environments, that women who involve themselves in distance running in the outdoors, can become aware of the difficulties presented by the environment, and adopt an attitude of victory as they develop ability to overcome those difficulties. The well trained and prepared runner will also be prepared in her understanding of the environment. Understanding of issues of broad environmental concern, and care for the local running environment, will be part of this preparation for engagement, if the environment is to continue to be a source of hope. The hope of the distance runner has been found, in this study, to lie in the aesthetically pleasing aspects of the environment, and in the environment's ability to provide for bodily needs, such as thirst and coolness, or shelter. To continue in this role, the natural world requires care and nurturing, but without a naive view of the natural environment as entirely pleasing and life giving.

We can see from this that the environment is important here, because of the contextual nature of endurance. Our runner must pass through some sort of environment, and her view of that environment will influence how she encounters it and responds to it. Reflection on any significance which that environment holds will enable greater hope, and so contribute to endurance of any difficulties which might occur, even where this means interpreting one environment in the light of another. For this theological framework, I am

suggesting a balanced view of the natural environment, and the built up environment, which acknowledges that while the world is beautiful and pleasing and we are a part of it, it is also harsh and it can be tough and destructive. It is worth our while nurturing these environments and allowing them to be pleasing and attractive places, through which we can run. I am also suggesting that marathons may be helpfully viewed as a training ground for life as a whole, so that each feature of a specific marathon, becomes something which builds up the runner as an enduring woman, enabled to encounter and overcome the challenges of life.

5.2.2 Endurance and transcendence

The Biblical texts suggest that the ideal of endurance involves the runner being a sacrifice to God. This opens up the possibility of interpreting running as a sacred event. The distance runner may view her activity as honourable by God's standards, as she engages positively with the running environment, for example, but need not be seeking out honour from society. This means that the runner may take a theological stance towards care of the natural environment and engagement with the outdoors, as part of living out a Christian way of being in the world, or may view her running as dedicated to God, and if she is an elite runner, she may use her running to support her country or to further human achievement, but always as a part of her Christian activity, rather than as a quest for personal glory. If a runner is engaged in distance running as a leisure pursuit, she is still encouraged by the Biblical ideal, to dedicate her running to God. Each runner may use her running as a sacred activity, and her running environment as sacred space. We found in our case studies that the runner may use her run as a time of prayer. In this way a theological view of the activity of running, legitimises theological reflection on running, and the bringing of theologically founded activity into the secular environment. In this way, the transcendent aspect of endurance running becomes, not an exceptional experience, but a moment in which that runner's philosophical foundations become a more apparent part of her experience.

Several themes arose, in the narratives and case studies, which were included in the broad theme of transcendence. Transcendence, here, is what goes beyond everyday life experience and perceptions. When we looked at the New Testament understanding of endurance, we found that endurance itself was often associated with transcendence. That

is to say, it was associated with the presence of spiritual things. This is the case in the New Testament understanding of Jesus as someone who endured. The metaphorical language of Jesus as both athlete, dedicated to God, and the priest who dedicates and sacrifices, enables the writer of the letter to the Hebrews to evoke an innovative portrayal of Jesus, as like and unlike what we know of things in this world. Jesus becomes, in this interpretation, a suffering and victorious athlete. For our study of endurance, we found running and enduring leading to a transcendent sacredness which goes beyond earthly glory.

Some other New Testament writers also assigned endurance an important place in the Christian life, which gained its significance from beyond that life. It is an action which takes the Christian through the contests of life in a meaningful and worthy manner, and it is also a quality which arises from facing difficulties, or sometimes from God. Endurance is related to hope, and is closely related to aiming towards Christ, often appearing to gain its meaning from Christ, and what Christ experienced. In this way, the significance of any moment of endurance comes from beyond any particular moment and gains Christological significance. We found in many accounts of endurance, both in the narratives found in secular sources, and from the case studies, which were deliberately theological, that endurance was experienced as an encounter with the divine.

In women's narratives we found that endurance was associated with transcendence in several ways. There was the transcendence of life which enabled a spiritual sense of reflection on issues of life and death. There was also the transcendence of social boundaries. Alongside these we found the transcendence of physical boundaries, and the sense of the transcendence of the runner's own life, and the transcendence of expectations. The areas in which runners experienced transcending the daily limits of life, were seen to lead to alternative senses of the runner's self and the world. We found runners experiencing a sense of reconciliation, a sense of autonomy and self-understanding, and also a feeling of flying. We also found, in examining transcendence, the active aspect of endurance as something which requires the will of the runner and activity in the face of difficulty.

In the New Testament we also find alternative understandings of the self and the world in relation to the experience of endurance. There, the humiliated apostles are reinterpreted as noble Christians, strong and honourable, fully clothed in alternative garb, able to pull

punches, and having a worthy home. These images transcend what would be expected, by reversing the expectations of society. Paul's life, specifically, can be seen to be reinterpreted, because of the difficulties which he faced and his continued perseverance. Paul describes his life using shocking and immediate images of public humiliation. We noted in Chapter 2 that Paul's life is a struggle. Paul frames the surprisingly positive interpretation of his own life, his reversal of the usual social understanding of such a life, in the context of endurance. It is because he has endured such trials that he is honourable from God's point of view, so that, through endurance we see Paul transcending social boundaries.

A theological account of endurance must take seriously the suggestions that enduring distance running has enabled many women to see their lives in a different way. As Paul would have it, they are often living their lives in a different way, from that which they would otherwise have done. They have viewed their lives and their relationships with God from a stronger position, and have seen themselves as reconciled to God. In our case studies, we found transcendence, in that each of the women thought about God in relation to their experience of the marathon, through prayer or thought of prayer during the marathon, or experience of the presence of God at the finish line. The experience of God, which each woman had during the marathon was slightly different from her usual understanding of God, but was intensified by the experience of endurance. Each woman came to the marathon with a specific image (or set of images) of God as part of her theological foundations. For the women as a whole, we found that there was a change in these foundational images after the experience of the marathon. After the marathon God was then interpreted as more intimate, and warmer, than the woman had previously expected, indicating that an illuminated understanding of God for this context, would view God as intimate, warm and close to the runner. We find that the marathon may take a runner beyond her expectations of herself, to enable her to help others or relate to God more closely than in normal circumstances.

For the Christian runner, running itself may appear trivial in the light of all the other aspects of the Christian life. In our case studies, we found the runners worrying about the tension between Church and their running, yet where distance running involves transformation into a woman who is more understanding of her relationship with God, the power of prayer, the nurturing presence of God, the significance of life and death, it would appear that distance running has the potential to provide a moment of encounter

with God, and to be an event of spiritual growth.

The experience of endurance has enabled many women to critique what they previously saw as limits in their lives. This is very positive, as it indicates the importance of endurance in enabling women to develop autonomy. Through experiencing great weakness, and overcoming that weakness, they have changed their perceptions of how things are. Interestingly, even the runners narrating their stories in the secular narratives frequently related views which resembled Paul's view of the reversal of cultural ideals. In many accounts, we find the distance runner coming to attribute greater value to herself through the experience of endurance, while at the same time retaining a humble stance. This occurs in the accounts where the runner has experienced weakness and overcome it. We have found runners who have come to understand weakness, but in the case of many female runners, we have found discoveries of strength. For some runners, a great deal of that strength is attributed to God.

For this framework we can draw on this element of reflection, that endurance has provided for many women who run. We can draw particularly on the experience of the case study runners, whose image of God changed through their experiences. I am suggesting, here, that the theological framework should include images of God which are intimate, and images of God who is present with the runner and does not judge her in the harsh way that she might imagine. Running can be carried out with a theological stance, with the quest for personal glory overshadowed by the aim of undertaking activity dedicated to God. In this theological framework, Jesus becomes the focus as an enduring athlete, who suffered extremes of physical torture, and yet knowing this would be the consequences of his action he persevered relentlessly. The focus here must be on this aspect of Jesus, as this is the aspect found to be helpful for endurance. This feature of Jesus' life and activity must not be obscured by the image of the heavenly and victorious Christ, because the victory itself is situated in Jesus' endurance. These aspects of the theological framework allow the runner to be empowered by the closeness of a God who endures, and who affirms her in her weakness, and in her moments of difficulty. This is the way in which we have found God to provide strength. This is completely different from any image of God making life easy for the Christian, or insisting on perfection in the details of how she lives her life. All these reversals of common understandings of a critical and distant God who punishes the wicked, create space for affirming the empowerment of women who are disempowered, and providing women with autonomy even where

society suggests they should not have it.

5.2.3 Endurance and solidarity and isolation

As we looked at women's running narratives we found that both solidarity and isolation are experienced as aspects of endurance in women's distance running. We found solidarity arising from the experience of the difficulties inherent in distance running and from sharing endurance with other runners whether known or unknown. We also found a sense of solidarity occurring from a more mature understanding of the suffering and endurance of others, arising from the distance running experience.

Along with solidarity we found a paradoxical sense of isolation arising, as runner's each undergo a unique struggle, in which difficulties conflict with the possibility of persevering through those difficulties, and in which persevering through those difficulties is the choice and responsibility of each individual.

In the case studies, both solidarity and isolation could be seen to be part of the experience of endurance running. We found that endurance in the marathon has been related to solidarity with other runners in the marathon, and we also found other types of solidarity. We found, in the case of Tina, the solidarity with suffering children. She had a sense that by suffering she could suffer with them. We also found in the runners the solidarity of Christian community, and of family. We also found irritation with other runners, and we found the discomfort of isolation from companionship and the discomfort of the self centred nature of the task.

Endurance can be seen to be an aspect of life, lived in fellowship. Each woman who endures, is in some sense in solidarity with suffering individuals and communities everywhere. We can give meaning to any suffering if it is understood in the light of the suffering of others and used for the benefit of others. If the suffering of distance running is overcome, and used for the creation of a more compassionate individual, then it is an event of spiritual maturity. Here, it makes sense to speak of the positive value of endurance as something enacted, and as a quality which is beneficial not just to one runner but to the wider community, or communities, in which she is located.

We saw that Paul speaks of endurance as provided by God. In his writing, endurance is a process which leads on to something else, and a quality produced by experience. It brings hope, and is a gift from God. So God is providing the ability to continue sustained effort, in spite of difficulties. We saw that, for Paul and the writers of Hebrews and the Book of Revelation, endurance is something by which the Christian might be judged. In Paul's writing, and in the introduction to the second letter to Peter, it is a quality which is part of faith. In 2 Peter it is explained in terms of participation in God's nature. In Hebrews it is action which God wants to be undertaken by Christians. The Letter of James portrays endurance as an aspect of the Christian life which arises because of suffering. Endurance here is a quality, rather than sustained action. The quality of endurance will arise naturally as a characteristic of the Christians who have been facing testing circumstances. As the quality is perceived as having value, the circumstances which produce that quality are ascribed meaning, on account of their consequences. So, we find that, in the New Testament, endurance is a quality which Christians should strive to have and may draw from God, as well as from experience. It is discussed as a part of the Christian life.

We can see from these Biblical accounts that endurance may be valued as a quality. The suggestion here, is that it is the duty of the Christian to build endurance, and to take personal responsibility for that choice, as Paul did. In so far as women who engage in distance running do build in themselves the quality of endurance, we can see that it is valuable from a biblical perspective, and also from the perspective of the women themselves. The value of women building greater endurance in themselves, can be seen most specifically in the role of endurance in the awareness of solidarity and in the growth of compassion for others. This awareness can be an awareness of suffering, and of the need for change in oppressive situations.

We saw in Chapter 2, Paul's suggestion that endurance of suffering is a shared experience, common to many Christians. He says first in 2 Cor 1:6, "If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer." Although Paul is talking about a specific experience of suffering, faced by the Corinthian community, he does not restrict the possible contexts for solidarity with the suffering. The specifically Christian element of this suffering, is its nature as shared experience, and arising from the sacred nature of this experience, is the ability to comfort others who suffer. Value may be found in shared suffering, and endurance is an experience shared throughout the world, and in that sense

can be understood theologically, as solidarity with the rest of creation. We find the writer of the Book of Revelation can say, in Rev 1:9 “I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus...” Suffering and endurance are automatically framed as theological, and an aspect of Christian fellowship.

In the theological framework, which I am building here, solidarity remains an important aspect of endurance. Through taking on the challenge of enduring a marathon, the Christian woman may consider herself to be sharing with others, and to be developing an illuminated understanding of the suffering of others. The Christian woman should aim towards becoming compassionate in order that she may act lovingly towards other people (and, in a similar way, animals and the natural world), and for this she should look positively upon running as a worthwhile way of achieving that aim.

Isolation also has to be important for our theological understanding of endurance. Just as each woman who perseveres through the difficulties of a marathon may be understood to be in solidarity with others who suffer, so each woman is undergoing a unique challenge. The difficulties of each woman who engages in distance running are not exactly the same as those faced by other women. Isolation relates to personal responsibility, and it is this responsibility that the New Testament writers express as being judged. The woman who runs marathons appears often to have a sense of facing that judgement at the moment of difficulty. It is perhaps from this sense of having faced judgement, that some women who endure appear to develop a feeling of being reconciled to God. In this way, a theological interpretation of endurance cannot emphasise only community, as some recent theologies tend to do, but must also take into account the individual challenge and choices that face each of us in our lives.

Paul relates the narrative of his own life, and interprets endurance in that context. The nature of his life as one which contains endurance, is part of the metaphor of a race requiring sustained effort. Running the race is actively participating and enduring the race, rather than merely suffering attack and opposition passively. Paul interprets the race favourably because he is continuing to run it, rather than having his life's purpose demolished by trials and afflictions, tears and humility. We can understand this active participation more deeply, now that we have looked at women's running narratives, because we can now see that the negative factors in a race, could lead to giving up, lying down instead of continuing, and failure to persevere, and that the runner is in a position

of having to choose active perseverance in the face of pain and suffering. Paul's life sufferings are being related to the harsh environmental factors of a race and to the physical difficulties that they bring. The active aspect of endurance takes place in the face of these. Paul takes on endurance as an active choice in his life. It is his personal race, which means that it is his specific vocation, to endure particular aspects of his life. Only he is in a position to overcome these obstacles. In this way the isolating aspects of endurance were experienced by Paul in his personal responsibility towards the task to which he was committed.

Each woman is responsible for her own running achievements to a certain extent. Theologically each woman has responsibility and is accountable for what she does. She also has her own choices and responsibilities. Women who run are each unique, and the view, which I suggest here, stresses God's affirmation of that uniqueness and of the personal nature of each woman's decision to run. In this way, each woman's running is a part of her unique life, and her wider vocation in that life, to live that life in the way in which she chooses, so that as each woman develops and matures through her running, she is responsible for allowing that maturity to impact her life more widely, and to impact her sense of compassion and solidarity with others.

5.3. A way of being endurance runners

This section is shaped by the points arising from the women in the case studies. The areas which emerged for them as important to the issue, were also found in the other sources, as we saw in the final section of Chapter 4, and in the discussion of the themes above. We begin with the points which were of most interest to those women. These are the areas which are most fully illuminated by this study, and shall be sketched out in the sections below. We shall turn first to the portrayal of God which has arisen as having most significance in this context, that is the portrayal of God as the God of the cross. This will be discussed in section 5.3.1. The second area which has arisen, is the solidarity of shared suffering, which will be discussed in 5.3.2. Section 5.3.3 will turn to endurance as something active. We shall then take our new understanding back to the Biblical text for a reading of women running in Matthew 28.

5.3.1 The God of the cross.

The understanding of endurance as something valuable and positive, can be seen to have taken its shape in Christian thinking around the area of Jesus having endured a great deal of difficulty in his life, and having persisted, in spite of these difficulties, right up until the point of his death. The thinking around this area was discussed in the New Testament, in terms of Jesus enduring, and often in terms of Jesus as an enduring athlete. One of the ways in which the New Testament and early Church found this idea to be important, was that it indicated that the Christian would do well to demonstrate a similar level of commitment to that demonstrated by Jesus, and a similar level of the overcoming of obstacles over a prolonged period.

For the women in the case studies, two central points emerged from the activity of Jesus. The first was a sense of wanting to be highly disciplined in training and life, as Jesus' activity appeared to warrant. At the moments of endurance, this sort of view became less important and the more dominant view was that of Jesus as understanding, or God as present alongside a person in the struggles of life. Although the women acknowledged that they were running the London Marathon largely for their own benefit, and that the suffering which it involved was not on the same scale as the suffering of many others, they nonetheless were strongly committed to the task which they had set themselves. As the marathon presented difficulties which required each woman to make an effort to persevere, we found that the idea of the closeness of God became more important than the idea of God as distinct from human beings. This has led me to suggest, here, that a more compassionate image of God is relevant to this theological interpretation of endurance. This more compassionate image understands God as being close to the runner, and as affirming her, rather than judging her. The Biblical images of running towards the heavenly altar, emerged here as running into the closer presence of God.

This brings us to the point of affirming the incarnate aspect of God as central to this theological understanding of endurance, as God who dares to be embodied in the world. In the same way, each runner is in the world. Our study indicated the importance of the running environment to encouraging the runner not to give up, or to contributing to feelings of tiredness. Where running narratives indicated that the environment had contributed positively to endurance, the runner had sometimes felt herself to be a part of the natural environment. Where the environment was portrayed as significant and

positive, it contributed to the hope of the runner. Perhaps a positive view of the natural and built up environment would be helpful to runners. We have found evidence here that a nurturing view of the environment is helpful, particularly if it acknowledges that physicality may include struggle.

While a highly incarnate view of God might, in some circumstances, be helpful, here, we have found more cause to take up a moderate view. There were times when the New Testament authors found it appropriate to make a distinction between things to do with God, and things to do with the environment in which they found themselves. This was necessary where the environment included suffering. They were able to reinterpret it, rather than accept it as always good. The environment in which a human being exists may be damaging and perhaps even evil.

The reinterpreted environment is important for endurance, because it allows the person who is experiencing prolonged difficulty to understand their own setting as containing some negative aspects which must be overcome. Not allowing for any distinction between God and creation, would suggest that God affirms human suffering and difficulty. A theology which stresses the importance of the cross, on the other hand, offers us an alternative image of God. This sort of theology of the cross emphasises God as someone distinct from the world, yet as someone who had come into the world, and who had experienced the most unbearable sort of suffering, and had overcome it. This sort of understanding of incarnation enables us to accept a very human image of Jesus as someone who experienced the physicality of life, enduring forty days in the wilderness, and pursuing a career of alleviating the physical hardships of others, and finally experiencing death on the cross. The most prolific exponent of this type of theology recently has been the theologian Jurgen Moltmann, who develops his views in this area most fully in *The Crucified God* (Moltmann, 1974).

The evidence which we have found here, from our illuminated understanding of endurance, is that, the form of our understanding of this theology of the Cross, must be influenced by our reading of Jesus life as a race. In Chapter 2, we found that by reading the New Testament athletic metaphors in the light of the history of sport, we were led to a reinterpretation of the death of Christ as a victory in itself. We discovered that, rather than Jesus being portrayed as a failure who died, who was paradoxically a victor because of his resurrection, his death itself was portrayed as a part of his victory, when

interpreted in the light of Greek athletics. In going to his death, Jesus was a victor, not because he suffered, but because he had demonstrated the greatest endurance, and won the race. Resurrection was not the victory, but a sign of the victory, of collecting the crown, as we see Jesus and the martyrs doing. The difficulty and suffering, experienced by Jesus, were not cancelled out by the resurrection, but were, rather, overcome by Jesus' strong and unwavering approach to them, and then followed up by the resurrection. It is, therefore, appropriate for a woman who runs, to view Jesus as someone who has faced suffering and can understand her, and be alongside her as she runs.

As we suggested above, this involves rejecting any portrayal of the risen Christ as glorious, which obscures the presence of Jesus with people who suffer, and to reject any portrayal which neglects the physicality of Jesus' own suffering, or which claims that Jesus victory lies in his rising away from human suffering rather than entering into it.

In this light, the New Testament call to self discipline, sometimes interpreted harshly by the case study runners as they were training, comes to be read as the advice of a coach who has experienced endurance sport. If God wishes us to be self disciplined in our training it is not, then, because God is harsh, but because God knows, from experience, that this quality is required for the overcoming of prolonged difficulties. Having found the more intimate portrayal of God, that emerges through the experience of endurance, we can read some of the New Testament texts which talk about endurance, as warm encouragement.

We found the runners in the case studies often held conflicting views of their running as being trivial, or as being a part of their process of maturing as people. If the quality of endurance is, in itself, worth encouraging, then runners such as our case studies, need not view such a strong tension between wanting to train for the marathon, and their faith. They showed some concerns that their running was trivial compared to what were sometimes seen by them as spiritual things. Yet, if endurance is really central to what Jesus did, and to what we are encouraged to do, then the runners are right when they place more emphasis on their running as developing the quality of endurance. There would be no reason why their running could not be seen as building up endurance, and growing in their closeness to God. This brings us to a surprisingly strong view of endurance as a significant aspect of the Christian life, as it is to be lived out, and a surprisingly strong view of endurance sport, as having a place in building a person's

endurance capability. We have seen that this position is justified by our rereading of the cross as a victory, because of Jesus' demonstration of great endurance.

5.3.2 The solidarity of shared suffering.

The New Testament emphasised suffering shared amongst Christians, as something of value. For our running women, this kind of fellowship and solidarity, were central to their foundational beliefs and to endurance as they experienced it in the marathon. Shared Christian fellowship allowed them to live in a particular community and gain strength through caring for, and being cared for by, that community. Even the idea of gaining strength from God could be found mediated by the idea of the praying Christian fellowship. The sense of fellowship through shared experience, was not, for the women, restricted to the Christian community, as it is in the New Testament, but spread beyond that. Family, friends, other runners and spectators provided a sense of common humanity, and a sense of sharing an experience with other people.

This sense of fellowship appears to be related to not being the only person who faces difficulty. Suffering itself becomes valued because it is a shared human experience. It is not just Jesus who shares suffering, it becomes something which marks us out as human and allows us to be in fellowship with others. We found that the early Christian martyrs were seen as fellow contestants, and this image gains power as we discover the strength of this sense of fellowship and solidarity in suffering, which arose from the running narratives and case studies. This sort of solidarity in suffering, in which the runner is part of a wider group of those who face troubles, and have difficulty persevering, appears to provide hope. It is a part of the positive attitude to endurance which might encourage a flagging runner to endure, as the meaningfulness of the situation is felt by that runner.

Another type of solidarity emerged from this study, and that was the solidarity with others who suffer. In the case of the runners in the case studies, and in the running narratives, that solidarity was a sense of suffering minor difficulties in the marathon compared to the danger, oppression and devastation present in the lives of others. We found the runners drawing on their compassion to provide meaningfulness to their own actions. We also found that the experience of endurance running can provide a more compassionate view of the lives of others. The marathon experience enables some runners

to endure in such a way that they are counteracting the suffering of others through raising money for charity, yet it was more than this that enabled the runners to gain a sense of vicarious suffering. The notion of the shared suffering of humanity meant that the runners were able to feel that they understood other people better, the more they faced difficulties to be overcome. In this way, a runner might take on suffering for another person, and being in a position of strength, might be able to overcome that suffering.

Understanding the suffering of others, occurs not just in the New Testament images of solidarity, and fellow contestants in the Christian life, but also in the portrayal of Jesus as compassionate. It was his compassion that led to many of his healings, as well as to prayers for others. If endurance involves not just personal growth but compassionate action for others, then endurance sport does become more worthwhile when others directly benefit from what is achieved (such as through raised sponsorship). None the less we do find here that the idea of solidarity in suffering, must not end with marathon running, but that marathon running can only contribute to a Christian lifestyle by being a part of a life of growth in understanding of others, and compassion, leading to actively helping to alleviate the suffering of others.

Alongside the runner alleviating suffering, we find that solidarity in suffering brings us to the point of allowing the runner, who is part of a Christian fellowship, to understand herself as somebody prayed for. This experience of being nurtured by others at times of difficulty was discovered by the case study subjects, through their marathon. Being nurtured by others was found to be a way of gaining not only hope, but also strength. This was an interesting development for the case study women, who tended towards viewing themselves as the carers. This is perhaps a vital part of growing in compassion, and a real way in which discovering one's own weakness can be beneficial. In finding themselves weakened, the runners became more dependent upon others. In this way the runner is also able to gain strength by becoming powerful on behalf of those who are not, and by understanding herself as part of a wider fellowship, in which she may find herself to be strong or weak. For the theological position I am developing here, the running woman becomes part of a wider fellowship, and that fellowship plays an important role in her actions and experiences, and in providing her with solidarity and strength, especially when she is weak.

5.3.3 Endurance as active.

It seemed at the outset of this study, as if the primary distinction between a sport setting and the setting of the endurance discussed in the New Testament and in the theology of the Early Church, would be that the person undertaking an endurance sport event, was choosing to undergo something difficult, while Jesus, the martyrs, and the early Christian communities were victims of suffering that was inflicted upon them by others. However, the activity of endurance, encouraged in the New Testament, was not found to be unlike that experienced by runners in the narratives and case studies.

This is perhaps why the athletic images of the New Testament metaphors work so well. While suffering and torture are inflicted by another, in the case of persecution, or are an unwanted part of life, in the case of illness or accident, the attitude to those can be a matter of choice. This appears to be what is being said in many of the theological texts. The Christian is encouraged to approach difficulties, as a person who will overcome them. This is an attitude of active endurance. We can see this as we look at the elevated position which a person having endured has been given. The New Testament does not focus on the suffering individual as a hero, but the one who has actively overcome, through persistent perseverance.

Endurance is an activity undertaken by a person, and so must be an act of choice. The women runners in the narratives and case studies had chosen to endure distance runs, and so had made a personal commitment to running the best they could. Each runner was responsible for allowing hope to get the better of despair, where there was a choice of activity, or giving up and being inactive, or where there was a possibility of slowing down. If endurance is to be a positive thing, as I am suggesting here, in the theology of sport, then, in the case of distance events, an emphasis on hope is required. Hope is what makes active endurance possible, hope of overcoming each difficulty, as well as hope of completing an event to the standard expected.

There are many positive images which have arisen here which could contribute to hope and allow the woman who runs to understand her activity in a positive and helpful way: particularly the image of God, as a God who has endured, and who understands what it is like to suffer and endure; also the images of solidarity with others who suffer, and the possibility of suffering on behalf of others. Alongside this the image of the Christian as someone who is encouraged to engage actively with difficulties in the close presence of

God and her fellow human beings, should be encouraging for the runner.

5.3.4 A Reading of Matthew 28

The hermeneutical model which forms the rationale for this study, suggests that a theological framework would include turning again and again to relevant Biblical texts. I shall now turn again to the Biblical text, and to the interpretation of a women's running narrative which can be found there. This passage presents a story which does not fit alongside the texts discussed in Chapter 2, but which cannot be ignored, as it is a gospel story of women running. The passage is from the last chapter of Matthew's gospel. We shall turn to this final narrative so that we can see the story of women running in a Christian theological context, which brings women's running further into our theological perspective.

The women have just been told that Jesus has risen from the dead. The text says "So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples." (Matt 28:8)

We find that, as the women run, they are involved in the paradoxical feelings which we have found in the stories of other women running. Fear and joy arising from important events in their lives, are mixed up with the importance of their message, their sense of urgency, and their running. Although their situation is not that of women running for leisure, it is of women running because they want to. In the narrative, the running appears to arise from the emotions, and we can see that the emotions and the running are all influenced by their philosophical foundations. At the beginning of Matthew Chapter 28, the women and the guards all witness supernatural events at Jesus' tomb. The guards are so shocked that they fall unconscious, while the women run with purpose to tell the story. The running women are portrayed as strong and purposeful and physically active.

As the women are running, the narrative reports, "Suddenly Jesus met them." Jesus, their son and friend has interrupted their mourning process by being pronounced alive and then by interrupting their journey. It is interesting that Jesus is also affirming their right to run. While in many recent narratives on women's running we can read about negative responses of family, friends and partners, this narrative presents a positive response.

Jesus does not interrupt them to say “Mother do not be so undignified. This running is quite wrong” but rather “Do not be afraid, go and tell my brothers....” (Matt 28:10)

While a similar story in Mark’s gospel talks of the women fleeing from the tomb and telling no one, Matthew’s women are stronger. Interestingly an addition to Mark’s gospel, the longer ending, mentions that the women did try to tell the men their story but that no one would believe them. Jesus later appeared to the men and expressed his disapproval of their lack of initial belief. Morna D Hooker, in her recent book *Endings*, discusses these resurrection stories. She suggests that Matthew’s contemporaries would have been ‘scandalised’ by the suggestion, in the narrative, that women were the first witnesses to the resurrection (Hooker, 2003, p33). She also notes another contrast between men and women in the narrative. She says, “...the disciples must go all the way to Galilee if they want to see Jesus; it would seem that their faith, unlike that of the women, needs to be tested.” (p34)

For our purposes, we can understand these running women as driven by their faith, which has overturned the social expectations of the time. They are encountering the transcendent in their lives and are empowered. They are also encountering their own redemption through the resurrection of Jesus, who is none the less a real person who has passed through human torture and death. This is not a heavenly or remote image of Jesus, but an image of Jesus as a person who can be met while running. The women’s faith does not need to be tested, as we can see from their running. Hooker helpfully points out that the endings of the gospels are about exhorting readers to spread the Christian message. These women are directly exhorted to speak out by Jesus, in his response to their faithful running.

Here, in this text, we find women running with purpose. They are in specific location. They are experiencing conflicting impressions of their situation, and Jesus encourages them to continue their run, but with the greater knowledge which he has revealed to them: the knowledge of his life, his resurrection. There are interesting parallels here to what we have found about women’s endurance running: there is an environment; a context; there is transcendence, with an encounter with the divine; there is solidarity, and there is a legacy of greater understanding of life. For our theological account of endurance we find that Matthew is telling us that it may be important for women to run. We find that there was nothing contradictory for Jesus about women being strong and active and purposeful, or

about them using their physical strength and endurance capacity, for God's purpose of spreading the news of the resurrection.

5.4 Concluding on the value of endurance

This framework of what a theological understanding of endurance might look like, has focused on the positive aspect of endurance as something which we may allow to hold positive meanings for us. We have found things that encourage us to take an active part in enduring difficulties and in developing endurance. Arising from the illuminated understanding of endurance, we have developed a strong understanding of God as present through difficulties and sharing in human suffering, and have suggested a focus on the God of the cross, the God who through Jesus experienced human suffering with an attitude of endurance. These are strong theological statements about the positive value which endurance may claim in Christian theology, and in particular in the theology of sport. However, when the difficulty that is encountered is not a challenge taken on by choice, enduring it may not be positive.

If endurance is to be encouraged, it is necessary to find some indication of where the limits of true endurance lie. I have taken a critical stance throughout this project, in which I have tried to be aware of the presence of any emphasis on suffering rather than endurance. If suffering is stressed above endurance then a negative and destructive image of human behaviour is being favoured. We found that active endurance was encouraged by the New Testament and favoured by running narratives and the runners in the case studies. Active endurance is a positive approach to difficulty in which a person makes an effort to overcome the difficulty. In this way the suffering is alleviated, and at some point the difficulty ends. The theological image presented by one of the case study runners, was of running into the presence of God, who values the effort made, as well as valuing the runner.

Passive acceptance of suffering occurs in many contexts where the person who is suffering is overcome by despair or difficulty. These are contexts such as domestic violence, social oppression and some cases of voluntary euthanasia. Although these issues are outwith the bounds of this project, it would be helpful to see these discussed elsewhere in terms of endurance. This passive approach to difficulty is contrary to the

view of endurance developed here. This means that in the sports context there is a limit to what can be expected of an athlete, by other people. If endurance can only be said to hold positive meaning for Christian theology, if it is an active choice of the participant, then an athlete who feels under pressure to endure, is not making a personal choice, and so is not performing an activity which is good.

There is also a limit to the amount of difficulty which it can be considered a good thing to endure. If a person is being destroyed by an activity, but none the less continues that activity, then their activity becomes negative and destructive, and cannot be said to fit the theological interpretation of endurance, which is being developed here. In this way, that person is not taking on difficulties in order to gain in compassion and understanding, by growing stronger and moving towards hope, but is bringing suffering and destruction onto a human being. Unfortunately it is not easy to locate the boundaries of the distinction between the positive aspect of endurance and this sort of negative self destruction. However, an approach to the question of endurance which allows for understanding each runner's philosophical foundations should be able to uncover any sense of self destruction which might guide an attitude to endurance, in the case of a particular runner.

5.5 Concluding this project

This project began with the aim of addressing the issue of endurance and the meaning that it holds for Christian women, involved in distance running, and of outlining a more illuminated understanding of endurance for Christian women who run. This section will assess the extent to which this project has been a success, and the possibilities for future study in this area.

The hermeneutical methodology has been helpful for undertaking a study of this kind, and has enabled a new kind of approach to theology, which is particularly relevant for an emerging area like the theology of sport. The theology of sport requires a methodology which will closely and realistically relate to the practice of sports ministry and to reflection on sport as it is performed and participated in by Christians. The hermeneutical methodology enabled experience to be explored, and also enabled the involvement of sport psychology in that exploration. As the three prongs of this study came together, it was possible to see the way in which deeper understanding became possible, which could

be helpful and informative for practitioners in the area of sport.

The methodology allowed sport psychology to use theological insight, to better address the problems associated with understanding distance running, and the moments of endurance. Without the methodology used here, it would have been difficult to reconcile the different approaches, and languages of theology and psychology in such a way that the theological foundations and their impact on sport experience and performance could be properly understood. From the point of view of sport psychology, this new approach has shed light on the complexity of the moments of potentially hitting the wall, and has allowed a new explanation of why the current classification systems used to explore these moments are unhelpful. The current classification systems of thoughts while running, do not relate the runner's thoughts to the runner's foundational views. The methodology here, has allowed this to happen, by enabling the disciplines of theology and psychology to come into dialogue with one another, in the very contextual setting of specific runners' experiences.

This project has demonstrated the need for sport psychology to include exploration of philosophical foundations, in order to really understand how a runner's attention functions during races. We have seen that the experience of running can be understood in more detail where case studies are used along with a holistic view of the runner. A runner's beliefs and spiritual views may impact a particular runner in a way which a psychologist would fail to understand if the psychologist did not take into account the presence of such views. This has implications for teaching and coaching, as well as for the improvement of distance running overall.

The theology of sport has benefited here from the insights and methods of psychology, which have allowed case studies to be used, and materials from the case studies to be analysed in a way in which the problematic moments in distance running could be highlighted, and the thoughts and actions of the runners taken into account. Psychology has allowed focus on the individual in a sport in which there is a strong element of individual responsibility, and has also allowed the study to look at the interaction of that individual with the wider context of community and philosophical foundations.

The methods used here allowed different types of data to be examined in distinct, but none the less appropriate ways. Each method of analysing the data was consistent with the material itself, as well as with the hermeneutical method of the project, and with the

stance which I have taken as researcher. The three pronged approach here, required each aspect of the study to remain within certain limits, in order to prevent the study itself from being too large. Although, a larger study could have provided further examples, and further discussion, it is not clear whether it would provide a different understanding of endurance. What is more likely is that a more precisely differentiated understanding might have emerged.

The inclusion of three distinct prongs lent each element of the study a slightly distinctive feel, in which appropriate methods, and also appropriate language emerged as relevant to each area of study. In this way the language of Biblical study was helpful for the analysis of Biblical texts, and the language of the study of literature was relevant for the study of narratives. In the same way, the language of psychology enabled me to discuss the individual cases and their approach to and response to running. Finally for the theological discussion, the language of theology allowed the three prongs to be brought together so that questions relating to the theology of sport might be answered, including questions about appropriate and accurate images of God, and of Jesus, as well as solidarity and suffering.

There is scope in the future for scholarship to extend study of the general area and specific areas examined here, and to expand upon areas which, here, could be only touched upon in passing. There is also scope for future studies to cover some of the areas covered here, from alternative perspectives. The most obvious extension of this study would be into the area of endurance in men's running. Another obvious step would be to include more discussion of and some case studies in ultramarathon running.

In the area of Biblical studies, we mentioned in Chapter 2 that once this study had been completed there would be a possibility of examining many of the Old Testament stories of endurance, using the deeper understanding of endurance gained from this project. In many Old Testament stories, the central characters endure lengthy periods in the wilderness, and this endurance is portrayed as a heroic part of those characters. Examination of endurance in these Old Testament stories would benefit the study of ultramarathon events, as well as reflection on other wilderness experiences today. This would also provide an interesting perspective on many of the women in these stories, who are often in the background, experiencing endurance but unremarked on for much of the story.

This study also paves the way for further discussion of the life of Jesus and how he demonstrated endurance. This has been made possible, by the inclusion, here, of a grounded understanding of our human physicality, as well as by the methodology which enables the study of specific and contextual cases. It would be interesting to explore how Jesus' beliefs, and sense of vocation, shaped his experience of spending forty days and nights in the wilderness, of walking extensively around the Palestinian countryside, and even of suffering on the cross. Such a study would be of wide interest, but would also be of particular interest to those people who are involved in sports in which endurance is involved.

In a similar way, the life of Paul warrants further study, as well as several other aspects of the New Testament which were discussed here. These texts could be discussed in a similar way in examination of topics other than endurance, which might be of interest to the theology of sport.

The psychology of running offers many further areas of study opened up by this project. It would be interesting to examine distinct responses, within Christian theological approaches to other areas of sports performance. It would also be interesting for a further range of philosophical foundational beliefs to be studied, in relation to the problematic moments of distance running. Religious views, such as Islamic, Jewish and Buddhist views could be examined, and they could also be compared with one another. This would be fascinating, not only for sports psychology, but also in what it would reveal about attitudes to endurance in distinct faiths. A real grounded example, and a thorough case study approach, would have the potential to reveal far more specific insights about distinct faith traditions, than abstract theorising.

There are areas of psychology, which arose from the case studies specifically, which warrant further exploration, but which were beyond the scope of this study to address. One of these areas is the link between philosophical foundations and the experience of flow in sport (in which the athlete feels completely involved and satisfied by the experience of sport on a particular occasion), (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The experience of flow in women's distance running could be explored in relation to interaction with the environment, as well as to interaction with experiences of transcendence. While here we developed these experiences in theological directions, a similar study could draw out experiences which may be flow experiences and use them to further understanding of

what flow is in sport, and how it might be achieved. The second of these areas is the connection between the spirituality found by environmental psychology to occur in wilderness experiences (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999), and the specific spiritual content which we have found to occur in distance running. The exploration here suggests that something useful could be achieved by drawing out the presence of spiritual understanding and the experience of the outdoors in training runs. Further study could focus on these areas, while also retaining an interest in runners' theological foundations.

Where this study most urgently leads is into a deeper exploration of the suffering and enduring Jesus. This image of Jesus as enduring suffering on the cross has been found here to be central to the Christian faith and to a Christian understanding of God, as it is to this theological position that we were led by women who run. The impact of the theological foundations of female Christian distance runners, has taken us to a point of emphasising the presence of Jesus with us in our difficulties, and opened us to a more compassionate image of God.

What is required is a Christian theology which returns endurance to its central position, and a close, loving and understanding image of Jesus Christ, who might meet us on the path as we run, and who is relevant to every aspect of our lives. Women who run require a theology which empowers them in their running, and in their ability to act out their concern for others, and we have found here that such a theology is justifiable from a Christian perspective. This theology needs to find a way of balancing a positive view of endurance as something worth fostering in all areas of women's lives, with concern for the wider community, and the suffering of others. Through this type of theology women who run can understand that what they are doing is worthwhile, and can acknowledge their running as a beneficial part of the Christian life.

Appendix AList of Questions from Questionnaire from April 2001: establishment of method

1. Say as much or as little as you like about who you are.
2. Please name any churches and Christian organisations or Christian groups to which you are affiliated.
3. Why did you run the marathon?
4. What kind of things did you think about during the first part of the marathon?
5. Did you complete the marathon?
If not - when did you stop and why?
If so - what was your time?
6. Was there any point at which you felt extreme fatigue?
If no, please go on to question 7.
If yes, please answer the following questions then move on to qu. 8.
 - a) at how many miles (or at what landmark) was this?
 - b) did you slow down?
 - c) did you regain a pace with which you were satisfied?
 - d) If you came through this time of fatigue OK, and finished the marathon, did any particular thoughts, feelings or occurrences help you to get through this low point?
 - e) If so, please describe them as best you can.
7. If you answered 'no' to question 6.
 - a) did you feel unpleasantly tired, uncoordinated or lightheaded, between 18 miles and the end of the race.
 - b) were you satisfied with your performance between 18 miles and the end of the race?
 - c) did any particular thoughts, feelings or occurrences help you during this final part of the marathon?
 - d) If so, please describe them as best you can.
8. Did anything of interest occur during the marathon which you have not had the opportunity to write about above? (e.g. strong emotions, "religious experience," conversation etc.)
9. Basing your answer upon your own experience as a runner, please say, as best you can, in what way you think Jesus was/is an athlete.
10. Would you mind participating in a short telephone interview, following this questionnaire?
If you would like to, please provide your telephone number.

11. Would you be prepared to participate in any future research?
12. If you were to participate in any future research, would you be prepared to
 - a) write your thoughts and feelings in a diary while training for a marathon?
 - or b) wear a recording device and speak in to it during the marathon?
 - or c) record your own time at six intervals during the marathon?
13. If you have written any poetry or prose, or done any artwork relating to your experience of running, which you would like to include, I would be very interested in receiving copies of these along with your returned questionnaire.

Appendix BList of Biblical texts from the diaries.

1 Corinthians 9: 24

Do you know that in a race, all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown of laurel that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Hebrews 6:20

We have... a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, the runner who runs ahead on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Habakkuk 3:19

God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer and makes me tread upon the heights.

1 Timothy 6:11

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.

James 1:2-4

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

Matthew 10:22

... you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Colossians 1:11

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a crowd of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Appendix C: Content Analysis
Content analysis of theological foundations

Raw Data Themes: quotations and paraphrases

First Order Themes

General Dimension

“In God’s Strength, but not our own”

“I will succeed as I believe... in my God”

“I need the strength” from God

God’s presence inspires endless running

God’s limitless power will sustain us

strength from God

relationship with God

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Prayer has a purpose

“he is there for us...”

“pray for continuing guidance”

“I have prayed for strength”

purpose of prayer

“A Christian and a friend of my father’s”
Church members are warm and interested
“prayer and Christian events... enriching”

Christian fellowship

“we can help others through our suffering”
“many others in same boat”
“I am... helping children who suffer”

solidarity with others

solidarity

Jesus has already experienced it
Jesus can identify with us

solidarity with Jesus

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“Determined to stay on the straight and narrow road”
“Spiritual self-control and self-discipline”
Spiritual training requires discipline

straight and narrow

“Times of trouble” are a “learning experience”
Difficult time... for a good reason

reasons for difficulty

Christian life and
responsibility

Self sufficiency
Thinking about a situation at church
Christian life is focus on Christ

personal responsibility

Content analysis of experience in endurance

Raw Data Themes: quotations and paraphrases

First Order Themes

General Dimension

“Scary”

“Noise of the crowd”

“You meet your demons”

“Brains get scrambled”

“Concerned that my legs would not hold out”

context

environment

God is with you

“Thank you Lord”

I did gain added strength

God was with me

Lord is my strength

“Narky “ and “demanding” prayer

relationship with God

transcendence

“I felt the power of people praying for me”

“Seems like I’m flying”

transcendent feeling

people praying
“support and encouragement”
family following
“so many people were supporting me”

fellowship and family

solidarity

companionship
not alone
imagined friend
“my... suffering could help”

solidarity

keep persevering
“‘self-centred’ experience”

responsibility

isolation

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