Gatis Lidums

THE DOCTRINE OF *IMAGO DEI* AND ITS RELATION TO SELF-TRANSCENDENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Academic dissertation

To be publicly discussed, by permission of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Helsinki, in Auditorium XVI in the main Building of the University, on October 29, 2004, at 12 noon.

HELSINKI 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

The chapters of this dissertation contain the result of my doctoral studies over five years, beginning in 1999 at the University of Latvia's Faculty of Theology and successfully ending at Helsinki University's Department of Practical Theology in 2004.

My interest in practical theology in general and pastoral counseling in particular began in the mid-eighties when a friend of mine and I started a youth group at one of the Evangelical churches in Riga, Latvia. At that time Latvia was still part of the Soviet Empire and spiritual activities of any kind were strictly limited. When our group grew from three people to thirty in just a few months, we came to a point of dealing with pastoral counseling issues. Moreover, since our youth group consisted of young people coming from a wide range of traditions, starting with the Roman Catholic and going all the way to some rather extreme forms of charismatic movement, the pastoral counseling issues often had a rather interesting dimension involving one's religious identity against the background of the fast-changing post-communist society. These were the issues that sketched an early blueprint for my counseling practice that has driven me with increasing intensity to look for things that are universally applicable to the quest for one's religious identity and peace with God regardless of the denominational affiliation. This particular interest of mine is also evident in this dissertation, perhaps most strongly demonstrated in the attempt to look for common ground between the Lutheran Reinhold Niebuhr's theological anthropology and the Roman Catholic anthropological framework, with its emphasis on self-transcendence, expounded by Walter Conn and Karl Rahner.

Unfortunately, in the early 1980 virtually no professional help from the pastoral staff was available in the situations that required pastoral counseling skills simply because most Latvian protestant pastors at that time were self-educated and severely under-equipped to deal with these kinds of issues. For better or for worse we had to deal with the situations ourselves. That was my first impulse, which later developed into a full-blown determination, to construct a theologically sound and practically effective framework for pastoral counseling practice, applicable in the Latvian post-Soviet cultural milieu, and acceptable to the Church in Latvia. Though I belong to the protestant

tradition, I hope that my work may provide some valuable insights also to the people standing in Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Free Church traditions.

My first formal encounter with the theology and practice of pastoral counseling came much later, when in 1991 I was able to study for one year at Nordiska Bibelinstitutet in Sweden. It was there that I had my first class in Biblical Counseling taught by John Brenneman. I am grateful to John for encouraging all of his students not to be shy of using their spiritual gifts and knowledge when they are called upon to provide some counsel.

A few years later I was able to begin studies at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. It was there that my theological views and my pastoral counseling position were molded and shaped through class work, internships, consultations, and by friendships with students and faculty. I am especially indebted to Dr. Gerry E. Breshears, whose motto "Our ministry flows out of our theology" has been a defining principle in shaping my philosophy of pastoral counseling. I am also grateful to three of my counseling professors at Western – David R. Wenzel, Sandra K. Wilson, and Kay C. Bruce- for their empathy and love in helping me make my first wobbly steps in pastoral counseling during the internships, without which my counseling theology would never have become a counseling ministry.

After four years at Western I returned to Latvia somewhat detached from the cultural context of that time, yet able to see things that sometimes evade one's sight if one lives in a certain cultural milieu all the time. Soon it became poignantly evident that regardless of denominational identity, the church in Latvia had developed an acute need for the ministry of pastoral counseling, though the attitude towards Western models of counseling from church leaders and pastors was mostly that of caution and suspicion. Meanwhile, in the mid 1990s, there were less than ten people in all of Latvia who had had some training (often just a few introductory classes) in pastoral counseling abroad. Into this situation the Faculty of Theology at the University of Latvia invited me to teach several classes of pastoral counseling. During my first two years of teaching, it became evident that in the Latvian context the most acute need in the areas of practical theology

in general and the theology of pastoral counseling in particular, was for an integrative theological anthropology framework around which the practice of pastoral counseling could then be developed.

This dissertation presents an attempt to formulate such a framework for the cultural and theological context of Latvia at the turn of the millennia. It attempts to provide a survey of various approaches to the concept and doctrine of *imago Dei,* mostly concentrating on the 20th century theological discourse, while at the same time providing insights into *imago Dei* interpretations across centuries and various traditions, with the aim of finding the common threads in theological anthropology that could be useful in formulating a tentative framework for pastoral counseling. I fully realize that in doing so, important aspects of theological anthropological discourse (e.g. the relationship between nature and grace, the issues of individual eschatology and the like) will be left out. It is not my purpose, however, to provide detailed information about every theological issue that has some bearing upon the primary topic of my research. Instead, my aim is to arrive at a common theological ground with regards to *imago Dei*, based on which every faith tradition can formulate its own answers to theological questions coming to the forefront at various times and in various situations. With this in mind it is my hope that the material of this dissertation would become a useful tool to those who strive to formulate a viable theological position of pastoral counseling for the purpose of practice, teaching, and learning.

Most of the thoughts outlined in this dissertation are shaped by the interaction with my colleagues and students at the University of Latvia, ongoing interaction with church leaders and pastors across the denominational board in Latvia, and by the people with whom I have had the privilege to consult in the capacity of a pastoral counselor over the last six years. To all of them I am deeply grateful. I am especially indebted to Prof. Leons G. Taivans, the director of the doctoral studies program in Theology at the University of Latvia, who was a demanding reviewer of the chapters already finished, as well as a constant source of encouragement for the chapters yet to be written.

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to theological understanding of the image of God there have been numerous attempts to exegete, explain and understand the relatively few scripture passages pertaining to this theme. At first glance this seemingly peripheral theological theme is in reality one of the more important scriptural themes (doctrines) regarding man's relationship to God, God's relationship to man, and all that entail these two sides of the same coin. Carl F.H. Henry in the "Evangelical Dictionary of Theology" entry on *imago Dei* beautifully captures the importance of the theological understanding of the image of God:

> The importance of a proper understanding of the *imago Dei* can hardly be overstated. The answer given to the *imago*-inquiry soon becomes determinative for the entire gamut of the doctrinal affirmation. The ramifications are not only theological, but affect every phase of the problem of revelation and reason, including natural and international law, and the cultural enterprise as a whole. Any improper view has consequences the more drastic as its implications are applied to regenerate and to unregenerate man, from primal origin to final destiny.[1]

In light of this quote by Carl Henry, it is not surprising that many theologians and thinkers throughout church history have attempted to exegetically and otherwise establish the theological and anthropological meaning of the *imago Dei*. However, in this process different people have arrived at different conclusions using a variety of methods. For instance, according to the article by S.B. Ferguson in the "New Dictionary of Theology,"[2] there are five major directions in the history of theology when it comes to the concept of *imago Dei*.

First, there is the so-called Anthropomorphite approach, which dates back to the 4th century. The representatives of this school taught that the image of God in human beings is primarily a physical phenomenon, the implication of this view being that God also has a physical body. This view, having been on a far periphery of the theological anthropological discourse for centuries, has recently gained increasing popularity in some

---

[1] Carl F.H. Henry "Image of God" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 546.

[2] S.B. Ferguson "Image of God" in *New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, England: Inter Varsity Press, 1988), 328-329.

circles especially in relation to ecological, feminist, and panentheist emphases in theology.[3]

The second view takes God's being in trinity as the prototype and looks for signs, or "footsteps" (*vestigia Trinitatis*) of trinity in man. The chief representative of this view is Augustine who develops this concept in his "*De Trinitate*".[4] Similar to the first view, this position also has a formidable following among the contemporary theologians both in the East (Eastern Orthodox theology), and the West (Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and others espousing a predominantly relational approach to *imago Dei* have, to various degrees, done that in their anthropological discourses).

According to the third view, God's image in man is defined in terms of man's dominion over the rest of creation. This view also has a relatively strong eschatological emphasis, for the true *imago Dei* is the New Man, Christ Jesus himself, who will be crowned with glory, and who will rein throughout eternity. Theologians who place emphasis on global ecology from a theological perspective and man's place in it, currently espouse various forms of this position.

The fourth view defines the image of God in ethical and cognitive terms. This view is traced back to the father of Reformed theology, John Calvin, who postulated that

---

[3] One representative of the "body of God theology" is, for instance, Sallie McFague, the distinguished theology professor at the Vancouver BC School of Theology. Her view is briefly outlined in a recent article "The World as God's Body," in *Concilium* no 2 (2002): 50-56. McFague asserts that there really is little difference between the doctrines of creation and incarnation. According to McFague, in Christian tradition God is always incarnate, and God is always creating things: "The doctrine of creation for Christians, then, is not different in kind from the doctrine of the incarnation: in both God is the source of all existence, the One *in whom* we are borne and re-born. In this view, the world is not just matter while God is spirit; rather, there is continuity (though not an identity) between God and the world. The world is flesh of God's 'flesh'; the God who took our flesh in one person, Jesus of Nazareth, has always done so. God is incarnate, not secondarily but primarily. Therefore, an appropriate Christian model for understanding creation is the world as god's body." (p. 50).

[4] This particular view does not only represent a historical developmental stage in the theological understanding of imago Dei. Interestingly enough, it has its followers among the contemporary theologians as well. For example, this view is espoused by the Vicar of Woodthorpe (Nottingham) F. W. Bridger whose in-depth article on humanity is featured in the recent major resource volume in practical theology - *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, eds. David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 21-27. Bridger interprets the plural pronoun in Gen 1:26 not as the plural of majesty, but rather as a clear reference to the plurality within Godhead. Employing the narrative theological approach in developing his interpretation Bridger characterizes the first chapters of Genesis as the "trinitarian narrative", which is structurally echoed in the Gospel of John chapter 1(John 1, in this case, is viewed as sort of a supplementary explanation of Genesis 1 creation account). He continues by saying: "Thus the original narrative of human origins is filled out in terms of Christ and its trinitarian basis made plain. [...] The centrality of the *imago Dei* as the defining characteristic of humanity is thus invested with a Christological and trinitarian significance." (p. 22)

what is restored by grace in believers is basically the same that was lost in the fall; namely the "rectitude and integrity of the whole soul".[5] This view of image, consisting of holiness, righteousness and knowledge, is more dynamic than static in nature.

Finally, there is the view that the image of God is societal in nature. This view goes back to Emil Brunner, who postulated that the image is not a possession of an isolated individual, but rather it belongs to a man-in-community living in a state Brunner called "existence-for-love". Similar emphasis is found in Karl Barth, who saw the societal nature of image primarily in the male -female relationships. [6]

Claus Westermann, in his commentary on Genesis and in other writings, has listed six different groups of opinion with regards to the image of God in the history of interpretation of the Genesis creation story. First, are those who distinguish between natural and supernatural likeness to God. Second, are those who define the likeness in spiritual capacities and abilities. The third group consists of those who interpret the image as external form. The fourth group is made up of those who are in sharp opposition to the theologians in the third group. The fifth group includes those who understand the term as primarily indicating that a human being is God's counterpart, someone who corresponds

---

[5] Quoted from the "Institutes" I. xv. 4.

[6] The former systematics professor of Dallas Theological seminary and a prolific evangelical writer, Charles C. Ryrie in his book *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, Il: Victor Books, 1986) outlines five theological positions on *imago Dei,* which are very similar to the classification of Ferguson. First, there is the so-called corporeal view, which, according to Ryrie, includes both material and immaterial parts of human being, but emphasizes the unity of both these parts, making the human body as sort of a unifying factor. Although the authors quoted by Ryrie as representatives of this view, namely L. Koehler and E. Jacob, present the bodily aspect of *imago Dei* as simply one aspect, Ryrie still feels that in their theology human body is somehow elevated above the other aspects when it comes to *imago Dei*, hence the term "corporeal".
Second, the non-corporeal view primarily connects the image of God to facets of personality, which are not directly related to the physical body. The facets include such aspects of humanity as morality, dominion over the rest of created world, exercise of will, the intellectual abilities and the like. Third, Ryrie mentions the so-called combination view, which in some ways is the combination of views one and two. This basically restates view number two by also stating that in a certain sense even man's body somehow reflects the image of God, even though there is no statement in the scripture that God would have a physical body. Fourth, Ryrie singles out what he calls the Roman Catholic view, according to which there is a distinction between the image and the likeness of God in man. Likeness, according to this view, is the original righteousness and holiness, which was given to man to control the lower appetites. This likeness was lost through the fall and is gradually added to the believers through participation in the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. Finally, the so-called neo-orthodox view is listed. This view is equated with Emil Brunner's theological interpretation of *imago Dei*. Brunner's twopartite view of the formal image (retained through the fall) and material image (lost as a result of the fall) is contrasted to Barth's view. Barth believed in total depravity and thus opposed Brunner's idea of the formal part of the image. (pp. 190-192)

to God. Finally, in the sixth group are those who interpret image as man's ability to represent God on earth.[7]

Millard J. Erickson, who has written one of the recent normative texts of systematic theology from the Reformed perspective, does a very good job grouping the different views. In his "Christian Theology" he divides the views regarding *imago Dei* into three major groups.[8]

The theologians falling into the first group represent the so-called substantive[9] view. Those who think that the image of God in humans is related to our bodily makeup (chief modern representatives of this view being the Mormons) and those who tie the *imago Dei* to some specific psychological or spiritual quality in human nature (Irenaeus, traditional Catholic view, traditional Lutheran view, and the traditional Reformed view) belong in this category.

The second category is made up of those holding to some form of the relational view regarding the image of God, which, according to Erickson, has its roots in existential philosophy. This view is more popular among modern theologians; chief representatives being the Reformed theologians whose names are closely tied to the movement of Neo-Orthodoxy - Emil Brunner and Karl Barth.

Those in the third category represent the functional view of the image of God in man. According to the functional view, image is neither something that belongs to man's makeup, nor in his experiencing of relationships. Instead, the image consists of something man does. Contemporary representatives of this view, according to Erickson, are C.G. Berkouwer, Leonard Verduin, Norman Snaith, and Sigmund Mowinckel.

There are theologians who have even narrowed down the views of the imago Dei to as few as two major groups, namely the substantialists (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas) and the relationalists (Luther,

---

[7] Claus Westermann *Genesis,* vol 1, Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament (Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag, 1980) quoted in Philip J. Hefner "The Human Being" in *Christian Dogmatics,* vol 1, Eds Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 323 – 340.

[8] Millard J. Erickson *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983,1984,1985), 495 - 517.

[9] Here and throughout the dissertation the terms "substantive" (Erickson's term) and "substantival" will be used interchangeably when the views embracing the idea that *imago Dei* belongs to man's substance in some way will be discussed.

Calvin, Barth, Brunner).[10] This division, however, seems to be too broad to adequately represent the various approaches that have been attempted in the history of theology with regards to the image of God, and their respective differences.

Some Christian counselors who take the image of God as the theoretical starting point for developing their counseling theories have also classified the views about the *Imago*. Larry Crabb, for instance, has grouped those views into four groups.[11] The first group includes those who view the image as man's dominion over the rest of creation and/or man's representation of God on the Earth. The second group is made up of those who view the image mainly as a moral virtue. Third, come those who see the image as an amoral capacity (this is how Crabb calls the traditional Roman Catholic view of *Imago Dei*). Last come those who see image as a similarity between man and God especially in that both are personable beings.

Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, in their monumental "Integrative Theology" offer an approach that more or less adequately takes into consideration differences and commonalities among various views regarding *imago Dei* from a historical perspective. These authors divide the views into six groups.[12]

The first group includes early church views emphasizing rationality. The theologians of the early church who have written about the image of God in this group include Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, John of Damascus.

The second group unites those who adhere to the traditional Roman Catholic view. Such theologians as Peter Lombard, St.John Bonaventura, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas belong in this group.

Third, the authors create a special group for those who hold to the Lutheran Postulate of Righteousness and Holiness. It is interesting to note, however, that the only representatives of this view that are mentioned in this group are Luther and Melanchton.[13]

---

[10] *Humanity* by F.W. Bridger in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, eds. David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1995) , 21-27.

[11] Larry Crabb *Understanding People. Deep Longings for Relationship*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 89 – 93.

[12] Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest *Integrative Theology. Three Volumes in One* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), vol. 2, 123 - 180.

[13] This perhaps can partially be explained by the fact that some contemporary Lutheran theologians simply reiterate Luther's position when it comes to *imago Dei*. A classic example of such reiteration can be seen in

According to this view, God's image in man can neither be equated with the physical dimension of man (God being a spirit has no body), nor with the endowments of will and reason that man received at creation. Rather, the meaning of *imago Dei* is to be looked for in the disposition of the above-mentioned endowments.[14] Before the fall, in the original state, man's intellect was perfect, though finite, and his will was in total agreement with the will of God: "Therefore, within the limitations of his given faculties, man was as perfect, holy, and righteous as God, who made him, and he led a perfectly integrated existence."[15] Hence, according to the classic Lutheran view, God's image and likeness in man can be equated with man's "perfect apprehension of the good by virtue of his perfect creation."[16] In other words, the measure of man's equality with God was the constant congruence of his will with God's will. The fall changed things in that the mind and will of man are no longer congruent with the will of God. A qualitative (as opposed to substantive) change has taken place, which means that in the sinful condition man is "completely unable to apprehend spiritual truths, such as are conveyed in the message of the Gospel, nor is man disposed willingly to accept them."[17] Hence, the classic Lutheran view would argue that the image of God is gone in the fallen human being, and is restored in the believer through the work of Christ.[18]

John Theodore Mueller *Christian Dogmatics. A Handbook for Pastors, Teachers and Laymen.* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1934). 205-216.

[14] *What, Then, Is Man? A Symposium of Theology, Psychology, and Psychiatry. Graduate Study Number III.* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 39-40.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid, 50.

[17] Ibid, 57.

[18] It must be noted, however, that even in the classic Lutheran view there is some slight ambiguity or hesitancy when it comes to the absence of *imago Dei* in the fallen human being. For instance, the Formula of Concord, when speaking about the situation of the fallen man, mentions the "spark of the knowledge" about God that even the fallen man has. Yet, on the other hand, it very clearly states that unless a person is born from above she or he cannot understand the things of God: "Although man' s reason or natural intellect indeed has still a dim spark of the knowledge that there is a God, as also of the doctrine of the Law (Rom. 1:19ff), yet it is so ignorant, blind and perverted that when even the most ingenious and learned men upon earth reads the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation, they cannot from their own powers perceive, apprehend, understand, or believe and regard it as true, but the more diligence and earnestness they employ, wishing to comprehend these spiritual things with their reason, the less they understand or believe, and before they become enlightened and are taught by the Holy Ghost, they regard all this only as foolishness or fictions. Now, just as a man who is physically dead cannot of his own powers prepare or adapt himself to obtain temporal life again, so the man who is spiritually dead in sins cannot of his own strength adapt or apply himself to the acquisition of spiritual and heavenly righteousness and life, unless he is delivered and quickened by the Son of God from the death and sin." (Quoted in *What, Then, Is Man?* p. 57.)

Fourth comes the functional view of Pelagians, Socinians and others. This group includes the "Pelagians in the patristic era, Socinians at the time of the Reforamtion, rationalistic Arminians in the seventeenth century (Remonstrants), and certain mediating theologians in recent times."[19] Such contemporary theologians as Gerhard von Rad, D.J.A. Clines and Leonard Verduin belong to this group.

Fifth, the group holding to the relational view of Neoorthodox and Theistic Existentialists is described. Dietrich Bohnhoeffer, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and John Macquarrie are the chief representatives in this group.

Finally, in the sixth group are placed those who hold the view called "the View of Augustine and some reformed and Evangelical authorities." According to this view, the human person is viewed holistically, and one's rational capacities are not separable from one's desires and will. The person is viewed metaphysically as a soul in a body. Therefore, the fall is thought to have affected the whole person and the whole image of God, yet the image is by no means completely lost. The representatives of this view include Augustine, Calvin, John Wolleb, Herman Bavinck, and Luis Berkof.

This is just a brief and somewhat random sample of how contemporary theologians are trying to classify and discuss the various positions developed by other theologians on the concept and doctrine of *imago Dei*. Among other things this list shows that there really is no consensus of how to describe and discuss *imago Dei*. Virtually every systematic theology text that offers insights into *imago Dei* scholarship features some kind of a list of the views on the image of God theology that have been formulated over the last two millennia. As evidenced by the lists presented above, the approach is similar. What varies is the number of categories and/or groups of views.

It is not my purpose to offer yet another list. As helpful as it is, it would most likely not bring me closer to exploring the relationship between *imago Dei,* self-transcendence, and the theology of pastoral counseling. The goal of this dissertation is to construct a tentative model for pastoral counseling based on the *imago* theology, and to explore its theological and practical implications. This is why only something that would help in counseling would be of value. Counseling normally deals with peoples' emotions, thoughts, views, values and so on. And, since I do not have research results,

---

[19] Lewis and Demarest, 128.

which would show how people *feel* about the image of God theology, or what the *imago Dei* theology as they understand it *means* to them, I will attempt to create something that a standard textbook on systematic theology does not offer. It will be a list of *themes* that I have identified in surveying the current theological and non-theological literature that deal with the issue of *imago Dei*.

I have identified nine thematic positions and/or themes, which will be offered in the first chapter. I have chosen to call them:

1. Layman's view,
2. Counselor's view,
3. The traditionalist position,
4. The pastor's view,
5. The theologians view,
6. The scientist's perspective,
7. The missionary's view,
8. The doctor's approach,
9. The feminist platform.

After each of the thematic positions will be examined, at the end of the first chapter the formulation of the thesis for this dissertation will be offered, as well as the methodology employed will be described.

Chapter one

THEMATICAL APPROACHES TO *IMAGO DEI* SCHOLARSHIP

The lists of theological positions on the interpretation of *imago Dei* concept and doctrine offered in the introduction are certainly helpful in a number of ways. They show how theologians who exegete the same scripture passages arrive at very different understandings and/or interpretations of the image of God in humans. However, rarely do the authors of these lists try to provide some sort of a consensual basis, which could be used for constructing a theologically correct and practically helpful model of *imago Dei*. An approach slightly different from the compilation of lists would be to try and identify common unifying themes around which the *imago* discussion is currently revolving. Hence, in this chapter I will attempt to group the views into thematically oriented systems in order to gain a wider understanding of the directions in current theological thought dealing with the phenomenon of *imago Dei*.

The headings of the themes are chosen arbitrarily. They are partly based on who, by their respective vocations and/or scientific interests have been the authors of works embracing or endorsing the particular theme. Partly, they are based on the terms used to describe the followers of a particular approach by those who follow a different approach. As indicated before, I have identified nine different *imago* themes around which the current theological thinking tends to revolve. This list is by no means exhaustive. Nor is it in any way normative. Most likely there are more than nine themes around which this discussion may revolve. In fact, there probably will be (and most likely already are) more than nine themes as theologians and non-theologians attempt to interpret their lives in light of the Biblical revelation, and to arrive at a personal *meaning* of the image of God concept and doctrine. The unifying themes listed and discussed below, however, are the most pronounced in the current literature. Hence, the hope that they will help to see how the *imago Dei* concept, doctrine, symbol, and idea helps people to self-transcend in the search for a deeper understanding of their lives and destinies, in light of the revelation recorded in the Bible. For as Lutheran theologian Philip Heffner has stated it succinctly: "Unless we perceive the human being's divinely ordained destiny, we have failed from the outset, to comprehend who and what *Homo sapiens* is."[1]

---

[1] Philip J. Heffner "The Human Being" in *Christian Dogmatics,* vol 1, Eds Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 324.

Layman's view

According to this view, it is not necessary to exegete the term *Imago Dei*, and the scripture passages that speak about it. Instead, the concept of the Image of God is employed more "like a thread which holds together a series of attempts to help layman untrained in theology think about God."[2] According to this view, more fully developed in T.P. Ferris' book entitled "Image of God", each person has the Image of God to some extent. This "piece" of the *Imago Dei* helps people to think about God, and perhaps draw closer to God as they contemplate God's character and attributes against the background of their own personalities. Moreover, since the New Testament only talks about Christ Jesus as the true Image of God[3], God's image that we have in us becomes like a momentum-provider for our spiritual growth, and for Christians' growth into Christ-likeness. In fact, according to this view, the spiritual progress of a person is directly proportional to and dependent upon the operational "Image of God" the person has at the given time. : "Every time you grow you need a greater image of God."[4] In other words, if a person images God in a childish way, her view of spiritual things and religious life as a whole will be childish. Obviously this view assumes a more substantive view of the *Imago*: "For us, the image of God is something mental, the creation of our capacity to think, to picture things we cannot see."[5]

Quite a few religion-friendly psychologists and Christian counselors adopt this view also. For instance, psychiatrist Stanley A. Leavy in his "In The Image of God. A Psychoanalyst's view," maintains that it is futile to try and find out the exact meaning of the *Image of God*. Instead, if the conviction that each person is created in the image of God is adopted, it helps us to never stop in our development, and to always move to more satisfying lives overcoming possible obstacles, and transcending the present state of the world we live in. Or, in so many words: "The *imago Dei* may never be realizable as such, but as a symbol of the implicit human life-project, it holds out hope." [6] The driving force in this process is love, or more precisely

---

[2] Theodore Parker Ferris *Image of God*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1965), v.
[3] Ibid. 10.
[4] Ibid. 9.
[5] Ibid. 4.
[6] Stanley A. Leavy *In the Image of God. A Psychoanalyst's View,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), xii.

unconditional love, which is the most revealing of all human capacities to resemble God.[7]

Various versions of this view have been adopted and espoused by a number of pastoral counselors who use the concept of *Imago Dei* as the key concept when discussing the core identity of a person, and the effects of the fall in the lives of people. A typical representative of this group would be Neil T. Anderson, who takes the position that the human inner self, which has been severely affected by the fall, is the bearer of God's image. This image is renewed and reshaped through repentance and spiritual renewal.[8]

Counselor's view

According to this view, all that is somehow relevant and important in us and in our relationships comes from the Image of God in us. We have been created in the image of God, which means that on one hand we are creatures similar to animals. On the other hand, since humans have been created in the image of God, we have the capacity for relationships with God, others and the world, and we are also to exercise responsible control over nature and impact the world.[9] *Imago Dei* is not lost in humans. It is marred and distorted, and needs to be restored in and through Jesus Christ, who is "the only complete and valid revelation of what the full image of God looks like." [10] The distorted image is restored through being in Christ, in the Church, in meaningful relationships, and receiving a continuous impact that helps in the process of restoration through these relationships.

Within this particular view there are variations as to how significant it is to speak about the transformation of the image, and the transformation of the person through the transformation of the image. A more "theologized" approach would be represented by Garry Collins and William T. Kirwan, who tie virtually everything that happens in and through us to the growth of the *Imago Dei* (or the lack of it). The basic thrust of the argument here is that when humans were first created, they were perfect in their humanity in that they had absolute knowledge of reality, absolute knowledge

---

[7] Ibid. 38.
[8] Neil T. Anderson *Victory Over the Darkness. Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ,* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990)
[9] Garry R. Collins *The Biblical Basis of Christian Counseling for People Helpers,* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1993)
[10] Ibid. 89.

of possibilities, and accurate sense of values.[11] After the fall, the human situation changed in two ways: the humans experienced a loss of positive self-identity, and the existential reality of a divided self.[12] In this situation healing is possible through the person's regeneration and coming to Christ, obtaining a new identity in Christ, and healing the wounds through progressive sanctification.

The group of representative of the less "theologized" approach appears to be quite large and well-represented in the recent literature on Christian counseling. To sketch the view, though, it will suffice to mention two somewhat randomly chosen names - Larry Day and John Patton. Generally authors belonging to this group tend to mention the *imago Dei* briefly, and having made a note of this theological-anthropological truth as a road sign, they move on to some other issues (e.g. therapeutic process, counseling techniques). For instance, John Patton, in a volume of 270 pages, allots about three pages to the major conviction on which the entire book is more or less based, at least in terms of its theologically – anthropological starting point. Moreover, Patton argues that Gen. 1:26-28 not only tells us that humans are created in God's image, but "it also provides an important biblical basis for pastoral care."[13] Once that is established, Patton moves on to the discussion of important and relevant clinical aspects of pastoral care without ever returning to the theology of the image of God.

Something similar can also be observed in a book on self-esteem by Larry Day[14] who ties the intrinsic worth and self-esteem of people to the fact that they have been made in the image of God. Once that is established, the transformations in the image are not discussed in detail. They move to the periphery of the discussion. It is assumed that once people anchor their value and self-esteem in the fact that they are God's image-bearers, they will be capable to lead much more authentic and emotionally healthy lives. Through which, in turn, they will become better image-

---

[11] William T. Kirwan, *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counseling. A Case for Integrating Psychology and Theology.* (Grand rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 76-78.

[12] Kirwan calls the two halves of the divided self the needing self (the part of the personality that needs affiliation, affection, and affirmation) and the rejected self (the part of the person that feels rejected, ashamed, and helpless). As the person is being progressively sanctified and renewed in Christ's image, the divided self is also moving toward a newly unified self (pp. 83-85).

[13] John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context. An Introduction to Pastoral Care.* Louisville: (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 16.

[14] Larry G. Day *By Design and in God's Image. Self-Esteem from a Judeo-Christian World View,* (Portland, OR: Mt. Tabor Press, 1994)

bearers. The major emphasis is on helping people to develop a healthy self –image and self-esteem taking the concept of *Imago Dei* as the starting point.

Larry Crabb and Wayne Oates, in their approach, represent a middle ground between the views outlined above. Crabb also sees the fact that people are made in the image of God as the most fundamental truth about human beings.[15]   It is so fundamental in Crabb's approach, that in drawing a schematic view of his counseling theory, he puts the fact that "People are fallen image –bearers" in the very foundation on which the theory stands.[16] The image of God in humans, according to Crabb, is "the enduring qualities of personhood which both God and people share, qualities that define what it means to be a person rather than a non-person."[17] Once that is established, Crabb integrates theological insights with counseling theory, attempting to show ways people can learn to live to the fullest potential of their personalities as opposed to continually suffering due to the fact that the God-given capabilities of their personhood are not fully used and/or developed.

The approach espoused by Oates is very similar to that of Crabb in that Oates sees the fact that people are created in the image of God as the most fundamental truth about human beings. He also grounds the interpersonal communication, which takes place in the counseling relationship in the *imago Dei.* The worth of both the counselor and the counselee resides not in ourselves, but in Christ, the Primal Image, and in the Word of God: "If you and I have any counsel to offer, it comes from the very image of God in us, as well. Such a perception of our relationship to our counselee brings the meeting of selves to worshipful heights of devotional and ethical responsibility."[18] According to Oates, when the client who is made in the image of God meets with the counselor who is also made in the same image, they both experience the presence of God in what happens in the counseling room.[19]

The traditionalist position

I choose to call the following view "the traditionalist's position" simply because several of the recent theological systems (process theology, feminist

---

[15] Larry Crabb *Understanding People. Deep Longings for Relationship,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987)

[16] Ibid. 88.

[17] Ibid. 92.

[18] Wayne E. Oates, *The Presence of God in Pastoral Counseling*, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 39-40.

[19] Ibid, 42.

theology) emphasize the connection between the classic, patriarchal theology and the centrality of the ideas of subduing and dominion in Biblical anthropology. This does not mean, however, that all who think of themselves as "traditionalists" in theology would embrace this particular view, and vice versa.

The notion that subduing the world and having dominion over it is an important aspect of being a man made in God's image is common throughout writings that have to do with Theology and Biblical anthropology. Seldom, however, one finds subduing and ruling being put at the very center of the theological discussion of *imago Dei*. Jay Adams is one of the most eloquent representatives of this view.

Adams generally follows the reformed theological tradition in affirming that man was originally created in the image of God which was subsequently "ruined at the fall"[20] The renewal of the ruined image happens when a person grows into Christlikeness by changing "his former sinful life patterns" and growing into "the stature of Christ"[21], which is the goal of nouthetic counseling.

This process of developing the likeness of Christ, who is the true image of God, is a direct result of the Christian person taking seriously God's call to subdue the earth. By God's grace a Christian can master his environment, and thus "once again reflect the image of God by subduing and ruling the world about him."[22] The opposite of this is a person who is feeling helpless and who doesn't act as if he was in control. Such lack of initiative stemming from the feeling of helplessness is "a pitiful distortion of the picture of God's all-powerful rule."[23]

As the Dutch reformed scholar J.S. Hielema has commented on the approach used by Adams:

> There is only one way to achieve victory. You recognize your problems, Adams explains, in light of the Word, in the mirror of God's law. You measure your problems and in terms of the Word through prayer and supplication you master them. "In nouthetic counseling, clients are taught to solve problems rather than adapt to them. There is a biblical solution to every problem." A Christian client can't say "can't."[24]

---

[20] Jay E. Adams *Competent to Counsel. Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry vResources Library, 1970), 74.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid. 129.
[23] Ibid.
[24] J.S. Hielema, *Pastoral or Christian Counseling: A Confrontation with American Pastoral Theology in particular Seward Hiltner and Jay E. Adams,* (Leeuwarden: De Tille, 1975), 184.

In describing the image of God in man, Adams allows room for the ability to communicate, holiness, the ability to know, and righteousness.[25] The main thrust, however, is on the person's ability to take control into one's own hands, to choose the right course of action, and to put off "disorder and confusion" while putting on the "proper habits of orderly thinking and living."[26]

The pastor's view

The following section deals with what I have chosen to call the "pastor's view." Again, not every pastor would embrace this view, and not everybody agreeing with this position will be a pastor. The title for this section is chosen based on the fact that several theologians (Kierkegaard, Rahner, Niebuhr) included here have served as pastors, and have viewed themselves primarily as such (Reinhold Niebuhr who has on a number of occasions openly and clearly stressed that he is *not* a theologian would perhaps be the best example). Also, most of the theologians mentioned in this subsection stress the importance of approaching the subject of Christian anthropology from a practical perspective, or, using Moltmann's phrase, to practice "theology in-action,"[27] which in essence is a very "pastoral" emphasis indeed.

By calling man "the case in open court," Jürgen Moltmann in essence has said that in the discussion about the true identity of man, it all depends on what background information in combination with preconceived notions one has before attempting to answer the question: What is man? Man's situation is a rather difficult one in comparison to the rest of the creation because as soon as man starts to ask what is a man, he falls into a dilemma. He is both, the one who asks, and the one who has to answer. In this quest, man has to view himself against the background of something or someone else. Moltmann offers three possibilities. Man can compare himself with other creatures, with other humans, or with the divine. The clearest answer to the question about his true identity that man can get is if he compares himself with the divine. Then he sees the crucified Christ who is both, the true God and the true man.[28]

The mission of Christ Jesus is to save and to reconcile man to God. Christ invites man to fellowship with Himself because Christ has shared the weakness of

---

[25] Ibid. 218.

[26] Jay E. Adams *The Christian Counselor's Manual. The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1973), 342.

[27] Jürgen Moltmann, *Man,* Trans. J. Sturdy (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), x.

[28] Ibid. 18.

humanity, and through that shown men that God loves them despite their weaknesses and shortcomings. Hence, man "can accept himself in spite of all his unacceptable features, because he has already been accepted by God."[29] Through the experience of God's love and faith, man who is created in the image of God, can fulfill his calling to the likeness of God by becoming more and more Christ-like.

Similar positions to the one developed by Moltmann are developed also by Howard Clinebell, who has written about the human need to fulfill the image of God by developing one's truest humanity (creativity, awareness, inward freedom) within the context of an authentic religious life[30], David E. Roberts has emphasized that one of the most important things for a human being is to reach inner harmony in the process of actualizing his God given talents (*imago Dei*) while at the same time bringing his freedom into right relationship with God.[31]

Though from a somewhat different angle, Karl Rahner takes a similar approach to the problem of a human being asking the question of "what is a man" and thus coming close to simultaneously being an object and a subject in this inquiry. According to Rahner, man is not a finite system, for "a finite system cannot confront itself in its totality… It does not ask questions about itself. It is not a subject."[32] Man is fundamentally a transcendent being, and the realities of man's transcendental experience are subjectivity, personhood, responsibility and freedom, which are all experienced when a subject as such experiences himself.[33] At the same time, man realizes that he is a dependent being who is always aware of historical limitations: "Being situated in this way between the finite and the infinite is what constitutes man, and is shown by the fact that it is in his infinite transcendence and in his freedom that man experiences himself as dependent and historically conditioned."[34] Through enduring and accepting the knowledge about his reality man comes to the real truth about himself.

---

[29] Ibid. 114.

[30] Howard J. Clinbell, Jr. *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling*, (Nashville, TN: Abington Prress, 1966), 250-251.

[31] David E. Roberts *Psychotherapy and A Christian View of Man,* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1950), 85 - 93.

[32] Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. William V Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1978) quoted in *Readings in Christian Theology*, Eds Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 169.

[33] Ibid. 173.

[34] Ibid. 175.

Reinhold Niebuhr places similar heavy emphasis on man's transcendence as an essential feature of *imago Dei*. According to Niebuhr, the key to unlocking the mystery of *imago Dei* lies in the Christian concept of individuality.[35] In Christian anthropology, the person is "conceived of as a creature of infinite possibilities which cannot be fulfilled within terms of this temporal existence."[36]

On one hand, a human person is a finite individual, while on the other hand, this same person has the ability to transcend in his self-consciousness the limitedness of temporal existence on this earth. Yet, no matter how much the person self-transcends in his spiritual stature, he still remains anxious for his life and is tied to the realities of the "here and now" in relation to his own body. Niebuhr formulates this tension as follows:

> The Christian view of man […] emphasizes the height of self-transcendence in man's spiritual stature in its doctrine of "image of God". […] In its purest form the Christian view of man regards man as a unity of God-likeness and creatureliness in which he remains a creature even in the highest spiritual dimensions of his existence and may reveal elements of the image of God even in the lowliest aspects of his natural life.[37]

Similar emphasis on the tension between man's creatureliness and his transcendence can also be found in the works of Augustine and Kierkegaard, both of whom Niebuhr refers to quite frequently throughout the discussion related to *imago Dei*. Niebuhr's theological views regarding the image of God are discussed in more detail in chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis. Human transcendence is also at the center of the anthropological discussion that emphasizes imagination as a central aspect of *imago Dei*, which plays a vital role in human interaction with the environment.[38]

The theologian's view

This subsection will include the views of theologians, who all basically agree that man is created in the image of God so that something may happen between man and God. This "something" may be communication, dialogue, overcoming our limitations in Christ, and discovering the true dimensions of human freedom. All these are activities that require active "theologizing," hence the title of the subsection.

---

[35] Reinhold Niebuhr *The Nature and Destiny of Man. A Christian Interpretation. Vol. 1*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), 169-170.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid. 150.
[38] Bryant, David J. "*Imago Dei*, Imagination, and Ecological Responsibility" In *Theology Today*, Vol 57, No. 1, (2000): 35-50.

Man as a creature is a part of the world, which also is a divine creature.[39] But there is a special relationship that God has to man that He doesn't have to the rest of created world. Man is created so he can stand before God as a creature with dignity, for by creating man in his own image, God has given man his human dignity. According to Claus Westermann, God has created man in His own image, "so that something can happen between him and God and that thereby his life may receive a meaning."[40]

Originally, in the creation story, as well as the entire Old Testament work is regarded as an essential part of man's state. This work is to be understood in a functional, not static sense. God has provided man with the created world as an arena for man's activities. In this world man names animals with precision and order using language, which refers to both scientific and poetic activity.[41] And, since man is created in God's own image, something can happen between man and his creator – God. Man disobeys God, and as a result of that he becomes limited by two things: suffering and the length of the life cycle, or simply put, death.[42] The limitedness of man is a foundational problem of the fallen man, which is only successfully resolved in Christ.

The problem of human limitedness is also quite central according to Father John F. O'Grady, for man is but a project who has a task to become more and more of a person.[43] The process of becoming is to a significant degree conditioned on whether or not man can accept his limitedness. Man is a creature with limitations, and to accept oneself - the way one is - becomes the starting point "for the achievement of any degree of personality."[44] This is no matter of one's choice when it comes to the Judeo-Christian tradition, for "the acceptance of limitations and creatureliness is the meaning of what the Bible calls truth."[45] This is the truth that will set man free, which Jesus talks about in John 8:32. First must come the acceptance of man's limitations, or the acceptance of ourselves for what we are. Only then God adds to the equation the blessed realization that despite man's creatureliness and limitations, He

---

[39] Claus Westerman *Creation,* Trans. John J. Scullion, S.J. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 7.
[40] Ibid. 56.
[41] Ibid. 87.
[42] Ibid. 93, 112.
[43] John F. O'Grady *Christian Anthropology. A Meaning for Human Life,* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), p. 111.
[44] Ibid. 113.
[45] Ibid. 115.

who is without any limitations has entered into a covenant with man. In this covenant in and through Christ, God offers to men more than the limited and finite creature could ever hope for – to be God's own children, to accept the world and other people.[46]

In the New Testament we see that Jesus Christ is sent by the Father to share in the limitations of human existence. Jesus is a man, lives among men, works for men, and dies for them. The Gospels basically are talking about the same thing as the creation story – namely, the relationship between man and God. According to Westermann, Jesus in this story serves as the healer in the sense "that he heals and restores again what God has created and put into the world."[47] So the curse that man is under as a result of sin is reversed into a blessing in and through Jesus.

O'Grady goes a step deeper in using the term "dialogue" with which he describes the significance of incarnation in dealing with the limitedness of man. In incarnation we see a call extended to a human being Christ Jesus to "communicate with God to the greatest depths of possibility."[48] Christ, The Word who had become a man, responded to this call by freely choosing to live and die as a human, or in other words to fulfill the possibilities of human freedom. Hence, Christ is the universal solution to the problem of human limitedness.

Similar is the position of human limitedness embraced by a panentheistic approach. For example Rigby suggests that God demonstrates to humans in the person of Jesus Christ the fact that freedom is not at odds with limitations, but rather they can enhance it. Therefore, we can discover our freedom by recognizing the possibilities fostered by our limitations rather than attempting to overcome them.[49]

The scientist's perspective

Science is the human endeavor of exploring, researching, clarifying, discovering, and finally – creating something new. Therefore, what I have chosen to call "the scientist's perspective" is a theological position which suggests that the most important aspect of man being created in the image of God is man's ability to create and thus to continue the process of creation once started by God. The idea of man as

---

[46] Ibid. 116-117.
[47] Westermann, 123.
[48] O'Grady, 122.
[49] Rigby, Cynthia L. "Free to be Human. Limits, Possibilities, and the Sovereignity of God." In *Theology Today*, Vol 53, No. 1 (1996): 47-62.

co-creator with God is neither new nor rare. Man's creative capacity and ability are often associated with, or viewed as based upon, man being created in the image of God. There is, however, a view that the image of God in man is virtually identical with the so-called "co-creatorhood", which is developed by a Lutheran theologian Philip J. Heffner.[50]

Heffner begins the discussion by stating a presupposition that human beings are created with a destiny. Destiny in this case is to be understood in a broad sense, including such ideas and nuances as vocation, calling, gift, determinism, purpose, and goal.[51] Heffner is very clear in that unless we view humans as God's creatures with a divinely ordained destiny, we fail to comprehend what and who humans really are. For, "only the presupposition of high destiny gives point to the discernment of sin and evil in humans."[52] Otherwise, the whole discussion of such terms as fallenness, pride, sin etc loses meaning.

According to Heffner, the theological tradition gives two important sets of symbols for the discussion of human destiny: the Garden of Eden, and the creation of man in the image of God.   The human destiny then is to bring to material fulfillment the position that man was formally given at the time of creation (placed by his Creator in the preeminent position in the ecosystem of the created world). In this process human beings participate as created co-creators.

Man can and should be viewed as a co-creator because of six unique characteristics that are given to him at creation: consciousness, self-consciousness, the ability to make assessments, the ability to make decisions (on the basis of previously made assessments), the ability to act freely (on the previously made decisions), and the ability to take responsibility for his actions. Such actions, or self-aware, free action constitutes a co-creating with God. In essence man, if viewed this way

---

[50] Philip J. Heffner "The Human Being," 323-339. This view which is recently enthusiastically embraced by several Lutheran theologians is not really based on the traditional Lutheran position on *imago Dei* (see the above-described postulate righteousness and holiness). Rather, it is derived from Martin Luther's vocational theology. According to this position, Christians are called to "get to work as God's co-creators in the task of world-building and people-serving." (Jean Larson Hurd, "Women and Vocation: Co-Creating with God," In *Word & World,* Vol. XV, no. 3 (Summer 1995), 275). According to Hurd, this phenomenon of co-creation in Lutheran theology practically works itself out as Christians serve, similar to Christ himself, those in need. The creative potential is used properly when Christians become "little Christs" in action for their neighbors thus joining God's creative work among humanity. In this process genuine Spirit-sustained love of God and love of one's neighbor plays a decisive role: "In the logic of vocation, love of neighbor remains the touchstone and may involve sacrifice, while yet embracing this unity of God-other-and-self-love." (Ibid. 276)

[51] Heffner 324.

[52] Ibid.

according to Teilhard de Chardin, is "evolution become aware of itself."[53] Therefore, it is possible to make the assertion that the created status of human being is thoroughly eschatological, and that every human activity that doesn't in the end qualify as participation in and extension of God's primordial will of creation is essentially perverse. In other words:

> The primordial *humanum* that emerges from God's creation is constituted by the calling (destiny) and the capacity to participate as an ordained co-creator in the creative thrust of God. That thrust consists of sharing as a free, self-aware creature in shaping the passage forward toward God's own *telos* of the consummation and perfection of the creation.[54]

This co-creatorhood, which is being able to make self-critical decisions, to act on those decisions, and then to take responsibility for the action is what according to Heffner comprises the image of God in humans. Heffner is quick, however, to add that an essential element in this equation is the human capability to reflect on the above-mentioned abilities, and to ponder and understand the profound need to be grounded in a relationship with the Creator God.[55]

It is also interesting to note that according to Heffner, if such interpretation of *imago Dei* is adopted, then human sin is fundamentally either our unwillingness or

---

[53] Ibid. 326.

[54] Ibid. 326-327.

[55] Such a condition seems theologically correct and absolutely necessary as a safeguard against man's irresponsibility (at least theologically speaking). Unfortunately, it does not in itself answer some very fundamental questions that are involved in this discussion. The reflection Heffner calls for may even make the discussion about co-creaturehood much more complex. Some aspects of this complexity are discussed by another Lutheran theologian Sigurd Daecke in his article "Man as co-creator" (Daecke, Sigurd M. "Der Mensch als Mitschöpfer." *Pastoral-Theologie,* 78. Jahrgang, No. 4 (April 1989): 196 – 211). First, Daecke poses a question about the goodness of creation in the context of reproductive medicine and biotechnology: If we say that man and God are not rivals but co-creators, then we must include the efforts and the results of gene research and biomedicine into the creation process. Then, however, we can no longer say that the creation is "good" as the Biblical record declares it to be. Hence, there is a serious tension between the classical Biblical understanding of the "goodness" of creation and the ambivalence of the new definition, which results from the theology of co-creaturehood. Second, Daecke poses the question whether the creation of life through genetic engineering, cloning and other artificial ways of creating human life can even be viewed as man's participation in the creation process started by God in Genesis. In order to co-create with God man would have to know the intention and general direction in which God's creation moves. If the co-creator does not know or does not want to know the original eschatological intention of the Creator, then the creation of life is motivated by the "fun of experimentation" and does not move in the direction of the new, eschatological creation as described by the Biblical record. It would perhaps be more accurate to view such a creation as "Genesis two", instead of co-creatorship within the boundaries of Genesis. Again, Daecke highlights the significant tension between the idea of man being a co-creator with God, and man being an independent creator doing his own creation business, as well as the serious difficulty to draw a clear line between the two especially in light of the image of God theology.

fear to accept our status as co-creator, or faulty execution of the co-creatorhood if we are somehow forced to accept it.[56]

The position of human co-creatorhood has recently also been gaining increasing popularity among scientists (hence the title of this sub-section). Its theological ramifications have been discussed especially meticulously in the context of artificial intelligence. The center of the two poles in the current debate on the relation of *imago Dei* and AI are embracing the functional and the relational view of the image of God respectively.[57] The functional approach defines people (and other beings) by what they do or for what they can do. The relational approach revolves around our ability to relate as the defining human quality. Recently, representatives of the AI scientific community have been asking the question of whether or not the *imago Dei* in humans can be passed onto something that we create thus sharing our image of God with the things (humanoids) we create. In other words, will the *techno sapiens* that is being developed by the AI science be as much an *imago Dei* as humans are:

> Will discussions about robotics echo the debate of the early sixteenth century about whether the people of the New World were truly human? Will there be an inevitable war between carbon-based intelligence, or is *Homo sapiens* more likely to embrace the *techno sapiens* enthusiastically?[58]

Perhaps, *techno sapiens* will be that which will complete and perfect the *Homo sapiens* divine image. However, to even ponder such wild speculations the question of the meaning of *imago Dei* must be satisfactorily settled. One way to settle this is offered by Anne Foerst who embraces the relational approach.[59]

Foerst suggests that in order to avoid the fruitless search for an unequivocal Biblical definition of *imago Dei*, it can be best viewed as a symbol.[60] In fact, if viewed this way, it is more than just a symbol. It is a promise, or a performative.[61]

---

[56] Ibid. 328.

[57] Noreen Herzfield "Creating in our own Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Image of God," in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 37, no. 2 (June 2002): 303-316. According to Herzfield, the substantive approaches to *imago* scholarship that dominated theology as well as AI research initially no longer present an interest to the AI researchers.

[58] Jeckelen, Antje. "The Image of God as *Techno Sapiens*," in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 37, no. 2 (June 2002): 289-302.

[59] Anne Foerst holds a Ph.D. in theology, and has served as the theological advisor of the two humanoid robots – Cog and Kismet – developed at MIT in the nineties.

[60] Anne Foerst "Cog, a Humanoid Reobot, and the Question of the Image of God," in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 33, no. 1 (June 2002): 303-316.

[61] Foerst follows the linguist-philosopher J. L. Austin who defines performative as "a speech act, which constitutes a new reality." An example of performative would be saying to someone "Congratulations!"

This performative promise is operative, however, only as long as the listener (human) trusts the speaker (God) and his message. Foerst claims that if *imago Dei* is not taken literally, but as a symbol, then every person has the freedom to believe in the *imago Dei* as just another story. This story then, supports our intuitive self-understanding, among other things in the fact that *imago* is "a symbol of God's promise to humans with which He elects us for being His partners."[62] This partnership in creating activities becomes visible in the creation of artificial intelligence, or the "Cog". In Cog, humans mirror God's creative powers.

The critics of Foerst's position have been quick to point out that while Foerst explores the vertical relationality between God and humans, and between humans and human creation, she fails to adequately extend it to the "horizontal sphere where our creation in God's image calls us to be in relationship with one another, a relationship patterned after our relationship with God."[63] However, trying to create the other (in the sense Karl Barth uses the term "other") in the form of an AI to whom we can relate will eventually lead to creating a "stand-in for God in our own image." This in turn, can be viewed as a form of idolatry, because replacing the "relationship with God and with each other with relationship with our own artifacts is idolatry."[64]

While the debate of relation between *imago Dei* and AI is still developing, several very important questions regarding *techno sapiens* (provided AI research will eventually lead to the creation of human-like robot) have already been provisionally formulated. Can *techno sapiens* perhaps be regarded as a step toward the kingdom of God in that it will be in some sense a perfected *imago Dei*? What will be the future definition of life in relation to its biological basis? How our interpretation of incarnation (emotion, dignity, sin etc) would change if the notion of *person* would no longer be considered as "identical with a human being as a biological entity"?[65] In grappling with the future possibilities of the present realities in the area of AI research, another question that sooner or later will need to be asked is whether humans want to be responsible for what they are capable of accomplishing:

In this case the person addressed is congratulated in the speech act. If *imago Dei* is viewed as a performative and as a promise, then it creates something new. It creates a relationship, which "did not exist the moment before." God's promise of faithfulness is the criterion for the truth of this relationship. And, since God does not break His promises people can rely on this relationship beyond their mistakes and possibilities. (Ibid.)

[62] Ibid.
[63] Herzfield, 314.
[64] Ibid, 313.
[65] Jackelen, 295-296.

> When humans ponder their co-creator status, they recognize that it includes the freedom to conceive of actions and to carry them out. This is a pleasant, even delicious, freedom; it undergirds human aggressiveness as *homo faber*, even to the large-scale technological results now around us. Beyond this freedom, however, lies the freedom in which the human agent must take responsibility for judging whether the conceived action is desirable. Then there is the responsibility for living with the consequences of the action, even if they prove undesirable.[66]

This is only a brief sketch of all the questions, issues, and problems relating to the "scientist's perspective," which confirm once again the enormous importance of the concept and doctrine of *imago Dei*. Correctly and adequately formulated, it would provide some practically helpful answers to the above-listed and similar questions.

The missionary's view

This view in contrast to other views listed in this section, emphasizes the collective aspect of the image of God, or in some cases postulates that only in collectivity of humanity the image of God can be found. As with other positions represented in this section, here as well it is in order to say that not every missionary would embrace such an approach to the doctrine of *imago Dei*. Likewise, not all who hold this position are or will be missionaries. The title is chosen simply because the theologians presented below happen to be missionaries, and/or their theological views are presented by periodicals dealing with the missions.

For instance in the October 1999 issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* professor Elshtain, in the context of discussion of changing human identity in present times, resonates with John Paul II by saying that human beings are created to be at God's disposal, and that "we are human insofar as we are in relationship and for the other."[67]
Though *imago Dei* is not the central theme of her essay, Elshtain, who belongs to the Lutheran tradition, makes a point that the image of God has a strongly collective aspect, and in fact can only be understood if discussed collectively:

> The significance of all this lies in the fact that it is the *communion* of persons (*communio personarum*) that is the authentic reflection of the *imago Dei* – not man alone. Communion expresses more than help or a helper; it names the existence of the person *for* another; of the gift of the self to another. It is a

---

[66] Heffner, 327.
[67] Jean Bethke Elshtain, "How Far Have We Fallen?" *Currents in Theology and Mission*, vol. 26, no. 5 (October 1999), 355.

special reciprocity; it affords intimations of an inscrutable divine communion.[68]

A retired reformed missionary teacher Harry E. Boer, who finds in the doctrine of imago Dei the locus for evaluation of his entire theological system, discusses the issue much more extensively. His view also is that only in the entirety of humanity the image of God can be found:

> By image of God I do not mean some characteristic or quality human beings have in common with God, so that every person can be said to be "an image of God." Rather I see mankind-the whole of mankind, past, present, and future, male and female, old and young, every race of Man, and as an organic unit-to constitute the one image of God. In this one mighty and varied human entity, all women and men participate. They participate in it, however, under the condition of sin. The bright flame of its original image is now only an ember, but an ember still glowing. And it is in the service of this universal human wholeness in all its fragile greatness and all its pervasive evil that the saving work of Christ the divine-human *imago Dei* involves us.[69]

The central thesis of Boer's book *An Ember Still Glowing* is that this collective image of God, into which all people have been created, constitutes the innate human capacity to respond to the message of the gospel affirmatively, for out of this image the phenomenon of religion arises. The test of the image of God, as Boer describes it, is salvation. If people don't respond affirmatively to the message of the gospel "they are cut off from the *imago Dei* in which they had been created."[70]

However, Boer goes on to say that the traditional reformed doctrine of predestination, which automatically involves the seemingly logical need for a group of people called reprobates, is in essence counter-Biblical:

> For these reasons the doctrine of predestination may be seen as seriously undercutting a massive motif in the history of creation and redemption as set forth in the Scriptures. That motif is God's carrying out his deepest intentions with Man, whether creationally or redemptively, in terms of mankind as a whole, that is, in terms of his *imago*, his *entire* image, not in terms of what we described in the preceding chapter as a split in it.[71]

God has created the entire humanity as His image, hence, "the redemption of mankind is the redemption of the *imago Dei*."[72] And even though there is a theoretical possibility of some people falling off the tree of the redeemed "towering humanity,"

---

[68] Ibid. 352.
[69] Harry R Boer *An Ember Still Glowing. Humankind as the Image of God.* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), ix.
[70] Ibid. 84-85.
[71] Ibid. 170.
[72] Ibid. 159.

such a possibility is only theoretical. As for the logic of this position, Boer says that for the present dispensation such logic may seem untenable, but for the coming dispensation it is entirely possible, because everything is possible for God and with God.

The doctor's approach

This view of man is not exclusively developed and held by medical doctors. However, it is the view that is most commonly embraced by doctors and mental health professionals (Paul Turnier being a classic example). Hence, the title of the following sub-section.

As it is stated in Genesis 2:7, God created man by forming man's body from the dust of ground, and then breathing His breath into the body of man. Thus, man becomes a unity of the purely physical and the divine. Or, in other words, man becomes an inseparable unity of the material and the spiritual (soul). Moreover, man is man as he is defined in the Scriptures only as long as he "lives in the unity and totality of body and soul."[73] This principle of unity between body and soul both in this life as well as in the resurrected state, which is central to the thought of Thurneysen, is also developed and supported by other theologians and medical doctors.

For instance, Paul Turnier makes this concept quite central in his theory of Christian holistic healing. Turnier, echoing the thought of Thomas Aquinas, calls it the concept of incarnation, which basically means that the human mind can not be completely defined except in relation to the body through which it manifests itself. And, vice versa, no body can even exist, let alone be defined, unless it is animated by mind.[74]   The same notion is maintained by another medical doctor, W.L. Carrington, who believes that our ability to relate ourselves to the whole man in medical and/or spiritual need is directly dependent on whether or not we view a person as a constant dynamic interrelationship of body, soul and spirit.[75]   The same notion is also found in

---

[73] Eduard Thurneysen, *A Theology of Pastoral Care,* Trans. by Jack A Worhtington and Thomas Wieser (Richmond VA: John Knox Press, 1962), p. 56.
[74] Paul Tournier, *The Healing of the Persons,* Trans. by Edwin Hudson (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), 62, 134 - 137.
[75] W.L. Carrington, *Psychology, Religion, and Human Need. A Guide for Ministers, Doctors, Teachers, and Social Workers,* (Great Neck, NY; Channel Press, 1957), 40 - 48.

the theological thought Dietrich Bonhoeffer,[76] Anthony Hoekema,[77] Michael

Banner,[78] Jean Bethke Elshtain,[79] and many others.

The most defining fact about man, however, is not that he has been created as a unity of body and soul, but the fact that he is created in the image of God. According to Thurneysen, the Image of God is not an ideal after which we have to strive, nor is it a goal we have to achieve, or a law we have to fulfill. Rather, it is a status man finds himself in and an attitude corresponding to that status. In other words, it is a reality of man before God, which predates everything about man, even man's own history.[80] The content of this status is something unique God has given to man that He has not given to any other creature. Since God is a totally sovereign and personal being whose name is "I am", God gives man that "impress of personhood" which makes him similar to God.[81] Man becomes an "I" who can encounter God, learn to understand God, and to be obedient to God. In other words, God has created us in His own image endowing us with personhood, so as to have an I - Thou relationship with us. God wants us to know Him, and He wants to be known by us.

Francis Schaeffer also espouses a very similar position to the one developed by Thurneysen. Schaeffer puts the doctrine of *imago Dei* at the very center of his

---

[76] Dietrich Bohnhoeffer, *Spiritual Care,* Trans. by Jay C. Rochelle (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 33 ff. The same idea is further discussed in Bohnhoeffer's *Ethics*, Trans. by Neville H. Smith (New York: Colier Books, 1986) where he presents a very compelling defense of "the natural." Bohnhoeffer believes that the concept of the natural life has been undeservedly forgotten in Protestantism, and needs to be intelligently recovered. It is essential because Christ himself entered the natural life thus validating it. Through that the natural life of humans (life in body) becomes "the penultimate which is directed towards the ultimate." (p. 145)

[77] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image,* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 203-226. Hoekema stresses that since man exists as a psychosomatic unity, full and complete redemption must include the redemption of the body.

[78] Michael Banner "Christian Anthropology and the Beginning and End of Life," In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 51, no. 1 (1998): 22-60. Though not a medical doctor, Banner uses extensively the idea of the goodness of human bodily life in his polemics against abortion and euthanasia. Banner's argument is built on Augustine's thought according to which "affirmation of the goodness of bodily life presupposes an anthropology shaped by the truth that the past is, like the present, a sphere of God's grace in Jesus Christ." (p. 27) According to Augustine human body is a temple (as opposed to a prison in extreme Platonism), which will have significance in the final resurrection and even the eternal life. Banner argues that only medicine, which does not believe in the goodness of bodily life, can practice euthanasia and abortion.

[79] Jean Bethke Elshtain "How Far Have We Fallen?" *Currents in Theology and Mission*, vol. 26, no. 5 (October 1999): 342-355. Elshtain argues that bodily aspect of our life here on earth is an indispensable element of us being created in the image of God. In fact, it even becomes central in such important matters as the ethics of death penalty, which Elshtain strongly opposes: "Our right to the bodily life is a natural, not an invented, right and the basis of all other rights, given that Christians repudiate the view that the body is simply a prison for the immortal soul. Harming the body harms the self at its depth." (p.382)

[80] Thurneysen 58.

[81] Ibid.

anthropology.[82] Schaeffer believes that since God is a personal God, and personality is "intrinsic to his makeup"[83], the fact that man is created in the image of God first and foremost means that man is a personal being who possesses "mannishness", from which he can never escape.[84] Through this mannishness[85] we can experience world and have a real meaning and knowledge through what God communicates to us.[86]

The things that flow out of the fact that our personality is at the very core of us being created in God's image are:

1. Our ability to maintain a two-way communication with God and our fellow men.[87]
2. Our worth and value.[88]
3. Our ability to change our destiny and ourselves (e.g. our choice to sin).[89]
4. Our creativity.[90]

The fact that man has a personhood in contrast to all other created beings cannot, however, be assumed as something self-evident. As pointed out by Wolfhart Pannenberg, there is a danger of transference of the I – Thou relationship between fellow humans to the relationship between man and God.[91] In fact, such theoreticians of modern personalism (Pannenberg's term) as M. Buber, E. Brunner and a few others have, to a certain extent, encountered a difficulty of this sort. Pannenberg sees only one solution to the problem of this transference, which is grounding the fact of humans being endowed with personality in the phenomenology of religion.[92]

---

[82] Francis A. Schaeffer "He is There and He is Not Silent" in Schaeffer, *Trilogy. The Three Essential Books in One Volume.* (Wheaton, Il: Crossway Books, 1990), 287.

[83] Francis A. Schaeffer "The God Who is There" in Schaeffer, *Trilogy. The Three Essential Books in One Volume.* (Wheaton, Il: Crossway Books, 1990), 94.

[84] Ibid. 24.

[85] Following the reformed tradition Schaeffer believes that the image of God in people though marred by the fall and the sin is still present, and has not been lost. The image equals "mannishness" and all men are still men even after the fall. (Francis A. Schaeffer "Escape from Reason" in Schaeffer, *Trilogy. The Three Essential Books in One Volume.* (Wheaton, Il: Crossway Books, 1990), 266-267)

[86] Schaeffer "The God Who is There" , 76.

[87] Ibid. 104 – 105.

[88] Ibid. 130-131, and Francis A. Schaeffer "Escape from Reason", 219.

[89] Schaeffer "He is There and He is Not Silent", 298.

[90] Ibid. 340-341.

[91] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology. Vol. 1.* Trans. George H. Kehm. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 227 – 231.

[92] "The priority of the relation to God for the phenomenon of the personal remains a mere assertion so long as we do not reflect on   the origin of personality in the phenomenology of religion, in contrast to a purely anthropological founding of personality. In order to maintain this distinction, however, it is essential not to explain the talk about the divine Thou directly and entirely by means of analogy with the human Thou, but to establish it independently on the basis of the character of the divine power as happening. The personality of man needs to be clarified in the light of the peculiar character of the divine personality, provided that it does have its origin in this." (Ibid. 230)

Biblically speaking, the nearest idea to the current concept of human personality is the Biblical concept that man is created in the image of God.[93]

Keeping in mind that the idea of personhood can best be grounded in the phenomenology of religion, we may, based on the New Testament data, assert that the highest form of the intercourse between man and God is through His Word and in His Word. In fact, any intercourse between God and man is possible only because man is created in the image of God. But since the first image in which man was originally created is according to Thurneysen "irreparably lost", the image we have now is the image that Christ Jesus who is the true original image of God (Col 1:15) restores in us through God's grace.[94]

The same basic idea is developed and discussed by Hoekema.[95] Firmly standing in the reformed tradition, Hoekema believes that the image of God in the fallen person has been marred and distorted. However, when a person experiences the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, God "regenerates a person" and "renews the image of God in him or her."[96] Then the person is able to experience a true freedom again and in this freedom turn to God in repentance and faith, for "we may say … that true freedom, as the fruit of God's redemptive work, is identical with the renewal of the image of God in us."[97] The more we exercise this freedom, the more we resemble God who is love, and the more we are able to experience God in a close relationship with Him.

The feminist platform

Finally I will outline the approach I have decided to call the feminist platform. I have chosen to call it a "platform" instead of a "view" or "perspective" mainly because there is a great variety of views and perspectives that, in printed form, all end up on the same library shelf with the label "feminist studies", "feminist theology" or the like. In reality these various views while all clearly standing in some type of opposition to the so-called traditional, or patriarchal theology, are far from being in harmony with one another in terms of terminology used, methodology employed, goals, objectives, and many other things. Some feminist theologians themselves have

---

[93] Ibid. 229.
[94] Ibid. 60-63.
[95] Hoekema, *Created*, 234-243.
[96] Ibid. 234.
[97] Ibid. 242-243.

conceded to the fact that: "Christian feminist theology still has to be described as a many-faceted, rapidly growing and partly diverse theological phenomenon. Sharing points of departure does not necessarily lead to the same conclusions."[98] One thing that is clear with regards to the feminist platform is that the writing theologians in this category are almost exclusively women, and for the most part they attempt to articulate the theological concerns modern women have. This is done in contrast to the patriarchal theology, which is "written *by* men, *about* men, and *for* men."[99]

Although the roots of the current feminist thinking in today's Western culture can be traced back to the 18th century Enlightenment, feminism as a force in Theology doesn't date back much further than the 1960s. [100] Since then, feminism as a paradigm in Theology has evolved into at least three major schools.[101] First is the so-called rejectionist or post-Christian school, which views the Bible as promoting an oppressive patriarchal structure. It rejects both Bible and Judeo-Christian tradition as non-authoritative and hopelessly male-oriented. Second is the loyalist or evangelical school that has a high view of the Scriptures, and is mainly preoccupied with redefining the traditional gender-role models into more egalitarian and mutual submission oriented models. Third is the so-called reformist or liberation school. It shares with the rejectionist approach concern about the patriarchal chauvinistic nature of the Bible and the whole Christian history. At the same time, it is committed to the idea of human liberation as the central idea of the Christian scriptures. This school is mostly engaged in the work geared towards formulating new hermeneutical approaches to the Bible ("hermeneutic of suspicion" could be attributed to the representatives of this school). Such dividing of trends in feminist theologies, however, seems arbitrary and subjective.

More objective, perhaps, is the epistemological approach according to which all feminist theological endeavors follow one of two epistemological paradigms that have been developed by feminist scholars as a response to the so-called malestream

---

[98] Anne-Louise Eriksson, *The Meaning of Gender in Theology: Problems and Possibilities. Doctoral dissertation at Uppsala University.* (Uppsala, 1995), 11.
[99] Ibid. this quotation used by Eriksson originally comes from Dickey Young.
[100] A. Brown, "Feminism," In *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, Eds. David J. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 380.
[101] H.M. Conn, "Feminist Theology," In *New Dictionary of Theology,* Eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 255-258.

epistemology.[102] First of these paradigms is the standpoint theory according to which where one is positioned dictates the kind of knowledge one has. According to this theory, women in society have been positioned differently than men, and due to this positioning they have had to learn the ways of men on top of the ways of women. This richness of perspectives makes women epistemologically privileged. Recently, however, this theory that is inclined to treat all women as essentially the same is losing its popularity and is giving way to the social constructivism. Social constructivism maintains that knowledge consists of past traditions, contemporary structures, and future possibilities. This essentially historical knowledge is always related to power and interests, and is open to change and transformation.[103]

In the area of Biblical anthropology, there is a general agreement among the feminist scholars that the purpose of redemption is the restoration of creation to what it was intended to be. Thus, salvation is defined as the "new creation," and Christians are those who bear in Christ the recreated image of God. This image of God into which man and woman were created according to Gen 1-2 account means that they both are to share equally in subduing and ruling the creation. [104] Ancient Near-Eastern male chauvinism in relation to woman that is seen in the Old Testament is viewed as something not belonging to the original order of creation.[105] Incidentally, the image of

---

[102] Rebecca Chopp, "Eve's Knowing: Feminist Theology's Resistance to Malestream Epistemological Frameworks." In *Concilium* 1996/1 (1996): 116-123. Malestream epistemology by Chopp is defined as the epistemology at the basis of virtually all traditional philosophy and theology: "Western epistemology and theology together developed the view that women were naturally more emotional and irrational, prone to hysteria and often quite childlike. […] Feminist critique of malestream epistemology has to do with how a social construction of knowledge gets represented as 'natural', thus masking particular relations of interest, power and knowledge that benefit a particular group of males. Knowledge, according to feminist theologians, it has not just been done *by* a particular group of men, but *for* a particular group of men." (pp. 116-117.)

[103] Ibid. 119-120. These theoretical divisions between different kinds of feminism, or between different approaches within the feminist theory and/or theology are very tentative and are regarded as such even among the authors writing about feminism, or writing from a feminist perspective. For instance, Eriksson, in her dissertation, makes an observation that it is no longer feasible to provide full accounts of feminist theology and/or theory. This results from the fact that do to the rapidly expanding field of feminist studies the attempts to "describe and map the feminist theoretical domain are outdated before they can be completed." (p. 16) Eriksson herself finds useful two classifying categories into which all feminist endeavors tend to fall. First, the humanist feminism (emphasis on the sameness of men and women in that both are human first of all), and second - the gynocentric feminism (emphasis on the fundamental difference of women from men as the source of female strength).

[104] Conn 257.

[105] This involves a radical change of how one views God, which may be a result of theological research as well as cultural transformation in a given society as a whole. This is illustrated well by a Brazilian feminist theologian Ivonne Gebara: "The image of God is no longer that of the father to whom one owes submission; rather, God is basically the image of what is most human in woman and man, seeking expression and liberation." ("Women Doing Theology in Latin America" In Ursula King ed. *Feminist Theology from the Third World. A Reader.* (New York: Orbis Press, 1994), 55).

God as a theological principle is used on a number of occasions as one of the weightiest arguments in building the case for liberation of the women and other underprivileged groups of society. For example, the final document of the 1996 Mexico conference under the title "Doing Theology from the Third World Women's Perspective" puts it this way: "… we are aware that our liberation is part and parcel of the liberation of all the poor and oppressed as promised by the gospel. Our efforts are rooted in the scriptures. Being created in God's image demands a total rupture with the prevailing patriarchal system in order to build an egalitarian society."[106]

This is tied to a very basic trait that underlies all of feminist theology: the question of how God is active and present in the lives of believing women, or simply put, "the woman's experience."[107] This category of woman's experience in theology is primarily concerned with relating the traditional Christian understanding of God's activity and presence among humans to "a construct of the flourishing and full humanity of women" (the link between *imago Dei* and *imago Christi* and the full humanity of women).[108] The emphasis in this discussion is placed on such concepts as centrality of experience, critique of unjust power relationships, a strong egalitarian thrust that emphasizes mutuality and reciprocity, and finally a strong emphasis on relationality, connectedness and embodiment with particular attention to both female sexuality and the natural environment.[109] Such theological and anthropological

---

[106] "Mexico Conference. Final Document on doing Theology from Third World Women's Perspective." In Ursula King ed. *Feminist Theology from the Third World. A Reader.* (New York: Orbis Press, 1994), 37.

[107] Lois Malcolm "The Gospel and Feminism: A Proposal for Lutheran Dogmatics." In *Word and World*, vol. Xv, No. 3 (Summer 1995), 292.

[108] William M. Thompson "Women and 'Conformity to Christ's Image': The Challenge of Avoiding Docetism and Affirming Inclusivism." In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 48, no. 1 (1995): 23-35. Thompson makes a compelling case for the "participative" instead of "duplicative" approach to the concept of *imago Christi*. According to the participative approach, when we speak about *imago Christi*, we should avoid the notion of exactly copying or "xeroxing" Jesus (such an understanding of believers being conformed to Christ's image would run the risk of associating maleness with the image of God rather than femaleness). Instead we ought to emphasize Jesus' togetherness with us and our being in Christ. This is possible through the incarnation understood "in scriptural and Chalcedonian sense as the uniquely definitive particularization of God for us in and as Jesus, which demands the surrendering of 'duplication' and thus a 'monistic' approach to the *imago Christi* tradition." (p. 31) Thus all believers, irrespective of their gender become effectively images of Jesus both, in his humanity and in his divinity. Such an understanding of the *imago Christi* tradition would ensure that both women and men in the believing community represent *Christus totus* as opposed to seeing *Christus totus* in one group and a *Christus defectivus* in the other group or groups. Hence, the egalitarian thrust and emphasis on relationality within *imago Christi*. This concept, though developed by a scholar following the loyalist feminist tradition in the context of the believing community, also has profound implications for the humanity as a whole.

[109] Malcom 292-293.

emphases call for new epistemological frameworks, which allow defining maleness and femaleness from fresh perspectives.

As indicated above, the epistemological approach that currently is gaining more and more popularity is social constructivism. Within this paradigm, gender is viewed as a form of social relations, as opposed to the more traditional view of a universal 'human nature' that endures throughout history and without social conditioning. Common elements of human nature, even if they exist, according to this view "remain inaccessible to our understanding beyond the medium of our own culture and interpretation." [110] In short, it is argued that gender is an artifact of human culture, and not a metaphysical category:

> The decisive impact of gender as a form of social relations is suggestive of a model of human nature as profoundly relational, requiring the agency of culture to bring our personhood fully into being. […] In a recent version of this, the multi-valented and interactive nature of the Divine is reflected in human relationships of mutual and non-coercive affirmation. Authentic human being is thus fully realized –recognized and made concrete-within human communities that respect dynamism and provisionality of personhood.[111]

Such a position bears significant implications for the Christian doctrine of *imago Dei*, among other things, for it challenges the traditional theological thought to contemplate human nature as contingent and contextual. It also challenges theology to consider the ethical and political implications of such a "non-realist" interpretation of Biblical anthropology.[112]

A brief note is in place here before closing the thumbnail sketch of the feminist platform. The social constructivism as outlined above is no doubt a creation of the West. While the general principles of the theory can be applied to a certain extent cross-culturally, different ethnocultural contexts may have different attitudes toward and approaches to constructivism. For instance, Indian theologian Padma Gallup has articulated a position according to which many of today's gender-related problems in theology arise from the fact that Western Christianity has lost the inclusive maleness and femaleness of Godhead. Gallup claims that Western Christianity is "wrapped in layers of ponderous patriarchy, Zoroastrian dualism, Greek philosophy, and the ethics of the marketplace and morality of the dominant

---

[110] Elaine L. Graham "Gender, Personhood and Theology" In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 48, no. 3 (1995), 354.
[111] Ibid. 355.
[112] Ibid.

male of the Puritan tradition."[113] Gallup calls for returning to the Asian religious traditions (Hindu religion in particular) to gain wider understanding of *imago Dei* from an Asian woman's perspective.

Echoing the position of Gallup, Korean theologian Chung Hyun Kyung has recently formulated an Asian woman's theology, in which the doctrine of *imago Dei* is positioned in a rather central place. Similar to many theologians both male and female, Kyung stresses the importance of anthropology in the Asian woman's theological quest: "The key to their theology is anthropology, that is, Asian women's experience of suffering and hope. God is defined by their experience."[114] At the same time Kyung notes that similar to many other Biblical teachings, the teaching in Gen 1:27-28 about human being created in God's image is contradictory. For an Asian woman it is quite natural to think that both women and men are created in God's image to the same degree as it were. This is possible do to their religious backgrounds, for it is quite natural in many Asian religions to view Godhead as both – male and female at the same time. According to Kyung: "Many Asian women believe that an inclusive image of God who has both male and female sides promotes equality and harmony between men and women: a 'partnership of equals.'"[115] This image of God can be found in some traditional Asian religions, as well as in the writings of some contemporary theologians. One name mentioned by Kyung is Karl Barth and his relational approach to the interpretation of *imago Dei*. The Barthian notion of *analogia relationis* is virtually identical with how Asian female theologians tend to view God. For Asian women, God is not an individual; God is community. Therefore, in the words of Philipino theologian Elizabeth Dominiguez: "To be in the image of God is to be in community. It is not simply a man or a woman who can reflect God, but it is the community in relationship."[116] According to this approach viewing God as a community safeguards theology from making God into an "all-powerful God who sits on top of the hierarchical power pyramid and dominates all other living beings."[117] Viewing God as a community in relationship also makes possible to assert: "Where there is no mutual relationship, there is no human experience of God."[118] This

---

[113] Quoted in Chung Hyun Kyung "To Be Human Is to be Created in God's Image." In Ursula King ed., *Feminist Theology from the Third World.* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 251-258.
[114] Ibid, 252.
[115] Ibid, 253.
[116] Quoted in Kyung, 253.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.

claim goes hand in hand with another current trend in the Asian female theological discourse. Namely, the shifting of emphasis from God's transcendence (the legacy of Western Neo-orthodox theologies in Asia) to the immanence of God that is all-embracing, and allows the human persons to understand the divine within themselves.

The thesis

As is evident from the selected attempts to classify the different views of the image of God presented above, there are almost as many different classifications as there are authors and approaches. This plurality in the area of classification is somewhat reminiscent of the plurality of approaches and positions regarding *imago Dei* that is still widespread among scholars even today. The only insight that theologians seem to be sure about is that originally man was created in the image and likeness of God. From that point on the opinions begin to vary and differ. It seems that the words written by D.J.A. Clines over 35 years ago largely hold true to this very day:

> It appears that scholarship has reached something of an impasse over the problem of the image, in that different starting-points, all of which seem to be legitimate, lead to different conclusions. If one begins from the philosophical evidence, the image is defined in physical terms. If we begin from the incorporeality of God, the image cannot include the body of man. If we begin with the Hebrew conception of man's nature as a unity, we cannot separate, in such a fundamental sentence about man, the spiritual part of man from the physical. If we begin with "male and female" as a definitive explanation of the image, the image can only be understood in terms of personal relationships, and the image of God must be located in mankind (or married couples!) rather than the individual man.[119]

At the same time, I believe there is a need to formulate and understand what is meant in the Christian tradition by the fact that God has created humans in his image. It is important because, and this is reflected in the very topic of this thesis, that the doctrine of the *imago Dei* could be the foundational platform (from a theological point of view) for the practice of pastoral counseling. It would also have anthropological significance beyond the strictly "pastoral" context (as evidenced by the "scientist's perspective" in the previous section). A question may be in place here as to why it is even necessary to find or establish such a platform? Isn't it enough to just embrace various well-tested and church-approved practices, and do the job? My

---

[119] D.J.A. Clines "The Image of God in Man" in *Tyndale Bulletin 19 (1968)* pp. 53 - 103, 61.

assumption in this thesis is that the answer to these and similar questions is a very definite "no". Here is why.

It is a well-known fact that the pastoral counseling movement toward the end of the 20th century has become increasingly ecumenical in nature (various current approaches to pastoral counseling are discussed in greater detail in chapter six). Three processes, in essence, determine the trend toward ecumenism:

1. Theological ecumenism.
2. Global ecumenism.
3. Clinical ecumenism.[120]

The trend towards ecumenism is interwoven with a trend towards eclecticism in the field of pastoral counseling in that the various approaches to pastoral counseling, which are colored by the clinical backgrounds of their practitioners, are all considered equal. While there are positive qualities to this trend, there are also some dangers involved:

> If this trend toward therapeutic eclecticism continues, teachers and practitioners of pastoral counseling will need to develop further their theological understanding of pastoral counseling so that eclecticism does not degenerate into the aimless pursuit of passing fads (there has been plenty of that!), and so that the criteria of pastoral objectives and methods become theologically articulated. Otherwise the norms of society regarding the healthy personality, or the norms implicit in a particular method, will govern pastoral practice. Not all of these norms are incompatible with Christian faith, to be sure, but many of them are. "Therapies" which advocate self-enhancement at the expense of others, or which try to teach mental control over emotions and actions, for example, would seem to harbor ideologies alien to Christian affirmations about service, community, and the wholeness of the person.[121]

Although this statement is formulated nearly two decades ago, it has not lost its relevancy today (and I suspect it will retain some of its relevancy for each coming generation). As evidenced by the professional literature discussed in more detail in chapter 6, there seems to be a strong trend toward the end of the 20th century to assume that the inherent relationality of man is the foundational anthropological truth upon which pastoral counseling is built. Even though the relational dimension definitely is a part of *imago Dei*, there is more to humans being God's image bearers.

---

[120] Clyde J. Steckel, "Directions in Pastoral Counseling," in Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling.* (NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985): 26-36.

[121] Ibid, 28. Regardless of whether one agrees with the argument of Steckel or not, Steckel does raise a valid concern at least in terms of the theological foundations for the practice of pastoral counseling.

Therefore, I believe that a coherent and systematical concept (doctrine) of *imago Dei* could serve as a foundation upon which counselors would be able to "develop further their theological understanding" of pastoral counseling (using the terminology of Steckel).

I also believe that one characteristic or quality of *imago Dei* can be identified as a sort of an axis around which the theological directions of pastoral counseling may be constructed. Both for theological and counseling-related reasons, I have chosen the human ability of self-transcendence as the quality of the image of God, which could serve as this axis. It is by no means a randomly picked ability or quality. As I am going to show in my thesis, a number of prominent theologians have advanced the idea that self-transcendence is one of the most important qualities that humans, as beings created in the image of God, posses. One such theologian is Reinhold Niebuhr whose theological anthropology is discussed at length in chapter 5. Self-transcendence and the things resulting from it occupy significant territory in Niebuhr's anthropology. But even theologians who don't spend as much time and effort discussing self-transcendence, recognize its crucial place in theological anthropology. It must be noted, however, that in such cases self-transcendence comes to the forefront of the discussion when the issues of human growth and spiritual (relational) development are involved. Since one of the goals of counseling across the spectrum of various paradigms is to promote human growth and development, I see it as one more evidence to the fact that self-transcendence is that human quality, which in one way or another, is involved in pastoral counseling.

Several thinkers have advanced the idea of self-transcendence as the major force behind authentic development of the human being.[122] It is said that genuine or authentic realization of human potentiality is a self-transcending realization, for "man achieves authenticity in self-transcendence."[123] Furthermore, it is claimed that as far as psychology is concerned, self-transcendence is virtually identical with self-realization, and that "every achievement of creative understanding, realistic judgment, responsible decision, and generous love is an instance of self-transcendence."[124] Walter Conn, who has built a strong and compelling case for rooting pastoral

---

[122] The Catholic theologian Bernhard Lonergan, and his contemporary follower Walter E. Conn are among those who have explored the significance of the human ability of self-transcendence.
[123] Bernard J.F. Lonergan *Method in Theology*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), 104. (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1981), 133.
[124] Walter E. Conn *The Desiring Self,* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 36.

counseling in self-transcendence, argues that by reaching beyond ourselves in transcendence "we both realize our authentic being (true self) and respond to the gospel's call to loving service of the neighbor."[125]

While I am in agreement with Walter Conn about the need to root the process of pastoral counseling in self-transcendence, I also believe that as far as theology is concerned, there is a need to root the very self-transcendence itself into something theologically intelligible and clearly formulated. This "something," I believe, is the concept and doctrine of *imago Dei*.

The ultimate goal, or the overarching purpose for this dissertation, therefore, will be to establish the connection between self-transcendence and the concept of *imago Dei*, and to explore the significance of that connection in terms of its implications for pastoral counseling. In order to achieve this goal I will attempt to accomplish a three-fold task. First, I will provide a survey of the contemporary pastoral counseling models and approaches to *imago Dei* interpretation (1). Though the listing of select models appears in an outline form only in chapter 6, the entire dissertation will build the momentum up to chapter 6 by exploring how different theoretical and practical models of pastoral counseling covered in this survey, which in turn are inextricably bound to positions of theological anthropology, relate to the concepts of *imago Dei* and self-transcendence (2). This, in turn will serve as the background for the argument constructed toward the end of the dissertation, which will argue that Walter Conn's model is perhaps the most successful counseling method to date in relating *imago Dei* to human self-transcendence (3).

However, before delving into the process of describing and analyzing self-transcendence, it is of utmost importance to establish some conceptual boundaries in terms of what is and what isn't understood in this thesis as self-transcendence. For the purposes of this thesis, I will refrain from describing the various approaches to defining the terms "transcendent", "transcendence", self-transcendence" and the like. Exploring the various approaches to defining these terms goes well beyond the scope of this product and pertains perhaps more to the area of philosophy. I will limit myself first to the realm of theology, and second to the area of pastoral counseling, which is to a significant degree closely related to psychology in general and psychology of religion in particular.

---

[125] Ibid. 37.

In theology the term "transcendent" is mainly used in the context of describing God's character and attributes. "To transcend" comes from Latin where the verb *transcendo* means "to climb over, step over, pass over."[126] According to Webster's dictionary, when theology speaks of God's transcendence, God is described as transcending the universe, the time and the like.[127] Mircea Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion* reiterates and expands the same idea. It says the following about transcendence: "The term is used of the 'relation of God to the universe of physical things, and finite spirits, as being … in essential nature, prior to it, exalted above it, and having real being apart from it.'"[128] Often theology speaks of God's transcendence and immanence at the same time. God's immanence thus means, "God is distinct from this world, does not need it, and exceeds the grasp of any created intelligence that is found in it (a truth sometimes expressed by speaking of the *mystery* and *incomprehensibility* of God)."[129] At the same time: "God, who is ontologically transcendent to the world, is immanently present throughout it and related to it by his providential and redemptive activities."[130] When theology speaks about God's encounter with man and vice versa, the term "transcendence" is attributed more to the area of mystical theology.[131]

Mysticism in turn, can be viewed as either a mainly collective phenomenon, or as primarily an individual phenomenon. The latter has been more discussed and described, and it is to be preferred at least from the standpoint of psychology of religion. Mysticism as an individual phenomenon assumes the religious experience, "which has been described as the development of the empirical into the true self or as

---

[126] D.P. Simpson *Cassel's Latin Dictionary* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1959), 610.

[127] *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1994), 1504.

[128] Charles Hartstone "Transcendence and Immanence" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Vol. 15. Ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 16-21.

[129] *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 276-277.

[130] Lewis, Gordon R. and Bruce, A. Demarest. *Integrative Theology; Three Volumes in One*. Vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 240. Three directions in modern theological thought – pantheism, panentheism, and the process theology, have recently represented the exceptions from this traditional theological view of transcendence and immanence. Each of these directions will be briefly looked at in this product as far as they address the concept of *imago Dei*.

[131] Ibid. 63-64. There is an opinion that Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner are the chief representatives of the modern mystical theology from the Protestant and Catholic camps respectively. Paul Tillich has "propounded a natural theology of ecstatic religious experience centering on the mystical intuition of Being-itself within the depths of the person's own being." (p. 64) Karl Rahner, on the other hand based on the method called by some "transcendental Thomism" has argued that "an a priori relationship exists between the human person and God, in every moment of consciousness human beings find their life oriented toward the life of God; the dynamic impulse that drives every person toward the immediate presence of God is the 'supernatural existential'." (Ibid.)

the realization of the self's divine destination in its union with the deity. In other words, it concerns the innermost self."[132] The individual approach to mysticism has been characterized by the word "introversion." Introversion well reflects the meaning of the Greek word *myein*, which is "to close one's self up against the outer world and with it against society, as against all distracting and disturbing influences."[133] Yet, even in the "closing one's self up" there is time and place for human companionship of the mystic (meeting everyday needs, mutual support in the protest against traditional/dominant religious forms and institutions etc).

The above-description reflects the values espoused by what is called the "growth/realization tradition" in the contemporary psychology of religion. This tradition is firmly anchored in the humanistic and phenomenological psychologies, which in turn can trace their roots back to the enlightenment philosophy. According to this tradition, the major emphasis is placed on the human ability "to create, grow, progress, and become ever more competent and able." In this tradition, then religion tends to become "self-enhancement, growth, realization, actualization, the broadening of experiential horizons."[134]

Walter Conn, with whose position I will interact in the seventh chapter, can clearly be identified with the growth/realization tradition. Similar to Niebuhr half a century earlier, Conn, for the purposes of staying away from the terminological jungle, postulates that self-transcendence, simply put, is moving beyond one's own self:

> The term "self-transcendence" has many meanings, some of them quite vague and mysterious. […] In this study the meaning of "self-transcendence," though not univocal, is quite direct and concrete: it refers primarily to the threefold achievement of "moving beyond one's own self" that is effected in every instance of correct understanding (cognitive), responsible decision (moral), and genuine love (affective).[135]

This definition of self-transcendence is adequate for the purposes of this thesis. And, since my objective is exploring the connection between *imago Dei* and self-transcendence, and their relation to pastoral counseling based on the positions of

---

[132] Wlach, Joachim. *Sociology of Religion*. (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1958), 161 ff.

[133] Ibid. Wlach himself recognizes the validity of the collective approach (represented in *Studies in Mystical Religion* by Rufus Jones) as well. He is quick to add, however, that in the groups surveyed by Rufus the "individualistic inclination of the mystic looms large."

[134] Hood, Ralph W., Bernard Spilka, Bruce Kunsberger, and Richard Gorsuch. *The Psychology of Religion; An Empirical Approach*. (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996), 21-23.

[135] Conn, *The Development*, 6.

Niebuhr and Conn, I will limit myself to the above definition: "self-transcendence is moving beyond one's own self."

The task and methodology

It seems that one way to speak at least initially about the phenomenon of the image of God, as it is presented in the Bible, could be the analysis of different aspects of the image. This would differ from the method sometimes employed by theologians and lay persons alike, namely identifying the chief characteristic or the most essential quality of the image, and then by default discarding or downplaying other qualities of the image emphasized in other approaches.[136] Thus, for instance, one would not speak about the image as a primarily relational phenomenon, but rather about the relational *dimension* (or aspect) of the image not forgetting that there are other dimensions as well brought forth by other theological approaches, or other "starting-points" in theological methodology as Clines would call them. Then, we would set the stage for the discussion of the importance and practical implications of the doctrine of *imago Dei* for ministry, while at the same time leaving the methodological considerations in the background of this discussion, which is really their proper place.

Such an approach would not really be as radical as it may seem at first glance, for several contemporary theologians have already offered it. For instance, the Reformed scholar Louis Berkof in his systematic theology posits five *aspects* of the image of God in man.[137] These aspects include the spiritual image (1), which really deals with man as a spiritual being, the rational image (2) which presents man as a rational and moral being, the moral image (3) which deals with the issue of original righteousness of man that is progressively being restored in believers, the corporeal image (4) which presents the human body as the proper organ of the soul, and the functional image (5) which looks at man's dominion over lower creation forms as an essential characteristic of God's image in human beings.[138]

---

[136] Although such an approach may eventually lead to a conclusion that some qualities of the *imago Dei* bear more theological significance than others, it would not assume right from the start that such is the case, thus leaving room for a relatively bias-free discussion of the phenomenon of *imago Dei*.

[137] Lewis and Demarest, 132-133.

[138] It is interesting to note that Berkof himself does not use the term "aspects" in his *Systematic theology* (Edinburgh, GB: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 202 - 210. In discussing the various interpretations of the image of God, Berkof represents the "aspects" approach as the Reformed conception and traces it back to John Calvin who has written in his *Institutes* I. 15. 308 that "the image of God extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals." Discussing the impact of sin on the image, Berkof uses the word "elements", and divides the image into

More recently David H. Kelsey, describing the image of God in man essentially from a relational perspective, seems to have taken a similar position. Human beings are finite, and as finite creatures they have to depend on their creator for their continuing actuality.[139] Human beings are immersed into this ontological relationship, or "its relationship of dependence for being".[140] Thus, humans are a part of the cosmos fundamentally related to God, and their nature has four major *dimensions*. Kelsey calls them "body and soul" (1), which describes the complex relationship between the material and immaterial parts of the human being, the social dimension (2), the teleological dimension (3), and the temporal dimension (4), which basically has to do with the fact that though human nature is itself nontemporal, it essentially is involved in time. The most important here for the purpose of this discussion, is the fact that Kelsey views the human being in its totality and unity, using the term "dimension" only to describe the various angles from which people can be viewed in an attempt to understand them better.

My position in this thesis will be similar to that of Berkof and Kelsey in terms of its fundamental approach being based on the analysis of various dimensions of the concept of *imago Dei*, (as opposed to parts of the image for example) as those dimensions have been described and discussed by theologians representing different theological schools and/or traditions. Initially I will look at three aspects of the *imago Dei* in humans, which, in one way or another and at different times, have come to the forefront of the theological discussion.

Similar to Millard Erickson's approach of classifying the different views of *imago Dei*, I believe it would be very helpful to primarily focus on the paradigm espoused by various groups and individuals (e.g. substantive, relational), or the school of thought championed by a certain theologian (e.g. Augustine, Karl Barth). Concentrating on various aspects of *imago Dei* as they reflect certain paradigms in

---

those elements that can not be lost unless man ceases to be a man, and those elements that man can lose and still remain human, namely "the good ethical qualities of the soul and its powers". (p.207) While the word "aspect" may in certain contexts mean "a part" or "a quality", I am inclined to use the word "aspect" in this discussion as "a way in which a thing may be viewed or regarded" (*Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1994), 88.). That way I would try to avoid the unnecessary implication that some parts of the image can be lost, not denying at the same time that the image may be affected in some ways by events such as the fall, for example. The terms "aspect" and "dimension" will sometimes be used interchangeably.

[139] David H. Kelsey " Human being" in *Christian Theology. An introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks,* eds Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, 2nd ed, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 167 - 193.

[140] Ibid. 169.

approaching this phenomenon would greatly help to organize and process the information pertaining to the subject. At the same time it should help to avoid overly detailed discussion of variations within certain theological traditions, which would not be possible, due to the limitations of length and scope of this thesis.

Two of the three dimensions discussed in this thesis will reflect paradigms (views) classified by Millard Ericson, namely the substantive view and the relational view. The third (functional) dimension will be integrated into the discussion of other dimensions. And, a fourth, teleological dimension will be added.

I am in complete agreement with Kelsey's list in that I believe the picture of major dimensions would not be complete without looking at the teleological dimension of the image of God in humans. Teleological aspect sometimes has undeservedly been left in the background of the discussion, but lately Wolfhart Pannenberg[141] and some others[142] have advanced it as one of the major dimensions of *imago Dei*.

As already stated, the functional dimension (view) will not be treated separately. It will be integrated into the discussion of the three dimensions presented in the thesis. It is my conviction that as much as the functional dimension is indispensable to a full-blown multi-dimensional presentation of the *imago Dei*, it is practically the only dimension that can very well be assumed under and integrated into the other three dimensions. The discussion of the substantival, relational, and teleological dimensions offered below will show that the respective representatives of each of those dimensions assume functional reality of *imago* virtually every step of the way. The underlying assumption for this is the belief that if God gives something to humans, it is given for the reason of serving a certain function. Such integration is warranted also, because as far as the enterprise of pastoral counseling is concerned, the teleological dimension really does assume a strongly functional connotation, yet takes it to another (and in my view higher) level. Finally, another consideration for

---

[141] Wolfhart Pannenberg *Anthropology in Theological Perspective,* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985)

[142] For example a strongly teleological perspective of imago Dei is developed in the Eastern Orthodox theology by Vladimir Lossky who, based on anthropology of the church Fathers in general and Gregory of Nyssa in particular, underscores it as one of the major characteristics of the image of God in man. Cf. V.N. Losski *Ocherk misticheskogo bogosloviya vostochnoy cerkvi. Dogmaticheskoye bogoslovye,* (Centr SEI: Moskva, 1991), ("A Survey of Mystical Theology of the Eastrn Church. Dogmatics" in Russian).

integrating the functional dimension into the other three is the length limitations of this dissertation.

Along with many theologians whose ideas I will try to summarize in this product, I believe that one of the most fundamental and defining things about human beings is the Biblically revealed truth that they are created in the image of God. This fact has a number of profound implications in the areas of substantive makeup of a person, the relational realm and the functional aspect of a person's life, as well as the teleological destiny of every representative of the human race. That is the first reality, which to a considerable extent has already been established in this chapter.

As evidenced by the above discussion, my position is that the concept of the image of God is best viewed as a united whole, which has various dimensions or aspects as opposed to the view that it consists of separable parts. I have chosen to group the various angles from which *imago Dei* can be viewed into four aspects, namely the substantive, the functional, the relational, and the teleological.[143] I arrive at that conclusion based on the prevalent views of the *imago Dei* in recent theological and non-theological literature. In terms of the structure of the dissertation, this would pertain to the first part of the three-fold task formulated in the previous section.

Though in the first part of the dissertation I will discuss various historical and theological aspects of the concept of *imago Dei*, I will mostly do it as steps on the way to approaching an integrative model of interpreting this extremely crucial concept of Biblical anthropology for the purpose of establishing a theological foundation for the practice of pastoral counseling. I believe it is possible and necessary to construct a tentative integrative model of the *imago Dei* as the theological platform on which such concepts as human value, worth, and self-esteem can be founded. I also believe that the main quality or characteristic of *imago Dei*, which makes such a model even necessary, is self-transcendence.

In the following three chapters (second chapter – substantival aspect, third chapter – teleological aspect, fourth chapter - relational aspect) I will discuss each of the dimensions in detail, trying to arrive at a better understanding of how all dimensions are interrelated into a united whole. That in turn, is crucial for further trying to establish a theological basis for implications of the concept of *imago Dei* for

---

[143] This is by no means a dogmatic statement, or the final truth in any way. It simply appears to be a helpful and, in my view, a coherent way to look at the image of God. The list of four dimensions identified here can perhaps be expanded or changed. Yet, at least for the purpose of this dissertation, I think it is sufficiently exhaustive.

pastoral counseling. In doing so, each of the three dimensions discussed will be correlated with one of the three major currents in Christianity: Substantival dimension will be correlated with Roman Catholic theology, teleological dimension will be correlated with the Eastern Orthodox theology, and relational dimension will be correlated with the Protestantism. This, in terms of the structure of this dissertation, would pertain to the second part of the three-fold task formulated previously.

In the fifth chapter, which in a way will be the focal point of the previously developed thoughts, and a point of transition to the second part of the dissertation, I will discuss the theological interpretation of *imago Dei* developed by Reinhold Niebuhr. I have allotted such a central place to Reinhold Niebuhr's position because he views the ability of self-transcendence as the key characteristic or quality inherent in *imago Dei*. At this point, as already stated above, it is my assumption that the ability of self-transcendence is a very necessary, if not indispensable quality in order to achieve progress of any kind in a given person's life. Hence, it is also my assumption (mostly based on personal counseling experience) that self-transcendence is the force behind productive and positive changes which occur in a client's life in case where pastoral counseling intervention has been successful. For this reason in the following chapters, among other things, I will try to explore the place of the phenomenon of self-transcendence in pastoral counseling.

In the sixth chapter, I will summarize the current trends and paradigms in pastoral counseling. It will be done keeping the focus of the discussion on the implications of the concept of *imago Dei* for pastoral counseling. This will serve as the bridge between the parts one and two of the three-fold task, and part three, which is analysis of the model set forth by Walter Conn.

In the seventh chapter I will interact with Walter Conn's model of pastoral counseling rooted in self-transcendence. By doing so, an attempt will be made to correlate insights from Reinhold Niebuhr's theological anthropology with the ideas advanced by Conn.

Finally, in the epilogue, I will provide a tentative theological model for pastoral counseling based on the concept and the doctrine of *imago Dei*. Also, based on the current insights into the *imago Dei* scholarship, theories of pastoral counseling, and my own counseling experience, I will discuss several possible implications that "flow out" of the proposed model, as well as suggest questions for further research.

Chapter two

THE SUBSTANTIVAL ASPECT OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

The substantival aspect of the image of God in humans has to do with what humans are made of or, more precisely with what it is in the human structure and makeup that makes them God-like in contrast to the rest of the creation. Although these issues have been of concern to theologians from the time theology was born, theological anthropology, as a discipline in its own right, has developed only in the modern period. In a strict sense, theological anthropology is concerned with two major questions: 1. What is it that makes it possible for the finite human beings to know the infinite God? 2. What makes human fallenness possible in such a dramatic way as to require such redemption for man as we see in Christianity? Throughout church history these questions, essentially pertaining to the realm of anthropology, have been discussed mainly in the context of other theological issues such as creation, hamartiology, and soteriology. These discussions of humanity in the pre-modern era have usually been implicit discussions about "human nature" (in the modern era "subjectivity" moves to the forefront, and the discussion itself is rather explicit). [1]

The first Church father to discuss *imago Dei* systematically is Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons.[2] Similar to a number of other early Church theologians, he was interested in the primordial image of God after which man was fashioned.[3] Trying to formulate a Biblical position as to whether this primordial image was Trinity, the Logos, or the Word incarnate- Jesus Christ, Irenaeus concluded that based on the scriptural data Christ Jesus is the primordial image after which man is fashioned:

> And then, again, this Word was manifested when the Word of God was made man, assimilating Himself to man, and man to Himself, so that by means of his resemblance to the Son, man might become precious to the Father. For in times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not [actually] shown; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created, Wherefore also he did easily lose the similitude. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these: for He both showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His image; and He re-established the similitude

---

[1] David H. Kelsey, "Human Being." In Hodgson Peter C. and King Robert H. eds. *Christian Theology. An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks,* 2nd ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 167.
[2] Lewis, Gordon R. and Bruce, A. Demarest. *Integrative Theology. Three Volumes in One.* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervian Publishing House, 1996): 123-180.
[3] John F. O'Grady, *Christian Anthropology. A Meaning for Human Life.* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 16.

after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.[4]

This quote demonstrates not only Irenaeus' position regarding the primordial image of God, but also his position on the nature of the image of God in man. Irenaeus believed that there is a distinction between the *imago* (*tselem* in Hebrew) and *similitudo* (*demūth* in Hebrew).[5] Thus, the image was defined by Irenaeus as consisting of endowments of a rational mind and of a free will, while similitude was perceived as the gratuitous life of the Spirit lost through the Fall but restored by grace in Christ.[6] By so arguing, Irenaeus laid the foundation for the medieval interpretation of *imago Dei*, according to which there is a difference between person's natural endowments, and the superadded gift of righteousness.

Medieval Roman Catholic theology (Thomas Aquinas in particular) expanded the *imago* theology first formulated by Irenaeus and created a very unique, *imago Dei* – based anthropology. Man's natural powers (reason and free will) were thus identified with *imago*, while *similitudo* was equated with the added endowment of righteousness – *donum superadditum.*[7] As a result of the Fall, man's added endowment of righteousness was lost while the natural endowment (natural powers) was not destroyed. Man in the fallen state no longer has the ability to control the "lower powers", or passions (*inferiores vires*) by his reason alone. Hence, man needs healing and restoration of supernatural grace, which are available in Christ through baptism.[8]

The most important fact for the sake of the present discussion, however, is that Irenaeus was the first to identify the part of the image of God in man that cannot be lost and is equally shared by believers and unbelievers alike.[9] This part is something

---

[4] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies.* In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1950): 544.

[5] Genesis 1:27.

[6] Lewis and Demarest, vol. 2, 124.

[7] Ibid. 126.

[8] Anthony A. Hoekema *Created in God's Image*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 39.

[9] According to Douglass Farrow, this could be explained by the fact that one of the major thrusts of Irenaeus' theological writings was opposing the gnostic tendencies in the church. In the area of anthropology, the gnostics believed that the material part of man (i.e. man's body) together with the material world is going to be utterly destroyed in the end while man's spirit and soul will survive. In short, the gnostics were looking forward to the dissolution of this world including the human body. Irenaeus, on the other hand, was countering this gnostic idea of disintegration by one of integration, or re-integration to be more precise. According to Irenaeus, there are only two kinds of people; those who receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and are thus re-integrated into fellowship with God and the life to come, and those who reject that gift, become increasingly wicked, and finally end up in the Abyss. In either case man does not disintegrate, because there is a part of man that cannot disintegrate. And that

that belongs to man's substance, or his original design. Irenaeus saw it primarily being located in man's rationality. While various aspects of Irenaeus' understanding of the image of God have been debated and rejected by a number of theologians, there is a large following to the idea that the image of God in man somehow belongs to man's basic constitution, and that it is an indispensable part of man's structure and personality.[10]

Because of the image of God, in their fallen state, people can learn things about God and even love God, because people by their nature are capable of loving God. This *imago Dei* based theological anthropology has to this day profoundly influenced the Catholic theology in general, and the Catholic view of humanity in particular:

> This common distinction between "image" and "likeness," or between natural and supernatural endowments, undergirds the Roman nature-grace distinction and provides for a far-ranging natural theology. In the light of these considerations, Catholics conclude that by the exercise of their intellect persons can learn much about God and moral duty, short of heavenly blessedness.[11]

As mentioned above, this Roman Catholic position was finally synthesized and formulated by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and the subsequent Catholic thinkers. However, it would be erroneous to think that this *imago*-centered theology starts with Thomas Aquinas alone. His predecessors, mostly Peter Lombard and St. Anselm, influenced Aquinas' theological thinking.

---

part is the *imago (tselem)* part of man. (Douglass Farrow, "St Irenaeus of Lyons. The Church and the World," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 4, No. 3 (Summer 1995): 333-355).

[10] Perhaps since Ireneus was the first theologian to develop a systematic treatment of the doctrine of *imago Dei*, he is mentioned by virtually every contemporary theologian in the discussion of the image of God in man. Moreover, some theologians speak of Irenaeus very highly (Brunner and Niebuhr would be good examples to mention here). It is interesting to note, however, that theologians belonging to the reformed camp concentrate more on the critique of the distinction between *imago* and *similitudo,* while the Roman Catholics seem to concentrate more on Irenaeus' treatment of the wholeness of a redeemed person in Christ. For instance, American reformed theologian Anthony A. Hoekema in his book *Created in God's Image* admits that an aspect from the *imago Dei* was lost through the Fall while another aspect was retained. In the meantime he disagrees with Irenaeus, saying: "Irenaeus was wrong, however, in associating these two aspects of *image* and *likeness*. […] Thus, although his teaching gave rise to a tradition that continued into the Middle Ages, his basic distinction is untenable." (p. 35) Father O'Grady, on the other hand, emphasizes that Irenaeus was able to preserve, though for a brief moment, the "concrete vision" of man as it appears in the Bible. This concrete vision is the emphasis on the whole man as a natural image of God being wholly redeemed in Jesus Christ who is the perfect image of God: "The totality that was Jesus of Nazareth was the manifestation of God's word as well as the exemplar of man as created in the image of God. Irenaeus is concrete in his doctrine of man as well as complete. No aspect of man is lost." (p. 17)

[11] Lewis and Demarest, vol. 2, 126.

Peter Lombard, the bishop of Paris (1100-1159), writes the following in his *Book of Sentences*: "Man is made … to the *image* according to memory, intelligence and love and to the likeness according to innocence and justice which are naturally in the rational mind. Or, *image* may be considered in the cognition of truth, and *likeness* may be considered in the love of virtue."[12]

St. Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1033-1109), embraces the same idea, namely that God's likeness is chiefly located in the rational capacities of humanity, which are essential to its humanness. Anselm in his *Monologium* writes:

> Therefore, the mind may most fitly be said to be its own mirror wherein it contemplates, so to speak, the image of what it cannot see face to face. For, if the mind itself alone among all created beings is capable of remembering and conceiving of and loving itself, I do not see why it should be denied that it is the true image of that being which, through its memory and intelligence and love, is united in an ineffable Trinity. […] But it is utterly inconceivable that any rational creature can have been naturally endowed with any power so excellent and so like the supreme Wisdom as this power of remembering, and conceiving of, and loving, the best and greatest of all beings. Hence, no faculty has been bestowed on any creature that is so truly the image of the Creator.[13]

The contemporary theologians whom I have chosen as representatives of the Roman Catholic theological anthropology are Father O'Grady and Karl Rahner. The choice of these two names was somewhat random, at least regarding the first of the two names. Speaking of O'Grady's theology, it was important, however, that his emphasis is on the total man as the image of God. In doing so O'Grady synthesizes the common tendencies in modern Biblical anthropology with the classic Catholic approach to the doctrine of *imago Dei*. Karl Rahner was chosen because the Catholic theology of the 20th century would be unfathomable without the impact that his work has made.

> Father O'Grady makes the following two conclusions about *imago Dei*:

> First, human nature is not indifferent to the Incarnation; the possibility of man as created by God implies the possibility of the Incarnation, a radical union of God in man. Human nature is so created as to be able to pronounce the Word of God. Secondly, the meaning of a natural image of God in man makes more sense. Man as person in his unity is created in such a way that he is the presupposition of the Incarnation. Man as person is the natural image of God. We say as person because human nature is not the image of God in an abstract fashion, but is realized only in the concrete man who is personal. The natural

---

[12] Ibid. Cited by Lewis and Demarest.
[13] St Anselm, *Basic Writings* (La Salle, Il: Open Court, 1962), 132.

image of God in man is something absolute, inasmuch as man is the image of God as personal; it is something relative inasmuch as this is always a possibility that is related to the actual manifestations of God in time.[14]

By this Father O'Grady sides with the contemporary theologians who "have returned to the more biblical approach to man as created in the image of God,"[15] and with Irenaeus, who in his formulation of the doctrine has been "concrete as well as complete."[16]

According to this approach the totality of human life with both, its bodily and spiritual aspects in a concrete individual is created in the image of God. This image of God, which in man is incomplete, is revealed as complete and perfect in Christ Jesus. Man is created so that he can hear the Word of God and speak the Word of God to others. In other words: "The image of God in man implies the possibility that man can manifest God because in a historical man, Jesus Christ, the Word of God became flesh."[17] This is what gives dignity and worth to every single individual human life. The capacity to manifest God can never be lost because it belongs to the original constitution and design of man: "Man never loses his human dignity as created in the image of God even when sin mars that image, and even when he refuses to reflect that image by sin. Conversion, a change of heart, is always possible and once again he will reflect what he can always reflect: the qualities of God."[18] This notion that *imago Dei* is something that belongs to man's substance (O'Grady himself does not use the term "substance") is not something peculiar to the anthropological thought of Father O'Grady. It is quite common in the Catholic theological anthropology.

To speak about contemporary Catholic theology, and theological anthropology in particular without mentioning the name of Karl Rahner (1904-1984) would be a great mistake. Simply because of the immense significance of Rahner's theological thought within the context of the 20th century Catholic theology, as well as the theological thinking in general. Rahner's thought is especially significant in the

---

[14] O'Grady, 19.

[15] Ibid. 18. Just a few pages earlier O'Grady gives a very integrated and contemporary definition of the image of God: "The Bible is clear in its teaching on the meaning of man: man as a totality, male and female with all of the spiritual and material aspects, is the image of God, destined to be perfected according to the perfect image in Jesus Christ. There is no separation of man and no lessening of the dignity of sexes. Whatever it is that adequately describes the mystery of man, it is that mystery that is created in the image of God." (p. 16)

[16] Ibid. 17.

[17] Ibid. 18.

[18] Ibid. 15.

context of the present discussion since "the basis of all Rahner's theological work is a theological anthropology, which he developed under the influence of the transcendental Thomism of Joseph Marechal and in dialogue with the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger." The method that Rahner adopted is called a "transcendental and anthropological method of theology,"[19] which makes the human experience key to all theological meaning while keeping its primary focus on what Rahner calls transcendental experience.[20]

The foundational approach that Rahner uses in his theological work is first formulated in his first dissertation submitted at the University of Freiburg in 1936, under the title "Spirit in the World" (*Geist im Welt*). In this dissertation Rahner offers the Marechalian interpretation of Aquinas's metaphysics of the mind's act of judgement, and brings it into a critical dialogue with Kant and Heidegger.[21] In his research Rahner "seemed fascinated by the congruence between Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*, or being-in-the-world, and Aquinas's concept of the dynamism of human mind."[22] Contrary to Heidegger's and Kant's agnosticism on the question of God, Rahner argued that:

> … the dynamism of the human mind was inspirited by the dynamism of God's own infinitude, the limitless horizon that was God's own being providing the "whither" of all human search for meaning. With one's rootedness in the world of the material, the sensate, one could, following Rahner's argument, attain the absolute in some way because the absolute of being was already implanting a restlessness within the human spirit and offering a horizon of unlimited attraction.[23]

This is closely tied to what Rahner calls the experience of grace from within. For Rahner this is "the most original and most important root of all Christian piety and holiness."[24] The concept of "grace from within", or prior signals of God's presence within one's personal experience, is universal and every person has the

---

[19] R.J. Baucham, "Karl Rahner," In *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), p. 556.

[20] According to Rahner this transcendental experience is "a universal pre-reflective experience which is the condition for all other human experience." According to Rahner's thought, pre-reflective experience of God is present in all other human experience, and human nature is defined as self-transcendence into God. (Ibid.)

[21] Geffrery B. Kelley, "Karl Rahner: An Outline of His Life," In *Karl Rahner, Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning,* Ed. Geffrey B. Kelly (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992): 1-31.

[22] Ibid. 7.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Geffrery B. Kelley, "The Graced Search for Meaning: Rahner's Way of Doing Theology," In *Karl Rahner, Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning,* Ed. Geffrey B. Kelly (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992): 32-62.

ability to experience this grace. In so many words, it simply means that: "We are oriented towards God."[25] This orientation is something that we experience, and something that is ever present:

> This unthematic and ever-present experience, this knowledge of God which we always have even when we are thinking of and concerned with anything but God, is the permanent ground from out of which that thematic knowledge of God emerges which we have in explicitly religious activity and philosophical reflection. It is not in these latter that we discover God just as we discover a particular object of our experience within the world. Rather, both in this explicitly religious activity directed to God in prayer and in metaphysical reflection we are only making explicit for ourselves what we already know implicitly about ourselves in the depths of our personal self-realization. […] For this reason the meaning of all explicit knowledge of God in religion and in metaphysics is intelligible and can really be understood only when all the words we use there point to the unthematic experience of our orientation towards the ineffable mystery.[26]

This fundamental orientation towards God is what leads the human subject into an endless search of meaning. In this search people keep opening themselves up to ever-new horizons of the human quest for meaning. Such opening to new horizons is an integral dimension of the power of self-transcendence, which according to Rahner is practically never ending.[27] This search, however, is endless only until we find rest for our restless hearts in God himself.[28]

---

[25] Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity, trans. William V. Dych (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 53.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Some authors believe that associating the image of God with the human ability of self-transcendence is a trend in theological scholarship that has started with Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, and has continued to the present including such prominent protestant scholars of the 20th century as Paul Tillich and Wolfhart Pannenberg. (Mark Kline Taylor "Anthropology" In *A New Handbook of Christian Theology,* Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992): 28-34) This group also includes Reinhold Niebuhr, whose concept of self-transcendence as the key to understanding *imago Dei* will also be discussed in this thesis.

[28] Here Rahner echoes what St. Augustine has said in the *Confessiones.* (Kelley, "The Graced," 35.

The man as *person*[29] and subject in Karl Rahner's theology

One of the reasons I decided to discuss Karl Rahner's theological anthropology in the section about the substantival aspect of *imago Dei*, is Rahner's substantivalist approach, which is strongly reflected even in the use of language in his writings. The substantivalist emphasis can be observed in the beginning of his *Foundations of Christian Faith*. When discussing the methodological presuppositions in the introductory part of his *Foundations*, Rahner says that every attempt to "do" theology involves anthropology: "Every theology, of course, is always a theology which arises out of the secular anthropologies and self-interpretations of man."[30] This is also a question of the relationship between philosophy and theology. On a very foundational level this means that "doing" theology can be broken up into three equally important steps.

First, we must reflect upon man "as the universal question which he is for himself." Concentrating on who man *is*, as opposed to what he *has* is the basic condition which makes hearing the Christian answer possible. Second, in order to see the point of mediation between theology and philosophy, the historical conditions, which make revelation possible, must be reflected upon. Third, one must reflect upon the foundational assertion of Christianity as the ultimate answer to the question "what is man." All these three steps, or as Rahner calls them "moments," are united in a circle, and are functioning as a condition for one another. To reflect on the circle appropriately we must do theology, for this essential circle "is not supposed to be resolved in a foundational course, but to be reflected upon as such."[31]

---

[29] The term 'person' as it is used in theology and other humanities is derived from the Latin word *persona*, which means 'face' or 'mask'. The word *persona* was defined as theologically synonymous with the Greek u`po,stasij by the Council of Alexandria in A.D. 362 (W.E. Ward "Hypostasis," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright. (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988): 539-540). Some time later, the council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) affirmed the Athanasian formulation of trinity, namely that God has one ousia (essence or substance) and three hypostases or persons (Millard J. Ericsson *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983, 1984, 1985), 335-337). Hypostasis, in this case, is to be understood as a way the Divine Ousia manifests itself in a form of a person. Hence, the view that personality as the mark of man's ability to have a hypostasis is also central in defining man as God's image-bearer. Rahner certainly sided with this view when he declares that one of the most fundamental Christian assertions about God is that he is a personal God. The fact that God is a person makes it possible for God to self-communicate, and for man to receive this God's self-communication. Therefore, personality is what makes man God-like, and is to be viewed as an integral element of *imago Dei*. This will be discussed in more detail in the following pages.

[30] Rahner, *Foundations*, 7.

[31] Ibid. 11.

Rahner emphasizes that if we are to understand man correctly, we have to admit that there exists an "inescapable circle between his horizons of understanding and what is said, heard and understood."[32] In fact, these things even presuppose one another. Christianity assumes that these presuppositions exist, and at the same time it also creates them by Christianity's own call. It summons man before the real truth of his being. This is the truth in which man is caught; yet at the same time "this prison is ultimately the infinite expanse of the incomprehensible mystery of God."[33] This is where we can see the interlocking of philosophy and theology.

> The presuppositions which are to be considered here refer to man's essential being. They refer to his essential being as something which is always historically constituted, and thus as existing in confrontation with Christianity as grace and historical message. Hence, they refer to something which is accessible to every theoretical reflection upon and self-interpretation of human existence, and this we call philosophy. And these very presuppositions themselves belong to the content of a revealed theology which announces Christianity to man so that this essential being of his, which is inescapable and is always historically oriented, does not remain hidden from him.[34]

Further, Rahner makes a statement that in our historical situation, a philosophy absolutely free of theology does not even exist. Likewise, theology cannot do without philosophical anthropology, which makes Christianity's message of grace reasonable and acceptable to man.

The inherent religiosity of man

The relationship between philosophy and theology in Rahner's theology is clearly illustrated in his thoughts about the future prospect of Christianity. Rahner believes that though Christianity is in a crisis-like state, it will certainly come out of the crisis and will be a major factor in the world of the future. It is going to happen because of two factors, which are based on purely secular consideration of human history and philosophy.

The first consideration is that Christianity "quite apart from any question of its truth or falsehood – has no formidable rival." According to Rahner, there is no new religious system on the horizon for the coming era, which, for the first time in history, is likely to be an age without a new religion designed as an answer to "mankind's

---

[32] Ibid. 24.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid. 24-25.

religious potential." [35] The questions concerning the "darker side of life" (e.g. death) will have no satisfactory answer. At that point men will begin looking for a religion, which is transcendental (1), highly realistic (2), universal - suitable for the whole of mankind (3), and historically mature, connected with and grounded in something tangible and real (4). According to Rahner, this will be the time when the "glad tidings of Christianity will once again be the only answer to mankind's newly resuscitated aspirations."[36]

The second consideration of the two, which is much more important in the context of the present discussion, is anthropological. It has to do with "man's indestructible religious propensity," or instinct. This instinct is the guarantee that:

> Sooner or later, however […] such a spiritual being is bound to inquire about the essence and meaning of his existence – not only his own as an individual but also mankind's collectively: and not only about the technical master of the isolated moments of his existence, either. […]
> Once again, once the problems relating only to this world have been solved, the transcendental problem of meaning will arise; for man will again find himself a finite creature with the problem of the infinite on his mind, a mortal being hankering after immortality. [37]

This, in essence, is a religious question. According to Rahner, no matter how settled into his world and life man is, he sooner or later becomes aware of the finite and problematic nature of this world. The more man subjugates his world, the more anxious, limited and mortal he feels. That in turn makes the man long with an increasing intensity for the object of worship "with the unearthly radiance of holiness and mystery."[38] The other option for man is to start worshipping himself, but that, according to Rahner, will be more difficult than ever before. Simply because "all progress is at bottom a clearer understanding of man's inner limitation, experience of his problematical situation."[39]

The issue of human freedom

Part of this problematic situation has to do with the fact that there is a considerable amount of freedom given to man. This freedom is announced no later than the very first chapter of the Bible, where God creates humans and tells them to

---

[35] Karl Rahner, An Introductory Selection from the Writings of one of Today's Leading Roman Catholic Theologians, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1972), 47-49.
[36] Ibid. 49.
[37] Ibid. 48-49.
[38] Ibid. 50.
[39] Ibid. 51.

subdue the earth and to rule over it. This command makes man into God's partner and through the person of Jesus Christ, the God-man, into God's ambassador to the creation. The implication of this is that: "the fundamental Christian relation to the world and nature exists not merely in the inwardness of faith, conscience and prayer but also in and through the world itself, in the fact of knowledge by earthly science and the ensuing subjection of nature."[40] However, man is a free agent in this model, and he has to make a choice as to how he will use his freedom. Rahner puts it this way: "For nowhere is man *more* God's free partner than in Christianity; so true is this that he does not undergo his eternal salvation but must *make* it in freedom (even though our freedom is given to us by God)."[41] Being a part of this process is also something that makes man similar to God. Because, "the Christian may regard this primal and necessary evolution as a challenge he must face, as the defense and vindication of his dignity as the creature of God and the amnestied partner of God."[42]

This human situation has profound implications in the religious sphere of life. The more man follows the path of his "necessary evolution", the more he seems to be in control of things, the more he begins to realize and feel that he is still living in the realm of the unknown. . The door to this unknown is opened by the hands of man himself, because the world is nowadays both made and controlled by man.[43]. God seems to be withdrawn and remote from the world that is made by man, but has at the same time become the greatest threat to man through weapons of mass destruction, pollution, depersonalization, and the like. At this junction man has to conclude that his "creative freedom experiences itself as subject to control and as venturing into

---

[40] Karl Rahner, *Do You Believe in God?* trans. Richard Strachan, (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), 50.

[41] Ibid. 49.

[42] Ibid. 50. Just a few pages later Rahner explicates in a splendid way how this partnership between man and God must be understood: "God has made the world an evolving world, a world of change and growth; only in man and his creative deeds does it become what God means it to be: the world of man which, changeable, fleeting and sinful though it is, has been granted a share in the life of God by the God-Man. Thus it is not readily apparent why a Christian should consider the human situation in this new age more dangerous, less capable of leading men to God, than that of earlier ages. The world is always God's world, even though full of temptation and human guilt. It can draw men away from God but also draw them to him. Of course, Christian too, can get bogged down in this world, but he will not find God by trying to take the refuge in an age that is dead or dying." (p. 57)

[43] Ibid. 48-49. Rahner makes an interesting observation about man's relationship to the created order today. He states that virtually all of nature today is created by man, including that part of it which man is trying to preserve untouched and "natural". The nature that we preserve is no longer the nature as it was originally created. It is the nature that we have voluntarily *chosen* to leave alone and not touch for the time being. Thus even the untouched nature today reflects the image of man.

unfathomable darkness."[44] The nature that surrounds man is no longer a mystery. Yet, there is a new mystery, which is welling up out of man's own nature:

"We call this mystery God. And the more we become what we are, free beings endowed with a certain degree of power, the more we seek him to whom this subject lordship, which never belongs to ourselves, can be entrusted – God."[45]

Rahner also makes an observation that this seeking of lordship has a tendency to intensify as the limits of what man can do to himself and other human beings keep growing as a result of new scientific discoveries. It happens partly due to the fact that the moral progress of mankind is much slower than the scientific progress. In other words, the more capable man becomes to control his own destiny, the more he is burdened by the weight of responsibility for what he can do to himself and his fellow humans. And, the more he is burdened by the responsibility, the more he seeks God, for "the ultimate, absolute principle of all responsibility is called God."[46] This, as stated previously, is a religious matter, and as such it concerns the relationship between God and man, for religion is "an experiential relationship with God," which somehow needs to be incorporated into the scientific world picture of today.[47]

The relationship between man and God

The relationship between man and God, in Rahner's theology, is something that begins with man. There are two reasons why the starting point is man. First, man is what we are, and thus it is something that we supposedly understand better compared to God. Second, many people may experience the question about God as something unpleasant and even painful. Hence, if we start with the man, we avoid creating the impression about trying to indoctrinate people. So, the beginning point for Rahner is stating that the Word of God has become man. Immediately after that Rahner asks whether we understand what is meant by "becoming" and by "man". Much of Rahner's theological anthropology revolves around the definitions of these two terms.[48] Geffrey B. Kelly writing about what Rahner wants to achieve with his theology has put it succinctly this way:

---

[44] Ibid. 53.
[45] Ibid. 54.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid. 76.
[48] Karl – Heinz Weger, *Karl Rahner. Eine Einführung in sein theologisches Denken,* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1978), s. 39 ff.

> Rahner's aim in theology is, then, to deepen, enliven, and make explicit the primal, transcendental relationship with God in creation and incarnation that activates theological awareness and enriches one's dialogue with the source of all being and of all theological articulation of the significance of such a relationship. […] The search for the source of this fulfillment has its starting point with Rahner, then, in an anthropology open to the transcendent.[49]

For Rahner all human knowing takes place in the world of experience, and the metaphysical is known in this world of experience as the human mind constantly turns to sensory phenomena. In this context man gains a transcendental understanding of God. According to Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, in this process that Rahner describes, God "is not known by man as an object of reality, but as the principle of human knowledge and reality. […] This transcendental orientation of man to God is the unifying principle of Rahner's theology."[50]

However, in order to describe and understand this relational orientation of man to God correctly, man himself must be understood correctly. At this point Rahner states that the first thing, which must be said about man in the context of this discussion, is that man is both a person and a subject.[51] From these two terms the more difficult one to define is the term "person." Rahner identifies five things, or "determinations," which mark the boundaries of the human personhood: Man's transcendence, responsibility and freedom, orientation towards the incomprehensible mystery, man's being in the history and in the world, and finally, man's social nature.[52]

All five determinations testify to the fact that the human person is very complex, and both individually and collectively man experiences himself in a great variety of ways. Yet, Biblical anthropology, just as any other anthropology looks at man as a whole. Therefore, these five determinations can be said to represent parts of which a human being's true personhood is constituted. Also, they at least provisionally indicate what Rahner means when he calls man a person and a subject at the same time. However, if the topic of this discussion is the image of God in man, then it also important to find out what if any of these five determinations in Rahner's theology are reflecting the divine image in man.

---

[49] Kelley, 37-38.
[50] Quoted in Keley, p.39.
[51] Ranner, *Foundations,* 26.
[52] Ibid.

According to Rahner, the statement that God is a personal God (i.e. that God is a person) is one of the most fundamental Christian assertions about God. To define what precisely is meant when we say that God is a being with a personal character, one must ask the question of whether God is a person at all, and if he is, is he a person only in relation to the humans? Or, has God hidden from humanity in his own self, in his absolute and transcendent distance? These questions cannot be satisfactorily answered unless we thoroughly discuss God's self-communication to man in grace as the transcendental constitution of man. Before going into that discussion, however, Rahner says that it is possible to make a statement that "God is a person," but this "can be asserted of God and is true of God only if, in asserting and understanding this statement, we open it to ineffable darkness of the holy mystery."[53]

Man as the event of God's self-communication

Self-communication for Rahner is not God saying something about himself to human being(s), rather it is an ontological act in which "God in his own most proper reality makes himself the innermost constitutive element of man."[54] This means that God self-communicates as a personal and absolute mystery to man as a being of transcendence (i.e. a spiritual and a personal being). In other words

> "Self-communication" is meant here in a strictly ontological sense corresponding to man's essential being, man whose being is being-present-to-himself, and being personally responsible for himself in self-consciousness and freedom. God's self-communication means, therefore, that what is communicated is really God in his own being, and in this way it is a communication for the sake of knowing and possessing God in immediate vision and love. This self-communication means precisely that objectivity of gift and communication which is the climax of subjectivity on the side of the one communicating and of the one receiving.[55]

In this self-communication, which is a transcendental experience, we see the essence of man, which becomes present "basically and originally in transcendental experience."[56] On the one hand man experiences himself as a finite creature, someone who is radically different from God, or as Rahner calls it, a categorical existent. On the other hand, man is coming from God and is grounded in God's absolute mystery. This means that God is no longer merely the absolute, yet distant source of

---

[53] Ibid. 73-74.
[54] Ibid. 116.
[55] Ibid. 117-118.
[56] Ibid. 119.

transcendentality. God is very close to the human being as the one communicating himself.

This process of Divine self-communication clearly shows that human beings have a spiritual dimension, and according to Rahner, only beings made in the image of God are capacitated to the spiritual dimension.[57] This spiritual dimension, or as Rahner puts it, "spiritual essence" of man is established by God in creation from the outset because God wants to communicate himself in love to his creation. In a way, Rahner talks here about the eternity in man's heart (Eccl. 3:11), or a void that God has placed in man's heart with the intention of filling it himself. What Rahner says here also very closely echoes the famous thought from the *Confessiones* by St. Augustine 1:1, where Augustine says the following about God: "… for Thou hast formed us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."[58] This rest can be found only as a result of man experiencing the divine self-communication:

> In the concrete order which we encounter in our transcendental experience and as interpreted by Christian revelation, the spiritual creature is constituted to begin with as the possible addressee of such a divine self-communication. The spiritual essence of man is established by God in creation from the outset because God wants to communicate himself […] In the concrete order man's transcendence is willed to begin with as the realm of God's self-communication, and only in him does this transcendence find its absolute fulfillment. In the only order which is real, the emptiness of the transcendental creature exists *because* the fullness of God creates this emptiness *in order* to communicate himself to it.[59]

This quote summarizes the kernel of Rahner's anthropological thought: God wills to create man in His own image. This means that man is created with the spiritual dimension or "spiritual essence" which, ontologically speaking, is an indispensable part of man's constitution. This, in turn, is the force behind man's fundamental transcendental orientation towards God. It also ensures man's ability to be the recipient of God's self-communication. It means that man is a hopeless God-

---

[57] David W. Fagerberg "Rahner on the Importance of Reconciliation in the Sacramentof Penance," *Pro Ecclesia* Vol. 5, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 349-361. Here Fagerberg very succinctly identifies man's spiritual essence, as it is "exegeted" in Rahner's theology, with the Image of God idea found in the Scripture. Rahner himself, however, seems very reluctant to use the term *imago Dei* as an operational term for developing his anthropology. On the other hand, Rahner arrives at a rather clear concept of *imago Dei* while discussing the experience of the self, and human essence or nature in the context of the incarnation of Christ, while still avoiding the use of the term itself. Rahner's understanding of the human self and the implications of incarnation will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

[58] St. Augustine, "The Confessions," In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, Philip Schaff, ed. (Peaboy, MA: Hendrikson, 1994), 45.

[59] Rahner, *Foundations*, 123.

seeker. It also means that the human person can find spiritual fulfillment only as a result of experiencing God's self-communication, or "finding God" for him or herself. In order to explain deeper the dynamic of this process, Rahner invents the term "supernatural existential". The supernatural existential is a universal phenomenon, which applies to all human beings alike regardless of their formal relationship with God. It is one of the key concepts to the whole of Rahner's anthropology.[60]

The Supernatural Existential

God's self-communication to man is an ontological statement, which "expresses in words the subject as such, and therefore the subject in the depths of his subjectivity, and hence in the depths of his transcendental experience."[61] These are not only words; rather, this is a reality that is both given and experienced in man's transcendental experience. And, Rahner does not speak here of a group of elect believers, he speaks about mankind as a whole:

> The statement that man as a subject is the event of God's self-communication is a statement which refers to absolutely all men, and which expresses an existential of every person. Such an existential does not become merited and in this sense "natural" by the fact that it is present in *all* men as an existential of their concrete existence, and is present prior to their freedom, their self-understanding and their experience.[62]

---

[60] There is a debate among scholars about the unity of Rahner's theological thought, and hence about the universal applicability of the terms Rahner has invented, described and used throughout his corpus of writings. According to Karen Kilby, there are those who would adopt the so-called foundationalist approach to interpreting Rahner's theology (Karen Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism in the Thought of Karl Rahner," In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (2002): 127-140). According to this more common approach, there is a strong unity between Rahner's earlier philosophical thought, and his latter theological thought, which is firmly grounded in and built upon some principles that have been formulated in Rahner's philosophy of religion. An example here would be the term *Vorgriff auf esse* (pre-apprehension of being), which is first introduced in Rahner's *Spirit in the World* (completed in 1936, first published in 1939). This term is first defined and discussed as a part of the larger philosophical discussion of humans being able to be recipients of God's revelation. In Rahner's later writings it is used as a philosophically established foundation upon which theological aspects of revelation are placed and further developed. With regards to the term "supernatural existential," it means that this term as well is grounded on the philosophical foundation of the *Vorgriff*. The other approach to Rahner's thought would be what Kilby proposes as the non-foundationalist reading of Rahner. This second approach is based upon the presupposition that there are significant discontinuities in Rahner's thought. The proponents of this approach, including Kilby herself, argue that Rahner's earlier thought is more philosophical, while his latter thought becomes increasingly more theological. With regards to the supernatural existential, it means that the "latter" Rahner moves from the philosophical conception of revelation being particular and historical to a notion of revelation being universal in time and space. This latter approach is formulated in the *Foundations of Christian Faith*. Although the debate about the unity of Rahner's theology is well beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to make a note of it at least in passing because the theological reflection of this chapter revolves around Rahner's theological anthropology as it is formulated in the *Foundations*.

[61] Rahner, *Foundations*, 126.

[62] Ibid. 127. Geffrery Kelley commenting on the universal nature of the supernatural existential has said that "Rahner uses the expression as a short rubric for affirming that all persons are created into a

The supernatural existential[63] is thus understood as the consequence of God's self-communication, yet at the same time, anthropologically speaking, it is to be understood also as a precondition to the experience of God's grace. Since God is infinite but human beings are finite, God himself must take the initiative in providing a mechanism, which allows us to receive God' s self-communication. This mechanism should also safeguard us against receiving something that isn't God as God. Therefore, God's self-communication as an offer also must be and is the necessary condition that makes its acceptance possible. In other words, this is the basic structure that modifies the human existence in its totality drawing people toward the divine. According to Geoffrey B. Kelley, the supernatural existential is "a constitutive factor in the divinely initiated response to the God who has, in Augustine's words, become more intimate to us than we to ourselves."[64] Thus, Rahner argues that the supernatural existential is a dynamic quality, or a dimension that completely affects the whole human being, because through it the human being is brought into intimate contact with God. According to Kelley, it affects "the whole human personhood, structuring into one's nature the gift of being open to, even pining for, the divine source of meaning and fulfillment."[65] In other words, the supernatural existential is the necessary precondition and at the same time the guarantee of the humans being transformed through God's unending presence in their lives.[66]

As it was pointed out in the beginning of this sub-section, the fact that man is created as a person means that first, he is personal as God is personal, and second, that

---

relationship with God by virtue of their human existence and not, as in textbook theology, by virtue solely of a superstructure of divine power flowing into a person through a ritualized action. For Rahner this is the necessary conditioning of the human spirit whereby God not only ordains people to the "supernatural level" but, in the gift of God's caring presence to the human spirit, creating a restless drive for union with God, makes them capable of accepting that which will modify their very existence." (p. 110)

[63] The term "supernatural existential" first appeared in 1950, in an article dealing with the relationship between nature and grace, which Rahner wrote for the journal *Orientierung.* (Kelley, 110)

[64] Kelley, 43.

[65] Ibid. 44.

[66] Kelley has summarized the function of the supernatural existential within the context of God's grace this way: "Rahner uses the his theological construct of the supernatural existential to indicate that human nature with its openness to being – or, to borrow a traditional scholastic term, "obediental potency" for fulfillment in being – is transformed through the advent of God's unending presence. In such a way a person's concrete existence or the "existential" becomes ordered to God and touched irrevocably by God. Rahner claims, consequently, that a person's actual existence in God's grace is integrated into his or her de facto existing nature. This grace, in turn, is the catalyst in seeking the highest fulfillment possible for human nature – that is, union with God. Grace is not something wholly external to being human. Nor is "it" a superstructure built upon a logical construct of "pure nature," if there can be such a thing. Rather, grace is primarily God's orientation of God's creatures to the divine self, an orientation that occurs in the supernatural existential of being human." (p. 44)

he is able to be the event of God's self-communication. The supernatural existential as a part of the basic structure of humanity is the actual "instrument" for receiving God's self communication, which afterwards transforms the totality of human existence. Even though Rahner himself does not say it in exactly these words, this really is a very elegant dynamic description of *imago Dei*, which is fundamentally relational and at the same time strongly substantival. Through *imago Dei* thus "activated," God draws humans into fellowship with Himself.

This happens through God's grace that, according to Rahner, is an act of God in which God orients his creatures to his own divine self. What happens in the process of the human subject experiencing the sanctifying and justifying grace in God's self-communication is "a divinizing elevation of man."[67] This grace in Rahner's theology has a strikingly universal character. When describing the transcendental aspect of revelation, Rahner makes the following conclusion:

> This inner self-communication of God in grace at the core of a spiritual person is destined for all men, in *all* of his dimensions, because all are to be integrated into the single salvation of the single and total person. Therefore all transcendent subjectivity possesses itself not for itself *alongside* history, but *in* this very history, which is precisely the history of man's transcendence itself.[68]

Hence, the transcendental experience of the person who opens herself up to such an experience is not just something remote and frightening that judges the human subject's world from a distance. Rather, this holy mystery is experienced by the person as a "hidden closeness, a forgiving intimacy, his real home, that it is a love which shares itself, something familiar which he can approach and turn to from the estrangement of his own perilous and empty life."[69] This way a person who feels guilty and unforgiven can at last experience God's forgiveness, and through it the incredible closeness of God.[70]

---

[67] Rahner, *Foundations,* 172.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 131.

[70] The concept of forgiveness through transcendental experience has immense consequences and practical implications for the pastoral counseling and/or therapy. That's why Rahner's description of this process deserves a closer scrutiny. This is what he writes in his *Foundations* about the "mechanics" of forgiveness: "It is the person who in the forlornness of his guilt still turns in trust to the mystery of his existence which is quietly present, and surrenders himself as one who even in his guilt no longer wants to understand himself in a self-centered and self- sufficient way, it is this person who experiences himself as one who does not forgive himself, but who is forgiven, and he experiences this forgiveness which he receives as the hidden, forgiving and liberating love of God himself, who forgives *in that* he gives himself, because only in this way can there really be forgiveness once and for all." (p. 131) As this quote indicates, for Rahner there is no question about who the forgiver is, yet at the same time he claims that to experience God is to experience one's self and vice versa (that dynamic

This grace, however, is not to be taken lightly because it is supernatural,[71] and as such it cannot be demanded by the human subject as a right or as something that God owes to man. In order to more fully understand the dynamics of man receiving God's self-communication Rahner talks about two phenomena: freedom of the human being and the "fundamental option," which both are tied very closely to the core of *imago Dei*, the supernatural existential.

Freedom and the Fundamental Option

The concept of the "fundamental option" is regarded by some as one of Rahner's greatest contributions to the Catholic moral theology and the theology of freedom in general.[72] At the very beginning of the discussion Rahner states that responsibility and freedom belong to the existentials of human existence.[73] The freedom that Rahner talks about here is not something that would consist in a particular faculty of man along with other similar faculties. Such an interpretation of freedom in Rahner's system is "too easy," and based on a pseudo-empirical understanding of freedom.[74] Rather, freedom is something that is inextricably related to the whole being of the human subject: "In real freedom the subject always intends himself, understands and posits himself. Ultimately he does not do *something*, but does *himself.*"[75] Or, put differently: "Freedom is the capacity of the one subject to decide about himself in his single totality."[76] This means that the human subject has the freedom to either say "yes" to God, or to say "no" to him, because freedom in this sense is understood as a "freedom of the subject in relation to himself in his final and definitive validity, and in this way it is freedom for God."[77] Succinctly put, freedom is

---

will be discussed in greater detail in one of the following sections of this chapter). For now, however, it will suffice to say that based on Rahner's approach, a case could be made for self-forgiveness as an integral part of experiencing the complete forgiveness by God, or at least self-forgiveness could be looked at as a byproduct of the experience of God's forgiveness.

[71] Some theologians have voiced criticisms against Rahner's approach to grace as it is discussed in the context of the concept of supernatural existential, saying that Rahner's treatment of grace makes his entire theology too anthropocentric. (Brian F. Linnane, "Dying with Christ: Rahner's Ethics of Discipleship," In *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 81, no. 2 (April 2001): 228-248). These arguments will be looked at more closely in the section on the experience of Self in Rahner's theology. For now, however, it will suffice to say that in order to avoid misconceptions of Rahner's theology, it is of utmost importance to at least try and define very clearly the terms that are used in a given discussion. Hence, the following discussion of the Rahner's usage of the term "freedom".

[72] Kelley, 45.

[73] Rahner, *Foundations*, 93.

[74] Ibid. 94.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid. 100.

"God's once-for-all gift of freedom is interwoven in one's being human."[78] This is precisely why I believe there is a legitimate ground to conclude that freedom also is to be considered as something that belongs to the dynamic *imago Dei* as Rahner constructs it via supernatural existential. As such, freedom along with grace provide the context in which Rahner looks at the fundamental option, because the gift of freedom cannot be reduced to a mere choice between diverse objects. Thus the gift of freedom becomes the necessary prerequisite for the fundamental option.

Rahner sets the concept of the fundamental option in the context of God's self-communication, which results in bestowing grace and freedom on human beings. In Rahner's system, the human person is both free in the conscious choices that are one's responsibility to oneself, God and others, as well as free in becoming a more mature self. Set in the context of Christian theology, this basically is equal with the process of growth and maturity in Christ. Hence, the definition of the fundamental option provided by Kelley: "Rahner's fundamental option is as much the self disposed to God or, alternately, turned in on itself as it is the inner dynamism of the options or decisions in which freedom is expressed."[79] Here again one can see how tightly interwoven and mutually interdependent in Rahner's theology are supernatural existential, freedom, grace, and the fundamental option. Since each of these phenomena is so complex in itself, it is no great wonder that their respective relation to the doctrine of *imago Dei* is left in the hands of the reader of Rahner's theology. One might wish that Rahner himself were a bit clearer in defining *imago* as it relates to the above-mentioned four phenomena. Still, as they are defined and described, there is little doubt that all these phenomena are exactly what constitute the complex structure of the image of God in Rahner's theology.

In exploring the implications of the fundamental option, Rahner invents the term "transcendental horizon of our freedom."[80] It makes freedom possible while also constituting the proper object of freedom. So, for Rahner the freedom that is given by God and makes possible the orientation of the human person towards God, is "shaped by the fundamental option in which one's destiny is bound up with God or with the self alone apart from God."[81] Thus, one can conclude that the fundamental option "becomes animated by God's presence in the human subject in the inner moment

---

[78] Kelley, 45.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Rahner, *Foundations,* 99.
[81] Kelley, 47.

when a person's life becomes oriented to God and one's self becomes enhanced in the process of saying yes or no to God."[82] The mechanism of how exactly that happens and what are the implications of this process is discussed in the following section.

The experience of Self

It has already been mentioned in the previous sections that Rahner emphasizes the movement from one's transcendental orientation towards the holy, eternal mystery of God, to one's actual experience of God. But Rahner goes a step further. In his attempt to develop a point of intersection between theological anthropology and Ignatian mysticism,[83] Rahner eventually arrives at the claim that every experience of God is also an experience of the self, and vice versa.[84] Even though Rahner doesn't say that both experiences are identical, he asserts that they constitute a unity, for one is impossible without the other. In the essay entitled "The Experience of Self and the Experience of God" in the volume 13 of his *Theological Investigations*, he writes the following:

> The experience of God and the experience of self is too ultimate and too all-embracing for it to consist in the simple fact that, as in every other "subject" of human knowledge, so too in the knowledge of God, the subject experiences herself or himself at the same time. This unity consists far more in the fact that original and ultimate experience of *God* constitutes the enabling condition of, and an intrinsic element in, the experience of self in such a way that without the experience of God no experience of self is possible. In other words the personal history of the experience of God signifies over and above itself, the personal history of the experience of the self. […] In accordance with this we can then likewise go on to assert: the personal history of experience of the self is the personal history of the experience of God. [85]

Rahner goes even a step further in asserting that without the experience of God the experience of the self is absolutely impossible. In other words, the human transcendentality, which elevates the human subject towards God, is at the same time the condition, which makes the experience of the self possible, and vice versa. Or in other words, these are "simply two aspects of one and the same history of

---

[82] Ibid. 45-46.

[83] Writing about Rahner and his relation to Ignatian mysticism Kelley says the following: "Rahner the Jesuit sees in Ignatian piety a relentless search for God in which the paradox of fleeing the world in order to find God in the world is reconciled. The point of reconciliation for him is the "foolishness" of the cross of Christ through which God is made known as the inner center of all Christian existence and as one able to invest this world with the joy of God's presence and the thrill of discovering God anew in the countless forms of Christian living, even in the pathos of suffering." (Ibid. 80.)

[84] Ibid. 172-173.

[85] Cited in Kelley, 176.

experience."[86] Therefore, as Brian Linnane has concluded, human spirituality for

---

[86] Cited Ibid. 182. This essay was originally published in 1971. It is very interesting, however, that some 20 years prior to the writing of this essay psychologist Karl Gustav Jung had already explored at great depth the relationship between the archetype of self, and the experience of God. Jung uses the term "self" almost exclusively when he refers to the archetypal dynamics and the process of individuation. William Crain has provided a succinct definition of the term "self" in Jung's writings: "The most important archetype is that of the Self, or unconscious striving for centeredness, wholeness, and meaning. The Self is an inner urge to balance and reconcile the opposing aspects of our personalities. […] The Self is also expressed by our search for God, the symbol of wholeness and ultimate meaning." (William Crain, *Theories of Development. Concepts and Applications.* 3rd ed. Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992. p. 292) Jung tackles the concept of Self throughout his heavily theologized treatises in analytical psychology. In the 12th volume of his collected works (originally written in 1944) he describes the Self as an instrument of sorts, which lies at the very center of our psyche and organizes our experience of God: "It would be blasphemy to assert that God can manifest himself everywhere save only in the human soul. Indeed the very intimacy of the relationship between God and the soul precludes from the start any devaluation of the latter. It would be going perhaps too far to speak of an affinity; but at all events the soul must contain in itself the faculty of relationship to God, i.e., a correspondence, otherwise a connection could never come about. *This correspondence is, in psychological terms, the archetype of the God-image.*" (Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy.* Trans. R.F.C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968. pp. 10-11) For Jung this means that: "It is therefore psychologically quite unthinkable for God to be simply the "wholly other," for a wholly other could never be one of the soul's deepest and closest intimacies – which is precisely what God is." (Ibid.) It is interesting to note that at another place in his writings, while discussing the symbolism of quaternity, Jung makes the striking conclusion that psychologically speaking, the self is practically identical with the *imago Dei*: "These examples […] bring the quaternity into closest relationship with the Deity, so that […] it is impossible to distinguish the self from a God-image. At any rate, I personally have found it impossible to discover a criterion of distinction. Here faith or philosophy alone can decide, neither of which has anything to do with the empiricism of the scientist. One can, then, explain the God-image aspect of the quaternity as a reflection of the self, or, conversely, explain the self as an *imago Dei* in man." (Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Western Religion.* Trans. R.F.C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. p. 86) Even though Rahner and Jung begin their journeys from different starting positions (a Jesuit monk and a physician coming from the Swiss Reformed tradition), and end their inquiry with quite different conclusions, theologically speaking, they have independently of one another reached the conclusion that the experience of the self and the experience of God are closely related if not synonymous at times. In this case what Karen Kilby has said about Rahner's transcendental theology in the context of modern intellectual pluralism applies in principle to both Jung and Rahner: "It is important […] to distinguish between the *content* of what is affirmed and the *way* in which it is affirmed. The content is ahistorical and universal – what is affirmed is precisely that there is an aspect to our experience that transcends history and particularity and difference. The manner in which this is affirmed, however, is crucially different – the affirmation that there is something transcending history does not itself pretend to transcend history and particularity, but is rather embedded in a particular moment in Roman Catholic theology. What one has, then, is a historically rooted affirmation of the ahistorical character of an element of our experience." (p. 140)

This is an extremely important conclusion for the pastoral counseling (the experience of God and the experience of self being virtually identical), because it provides the absolutely necessary theoretical foundation for "normalizing" certain experiences in people's lives, which may not at the first glance fit into neatly organized cognitive dogmatic constructs thus possibly creating cognitive dissonance and anguish. Rahner himself has made allusions to this dynamic in his discussion of mystical theology. For instance, in his *The Practice of Faith*, Rahner lists four problems in mystical theology. One of the problems is the problem of "nature" and "grace". Are altered states of consciousness "natural," or are they to be treated as special events of grace? The answer to this question is not an either/or, but rather a both/and kind of an answer. Rahner allows for the possibility that such occurrences can be attributed to God's personal self-communication. Yet, he also says: "… as far as we know, it is conceivable that simply naturally altered states of consciousness could be pure experiences of transcendence: that is they could be (totally or partially) disconnected from categorical meditation." (Karl Rahner, *The Practice of Faith. A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality.* Eds. Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt. New York: Crossroad, 1984. p. 75.)

Rahner is simply "the full achievement of the human person as spirit in the world, as unlimited transcendence toward the mystery of God."[87] This achievement for Rahner is always an event of grace, which is possible in and through the divine self-communication. This achievement to its full extent is only possible in the categorical experience of moral freedom. But genuine moral freedom is always a result or manifestation of one's love for neighbor, which in turn is "the event of a subject's most complete self-realization."[88]

Love of a neighbor for Rahner is not a matter of theoretical theological reflection. It is always a concrete action, which is a concrete expression of the theologically complex idea of "dying with Christ." In his essay "Christian humanism" Rahner summarizes it this way:

> From the example of man who struggles and dies on the cross Christianity knows that the most ultimate and radical love for others in God implies this very fate: one only passes from death to life by loving the other person; and in loving him one knows that it is only with God's help that one can avoid withholding oneself ultimately from the other person, that one must carry on loving, right to the very end of a pointless death.[89]

This "dying with Christ" in Rahner's theology appears to be something more than just the imitation of Christ. Being in Christ means being a part of God's self-expression, which at the same time is humanity in its most radical expression: "Christ is therefore man in the most radical way, and his humanity is the most autonomous and the most free not in spite of, but because it has been assumed, because it has been created as God's self-expression."[90] This appears to be a very elegant way of depicting the dynamic development of humanity created as *imago Dei*, which is possible only in

---

[87] Linnane, 236.

[88] Ibid. 236-237. Some have criticized Rahner's approach as unduly anthropocentric, and thus not faithful to the foundational theological truths. For instance, James Gustafson argues that Rahner's approach may eventually lead to "radically anthropocentric tendencies of Christian theology and pastoral practice." Such tendencies are dangerous because they may lead to the notion of instrumentalizing God, and the conclusion that God's purposes coincide exclusively with the human well-being as defined by human persons. Further, Gustafson believes that Rahner's emphasis on human freedom (transcendental freedom in particular) and self-realization serves to exalt the human person and its interests to the detriment of God and God's purposes. That, according to Gustafson, is contrary to the empirical evidence, which suggests the highly determined nature of human existence in this world. (Lianne, 229-235) It must be noted, however, that while Rahner talks about the radical freedom of man, it seems to be discussed more in the context of man's ability to make a free moral choice for or against God. This choice finds the highest expression of man's transcendental freedom in his "dying with Christ," which provides the necessary balancing theocentric element in this discussion. Freedom for Rahner is "not an end in itself, nor is it understood as being in service of human self-interest. Rather, human freedom in Rahner's account is properly oriented to responding to God's will without regard for reward or benefit." (Ibid. 235)

[89] Quoted in Linnane, 237.

[90] Rahner, *Foundations,* 226.

Christ. Precisely because the human self patterned after God's own image is involved,

Rahner makes the following statement:

> If God himself is man and remains so for all eternity; if therefore all theology
> is eternal anthropology; if it is forbidden to man to think little of himself
> because he would then be thinking little of God; and if this God remains the
> absolute mystery: then man is for all eternity the expression of the mystery of
> God which participates for all eternity in the mystery of its ground.[91]

It also seems that for Rahner, Christ, or to be more precise *imago Christi*, is

the ultimate *telos* in which the entire *imago* anthropology, and as a matter of fact

theology as a whole, is wrapped up. Hence, the answer to anthropological questions

lies in the area of Christology:

> Because it is the union of the real essence of God and of man in God's
> personal self-expression in his eternal Logos, for this reason Christology is the
> beginning and the end of anthropology in its most radical actualization is for
> all eternity theology. It is first of all the theology which God himself has
> spoken by uttering his Word as our flesh into the emptiness of what is not God
> and is even sinful, and, secondly, it is the theology which we ourselves do in
> faith when we do not think that we could find Christ by going around man,
> and hence find God by going around human altogether.[92]

What brings the theocentric balance into Rahner's seemingly anthropocentric

system of thought is the love for one's neighbor, because it is the actual fruit that

flows out of one's experience of God (and self). At the same time love for one's

neighbor is not something that can be compartmentalized or treated in isolation from

the other aspects discussed in this section (experience of self and experience of God).

Anne Carr has observed rightly that for Rahner "love is not some special performance

but the unique realization of each person which is really known after it has been

accomplished. The heart with which one loves is in fact oneself, and this personal

adventure of trust and surrender to the unknown is the center of Christian morality."[93]

In the "Experience of Self and Experience of God," Rahner sums it up this way:

> The unity which exists between experience of God and experience of the self
> as here understood could of course be made clear in a process of
> transcendental reflection. […] The transcendentality of human beings in

---

[91] Ibid. 225.

[92] Ibid. 225-226. Here again one cannot help but notice the skillful integration of substantival
and relational dimensions of the image of God in Rahner's theological discourse. However,
some caution must be exerted because Rahner himself consistently avoids using the term
imago Dei explicitly. This is why the *imago*, which implicitly really is the fabric of Rahner's
anthropology must be as it were 'extracted' from the text.

[93] Anne Carr, *The Theological Method of Karl Rahner* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholar's Press, 1977), p.
211. Cited in Linnane, p. 237.

knowledge and freedom, as it reaches up to absolute being, the absolute future, the incomprehensible mystery, the ultimate basis enabling absolute love and responsibility to exist, and so genuine fellowship (or whatever other presentation we would like to make like to make in fuller detail of this transcendentality of human beings), is at the same time the condition which makes it possible for subjects strictly *as* such to experience themselves and to have achieved an "objectification" of themselves in *this* sense all along.[94]

This is where the circle both ends and begins at the same time: the human subject experiences God through experiencing self, and this experience materializes in dying with Christ in love for one's neighbor: "The history of the experience of self, that is, of human beings' interpretation of themselves as achieved in freedom, is *eo ipso* the history of their experience of God as well, and vice versa."[95] This in turn provides the environment for ever-greater experience of self (and God at the same time) in a communal context. Rahner himself calls the experience of God, the experience of the self, and the love for one's neighbor a single reality with three mutually conditioning aspects.[96]

Rahner believes that this is perhaps one of the most effective ways to help the modern human beings who are inclined to distrust all statements about God out of ideological considerations, understand that "in the changing history of their relationship with themselves […] they have all along been living through a history of their experience with God."[97] Consequently, if the locus of our God-experience is our self-experience, then the history of the loss of one's identity is the history of loss of the experience of God. The implications of these conclusions are serious and far-reaching when it n comes to *imago Dei* as an essential characteristic of what it means to be human. Among other things it means that this experience has a very strongly ecclesiologically communal aspect, which will be very briefly discussed in the following section.

---

[94] Cited in Kelley, p. 177.
[95] Ibid. 182.
[96] Ibid. 179.
[97] Cited Ibid. 182.

Love for one's neighbor as a practical expression of God-experience

As stated above, for Rahner the experience of God, the experience of self and the love for one's neighbor are three mutually conditioning aspects of a single reality. For Rahner "those who fail to discover their neighbor have not truly achieved the realization of themselves either."[98] This is so because by design people are created as relational beings, and their relational nature manifests itself in the experience of other persons, and not other things. To briefly recap and condense the principles outlined previously, Rahner's system looks like this:

1. Experience of God is the same as the experience of self,

2. Experience of neighbor and the experience of self are one,

3. The love of God and the love of neighbor are one.

If these three principles are viewed as mutually conditioning, then the following statement can be made:

> Only then can we say that human beings discover themselves or lose themselves in their neighbor; that human beings have already discovered God, even though they may not have any explicit knowledge of it, if only they have truly reached out to their neighbor in an act of unconditional love, and in that neighbor reached out also to their own self.[99]

The third statement in the above sentence is just as difficult to comprehend at the first glance as the previous two. Therefore, Rahner clarifies this statement further by emphasizing that the love of God and the love of neighbor can be one only on the assumption that the experience of God and self are one. Besides, this statement can be maintained in all of its significance "only if the relationship inherent in every act posited by the subjects is extended to God and the neighbor also with the same transcendental necessity as it is to the subjects themselves."[100] In other words, loving

---

[98] Cited Ibid. 178. Father O'Grady comes to virtually identical conclusions in his *Christian Anthropology*. O'Grady uses two terms, covenant and calling, as the basis for arriving at his conclusion that God has created man for fellowship with Him and at the same time God has established a covenant that calls men together to share a life in union with God. In this process the calling of man is at the same time accomplishing the calling together of men. Or to put it another way, the *klasis* (calling) issues in *ekklesia* (community called). This makes possible for man to live in a love relationship with other men: "Man can fulfill himself when he lives in love, and this is possible because of the gift of God. All that is human is disposed for this community by the Creator. Man is so created that he can become individual only through the other. The "I" becomes the "I" through the "Thou." […] Personal existence, corporate existence, sacrifice, and self-sacrifice belong to one another. Love combines the challenge of sacrifice for the sake of the other, with the call to find oneself. The two ideas belong together." (p. 163) Even though Father O'Grady employs slightly different terminology as Rahner, as the above quote clearly demonstrates, his conclusions are virtually the same.
[99] Cited in Kelley, 179.
[100] Ibid. 180.

God, loving one's neighbor, and loving oneself are inextricably bound together, and only if discussed together can they provide adequate insight into Rahner's anthropological thought. Love of a neighbor is the manifestation of the communal aspect of our self- and God-experience. Taking into consideration the previous discussion in this chapter, I think it is legitimate to say that in some sense this is Rahner's way of addressing the collective aspect of *imago Dei*.

The church in this case unites Christians who differ from the non-Christians in that they are not turning their lives into some system, but are instead allowing themselves to be led "through the multiplicity of reality, a reality which is also dark and obscure and incomprehensible."[101] This is so because according to Rahner, to be a Christian requires opening oneself up to the incomprehensibility of God. That is the way through which a person can experience God's self-communication as a part of the personal salvation history by appropriating his "supernatural transcendentality" in interpersonal communication, love, and fidelity.[102] At the same time, however, Rahner emphasizes that this process opens up the participation in salvation history virtually for everyone, for the supernatural transcendentality is something that universally belongs to the very essence of being human. Christian church in this equation represents the final and irreversible eschatological stage of the universal salvation history, where God has announced his irreversible triumph through Jesus Christ. Man can no longer say "no" to the "yes" uttered by God in Christ.[103] The Church is the locus of the human experience transformed by incarnation where the "visible activity liturgically emphasizes the invisible event."[104]

---

[101] Rahner, *Foundations*, 407.

[102] Ibid. 411.

[103] Ibid. 412. Christian church in this case is the vehicle through which the communal nature of salvation for the believing community is revealed (as opposed to someone outside the church who may be going through an earlier, more individualistic as it were stage of personal salvation history). The communal aspect of salvation in the church is discussed at greater depth in the context of a larger discussion of Eucharist. In the book entitled *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, which Rahner co-authored with Häussling, he explains it this way: "Mass with communion is not primarily a meeting of the individual soul with its God and savior. The celebration of the Eucharist was rather instituted as the highest actualization of the Church, the redeemed community. This latter itself is the first sign of the grace of Christ (Church as fundamental sacrament), and not in a vague mythological sense, as though the church were outside the everyday world, but in a very real sense. The salvation which is Christ is found where the church is realized among men and in men, though of course in different stages and forms of actuality." (Karl Rahner and Angelus Häussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*. trans. W.J. O'Hara. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968. p.93)

[104] Fagerberg, 361.

Conclusion

This chapter of the thesis deals with the substantival aspect of the *imago Dei*, which historically has been more emphasized in Roman Catholic theology. The theologian of choice for this chapter is Karl Rahner whose understanding of human nature and constitution serves as an example of the so-called substantivalist approach. It must be noted, however, that an attempt to discuss Rahner's theological anthropology in a couple dozen pages has extreme limitations. The anthropology of Rahner is so extensive and so complex that besides the substantival aspect of the image of God, it covers other aspects as well. Yet, the notion of man being created in the image of God as a part of man's very essence (substance) is undoubtedly very strongly presented in Rahner's theological system, as witnessed by the use of terminology in which the word "essence" appears frequently as Rahner refers to humans and their constitution.

Even though Rahner avoids using the term *imago Dei*, that, according to his interpreters (Fagerberg), is essentially what he means when he describes the capacity for and the power of the self-transcendence, which is what drives humans in their search for God. Even though much revolves around self-transcendence in Rahner's theological anthropology, his approach is somewhat different than that of Reinhold Niebuhr, which is discussed in the following chapter (though it must be noted that in some respects Niebuhr's theological anthropology is almost identical with Rahners'). If Niebuhr spends much time in the area of hamartiology as well as discussing living in community, Rahner besides also discussing these two areas, seems to be at times more interested in the actual "mechanics" (essence) of self-transcendence.

According to Rahner human beings are God-seekers who are at the same time their own most universal questions. Humans are capable of being subjects and objects at the same time, because they are capable of the unthematic experience, or experience of the grace from within. This makes man capable of being the recipient of God's self-communication the ultimate expression of which is the God-man Jesus Christ. Man is a free being who in his freedom is endowed with what Rahner calls "the fundamental option," which is man's ability to say "yes" or "no" to God.[105] In

---

[105] Rahner virtually does not speak about what happens if the answer is 'no.' The possibility of having one's eternal destiny being bound up with the self alone apart from God is allowed in principle but is not discussed or explored in detail in Rahner's works. Unfortunately, the exploration of individual eschatological implications of the *imago Dei* doctrine really goes beyond the scope and limits of this dissertation.

this process man also experiences himself as God's partner. This is possible through the virtual identicalness of the experience of one's self and the experience of God.

Rahner's anthropological discourse could be summed up by a quote from "*The Foundations of Christian Faith.*" Rahner makes the following statement there: "The history of salvation and grace has its roots in the essence of man which has been divinized by God's self-communication."[106] This statement, as well as everything that stands behind it, no doubt has profound implications for *imago Dei* theology, as well as for theology of pastoral counseling.

---

[106] Rahner, *Foundations,* 411.

Chapter three

THE TELEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF *IMAGO DEI*

The teleological[1] aspect of *Imago Dei* deals primarily with the human destiny in a long-term perspective. Questions related to the teleological aspect of *Imago* are all in one way or another, trying to find an answer which would at least sketch a blueprint of what it is that human beings are destined for as beings created in the image of their Creator. What is the "chief end of man", and how is it to be interpreted in the framework of Biblical and Systematic theology? Those are the questions that will be tackled in this chapter.

In this discussion there will always be a certain amount of ambiguity present. The same is true with regards to theological speculation. Both, however, belong to this discussion, because the Biblical record is metaphorical, allegorical and provisional about what expects humans in "the end". Both also apply to the terms "openness" and "deification", and their respective descriptions and interpretations in the theological systems of Eastern (Patristic) Orthodoxy and contemporary Protestantism (especially Lutheranism), Wolfhart Pannenberg being a representative of the latter. It is not my intent to suggest or to prove that "openness" as constructed and defined by Pannenberg is the same as the doctrine of deification in the Eastern Orthodox Church. That would perhaps be a good topic for an entire dissertation. My intention in this chapter is to show that both in Protestant and Orthodox theologies there is an understanding and even a feeling present that the end of a human being is inescapably connected with and related to God. Or, to be more exact, it has to do with human beings being "grown up" spiritually as it were, so they can fellowship with God ever more intensively and intimately.

Both, in Protestantism (Pannenberg being the theologian of choice, but by far not the only representative of the view discussed here) and in Orthodoxy (here as well, similar theological notions are strongly present in the Roman Catholic mystical theology as evidenced by the previous chapter) the idea of man's teleological development is inextricably bound to the idea of human ability to spiritually transcend the limits of earthly existence. Even though Pannenberg (as well as the Orthodox

---

[1] From the Greek noun τέλος. Τέλος in Biblical Greek as well as in other early Christian literature predominantly refers to the end, goal, termination, cessation, close, and conclusion. In the context of this discussion it will be used in the sense of "the final *goal* toward which men and things are striving, of the *outcome* or *destiny* which awaits them in accordance with their nature." (Arndt, W.F. and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957) p. 818-819)

theologians) unlike Niebuhr or Rahner doesn't specifically discuss the terms of transcendence and self-transcendence, the concepts do appear in the theological discussion and they are certainly implicitly present and assumed virtually at every step of "making theology".

Characteristic to this position is the emphasis on the importance of history, which according to Pannenberg is "the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology."[2] This position must be defended equally against the attempts to dissolve history into the historicity of existence (existential theology), as well as the notion according to which the real content of faith is in fact just a suprahistorical kernel. The emphasis on history is so critical because: "All theological questions and answers are meaningful only within the framework of the history which God has with humanity and through humanity with his whole creation – the history moving toward a future still hidden from the world but already revealed in Christ."[3] Among other things, this future includes the historically determined *telos* for human beings, which the Scriptures point to, and which is brought to complete fulfillment in and through Christ. The human *telos* will be reached through progressive completion of the full-blown image of God in the redeemed community as the intrinsically self-transcendent human beings will be elevated to the deepest level of fellowship with God himself.

Image of God in Eastern (Patristic) Orthodox theology

"Eastern Orthodox theology differs from both Roman Catholic and protestant teaching in a number of important respects"[4], and the understanding and interpretation of the image of God in humans are certainly no exception. It is not just certain accents and emphases that make Orthodox teaching differ from the Roman Catholic and the Protestant theological discourse. The difference is caused by the fundamentally divergent orientations of apophatic[5] (generally speaking equated with the Eastern

---

[2] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions In Theology. Vol. I.* Trans. by George K. Kehm. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 15.

[3] Ibid.

[4] G.L. Bray "Eastern Orthodox Theology" in *New Dictionary of Theology,* eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 215-218.

[5] The formulation of the two ways in the theology, the apophatic and the kataphatic, is believed to have originated from Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite in the 6th century. Some of Dionysius writings (e.g. *The Names of God*) describe that which can be affirmatively predicted of God. This includes God's names, His attributes and the like, which all together belong to the realm of kataphatic or positive theology. Apophatic theology, on the other hand, is perceived as negative, because it deals with that which surpasses any human prediction in relation to God. In his *Mystical Theology* Dionysius stresses that kataphatic theology needs to be complemented by apophatic theology, according to which God not

Church tradition) and kataphatic (generally equated with the theological tradition developed in the West) theologies.[6]

For this reason the Eastern Orthodox concept of *imago Dei* definitely deserves to be treated in a separate section.[7] Yet, following the classification of the aspects of *imago Dei* employed in this work, I have chosen to include it under the teleological aspect along with Wolfhart Pannenberg's theological insights. It is done so because regardless of the fact that most of the Eastern Church fathers have seen the image of God in primarily substantival terms, it has always been done keeping in perspective the overarching teleological component, namely, the idea of deification of man, or in other words the person's "transfiguration into the image and likeness of God."[8] Perhaps due to the fact that the concept of *imago Dei* in Orthodox theology is practically inextricably bound to the concept of deification, the theology of the image takes a rather central place in Orthodox anthropology, and for that matter in the Orthodox theology as a whole.[9]

---

anything visible or intelligible. And since God transcends any affirmation and/or negation, the way to God is ecstasis of love in deification as opposed to intellectual contemplation. (D. P. Spearrit "Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite," In *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Ed. Allan Richardson (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1969), 96).

[6] Verna E.F. Harison "The Relationship btween Apophatic and Katphatic Theology," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 318-332.

[7] Evidently, due to the limitations and scope of this dissertation I will have to limit myself to the understanding of the image of God in patristic theology, which is still considered normative in the Eastern tradition, leaving out various theological developments in Eastern (Russian in particular) Orthodoxy in 19th and 20th centuries.

[8] Ibid. 218. At the same time it must also be noted that *theōsis* in Eastern Orthodox theology has a strong relational dimension as well. *Theōsis* as participation in divine life also means communication with God, which presupposes relationship. N.V. Harrison has formulated it well: "Today what needs to be emphasized in Christian proclamation is the underlying idea that as humans we indeed are made in the image of God. This means that at the core of our being we are related to God and can have access to God." (Nonna V. Harrison "Theosis As Salvation: An Orthodox Perspective," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 6, No. 4 (Fall 1997): 429-443. p. 431). It is a somewhat arbitrary choice to include the Orthodox teaching on *theōsis* under the teleological aspect of the image of God. Yet, it seems that the Orthodox are very seriously involved in the teleological issues, and that those issues come to the forefront of the deification doctrine while the relational dimension of the doctrine is often times left in the background and/or simply assumed.

[9] Because of the content of this section, I believe it would be useful to change the format of discussion somewhat. While in other chapters it has proved to be fruitful to investigate the theological positions of one or two theologians in depth, the section of Eastern Orthodox theology calls for something that is closer to the format of a survey. Such a decision was made because the Eastern Orthodox anthropology seems to be a fairly homogenous field of theology. The church fathers as well as the contemporary theologians virtually all agree on the basic approach (apophatic), the basic principles, and the basic conclusions drawn from the anthropological discourse. There are differences on things that are peripheral to the central principles; therefore, the discussion on those matters goes beyond the scope and parameters of this thesis. Hence, in this section I will be concentrating on the main principles of Eastern Orthodox anthropology instead of in-depth discussion of one or two theologians. The two theologians whose names appear more frequently in this chapter are Russian theologians Vladimir Lossky (1903-1958) and Archimandrite Kiprian (1899-1960). They are chosen, first of all, because they are chronologically close to today's theology; both have lived and worked in the 20th century.

Two prominent 20th century Eastern Orthodox (both are Russian) theologians who have remained faithful to the patristic theological heritage, and who have discussed *imago Dei* and the concept of deification at great length in their writings are Vladimir Lossky[10] and Archimandrite Kiprian (Kern). Towards the end of this section, some time will be spent also discussing the idea of the ability to see the "uncreated light" as the chief concomitant of *theōsis*, and its relation to human self-transcendence and *imago Dei*.

Vladimir Lossky in his "In the Image and Likeness" has said the following:

When it comes to knowing God and man the theme of *image* in the Christian thought has such an important meaning, that without exaggerating a doctrinal element of secondary importance, we think that it is possible, and we even have a certain right, to speak about the "theology of image" both in the New Testament and in the works of some Christian authors.[11]

The very same notion is also expressed by the Archimandrite Kiprian when he talks about the importance of anthropology in the Orthodox theological system: "... the study of man in the context of the spiritual world is particularly significant. In this regard the theme of the image of God becomes extremely powerful in the writings of the Fathers."[12] Not only is this theme extremely powerful, it is defining when it comes to Eastern Orthodox anthropology because it is the key to the human identity. This identity has two equally pronounced dimensions, the substantival and the relational, which are intertwined and mutually conditioning:

In contrast to the more somber aspects of Augustine's later thought, Eastern Christian theology locates the core of human identity in our character as created in the image of God. And this image is defined above all as a relationship to the Archetype. Thus the intrinsic root of our humanity is a capacity to turn toward God in love and share through his gift in divine life. Human identity is personhood, an ontological interrelatedness with all other

---

Second, they are both chosen because their works have attempted to systematize anthropological insights from the Orthodox patristic tradition, and to make those insights understandable and practically applicable to their contemporaries.

[10] Lossky as a co-founder of the so-called Neopatristic school in Russian Orthodox theology is a good representative of the theologians who have attempted to systematize the patristic heritage while remaining faithful to its spirit and limitations. In mid-1930s Lossky, together with George Florowsky, championed the Russian Neoptristic theology, which opposed the attempts of going beyond patristic Orthodoxy represented by Schmemann from the Orthodox Theological Institute of St. Sergius in Paris. (Paul Valliere *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 4 ff.)

[11] Vladimir Lossky *Po obrazu I podobiyu,* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Svyato-Vladimirskogo Bratstva, 1995), ("In the image and likeness," in Russian), 117. Here and further translations from the Russian originals are all mine.

[12] Archimandrite Kiprian (Kern*) Antropologia Sv. Grigorija Palami,* (Moskva: Palomnik, 1996), ("The Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas" in Russian), 356.

human persons as well as the divine and angelic persons. Our very being as human is an invitation to respond in love to divine love, to share in the life of the Holy Trinity together with all other persons and the whole of creation.[13]

This, in essence is what the Eastern Church understands as *theōsis*, or sharing in the divine life. Or, to say it in other words: "This means that at the core of our being we are related to God and can have access to God. It also means that we are intrinsically capable of goodness that, however sinful we are, we can learn, if only little by little, to love and do good."[14] This idea begins with the concept of adoptive sonship, which is present in the Pauline and Johannine literature. According to this concept the believer is incorporated into Christ's body the church, while Christ permanently indwells the believer.[15] This is one dynamic of *theōsis,* which reflects the patristic formula: "God became human (without ceasing to be God) that humanity might become God (without ceasing to be human)."[16] This becoming God is nothing less than human participation in divine life, which, on one hand, means that the human self is not destroyed. Rather, it is transformed, purified, illumined, and restored to its "primary substance," or "being made in the icon of God."[17] This is the substantival dimension of *theōsis*.

On the other hand, Eastern Orthodoxy emphasizes that human participation in the divine life does not compromise the doctrine of trinity.[18] Quite to the contrary, the doctrine of trinity is very important for Eastern Orthodox ontology, because: "God is not a monad, but a triad, a mystery of communion in which each Self, or hypostasis of

---

[13] Nonna V. Harrison "Theosis As Salvation: An Orthodox Perspective," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 6, No. 4 (Fall 1997): 429-443. p. 431.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Kenneth Paul Wesche "Eastern Orthodox Spirituality. Union with God in *Theosis*." In *Theology Today*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (1999): 29-43. p. 29. This brief statement first formulated by Irenaeus in his treatise *Against Heresies*, according to Wesche, sums up the "character and aim" of Eastern Orthodox spirituality.

[17] Ibid. 41.

[18] This view was championed by Gregory of Palamas in 14th century in the context of his theological debates with the monk Barlaam of Calabria and the theologian Gregory Akindynos, and the Orthodox church has accepted Palamas' arguments and view as normative since then. Palamas' opponents, based on the Greek translation of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, argued that direct vision of God is impossible for humans, or else the doctrine of trinity must be compromised. Palamas, while upholding the orthodox position on trinity argued that human beings could see God as long as "the utterly transcendent and unknowable divine essence was carefully distinguished from the uncreated divine energies." (Vigen Guroian "An Orthodoxy View of Orthodoxy and Heresy. An Appreciation of Fr. Alexander Schmemann," In *Pro Ecclesia,* vol. 4, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 79-91. p. 85.) According to Palamas the divine energies penetrate creation and draw human beings into the very life of God. These energies are not what Platonism would understand as emanations of God; "they are nothing less than the divine life itself manifested in creation." These energies were present in Jesus whose humanity was "thoroughly penetrated by with the divinity of his pre-existent Sonship." (Ibid.)

the Trinity, remains itself even as it exists wholly in the Other."[19] Moreover, the trinity in Orthodox theology is viewed as "an ontological icon to show that being is perfected in the mystery of communion."[20] This is the relational dimension of *theōsis*, which describes giving or communicating oneself selflessly to the other in love. This happens as one moves outside of oneself in accord with the "inmost law of its essence" in order to give oneself to the other. At the same time the other is received into oneself, and the self becomes the lover and the beloved at the same time. When the self is united with the Logos in whom it was created in the first place in such a way, it is perfected, and this is the mechanism of *theōsis*.

This Orthodox understanding is very different from the "monistic fusion" concept, which has a fairly large following today in the West. The idea of "monistic fusion" talks about the human person being absorbed into "the One." In this absorption, however, no other is left that can be loved, and "the purposeful movement natural to the self becomes an ecstatic movement into nihilism."[21]

Positions on the doctrine of *imago Dei* within Eastern Orthodoxy

According to the Archimandrite Cyprian, historically The Eastern Church Fathers have developed seven different views regarding the image of God in humans.[22] It must be said, however, that in each of these views presented below, the image of God is seen in connection with primarily one specific human quality or characteristic, yet in most cases other characteristics are also discussed as reflecting the *imago Dei* besides the "main" one.

Most of the Eastern Church Fathers have viewed the image of God as something located in man's rationality and intellect.[23] According to the second view, the image of God is seen in the free will of man along with rationality. Most of the fathers holding to this view are also mentioned in the first group.[24] Only four fathers are mentioned among those who see the image mostly in immortality of human

---

[19] Wesche, 41.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Archimandrite Kiprian, 354 - 355.
[23] Archimandrite Kiprian places fathers such as Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory the Theologian, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa and some others in this group.
[24] Here the main representatives are Cyrill of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nyssa, John of Damascus, Cyril of Alexandria.

beings.[25] According to the fourth view, the image is to be seen in man's dominion over the rest of created world.[26] Fifthly, the image has been viewed as associated with holiness, or more precisely, with the ability to reach a certain degree of moral perfection.[27] According to the sixth view the image of God is viewed as human creative ability both in church and secular life.[28] Lastly, a large group of Fathers believe that the image of God must be seen as trinitarian likeness, which means that man's spiritual structure as *imago Dei* reflects the intratrinitarian life and communion of the Godhead.[29]

It is noteworthy that the Orthodox tradition for the most part does not view these positions as competing or mutually exclusive, but rather complimentary in nature. They are viewed as building on one another's strengths (which is witnessed for instance by the fact that many of the fathers have been in agreement with several of the views at the same time). This kind of a "peaceful coexistence" of the various views is not so difficult to understand in light of the fact that the Orthodox tradition assumes and even postulates that the phenomenon of the image of God is not to be fully understood and comprehended by the human mind.[30]

According to Gregory of Nyssa, since the image of God in man reflects the perfection of its Prototype it must likewise reflect the impossibility to comprehend it (God is as perfect as He is impossible to comprehend).[31] Based on this analogy Lossky concludes: "Hence, we cannot determine what the image of God in man consists of."[32] Archimandrite Cyprian echoes the same notion:

---

[25] Clement of Alexandria and John of Damascus are the chief representatives of this view.

[26] The group of theologians holding to this view is larger than the previous one and includes such fathers as John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyrill of Alexandria, John of Damascus and a few others.

[27] Among the five theologians mentioned by Cyprian is John Chrysostom, St. Diadochos, Isaac the Syrian, and John of Damascus.

[28] The champion of this particular view is John of Damascus, and some others.

[29] Among the better-known Fathers in this group is Gregory of Nyssa, Cyrill of Alexandria, John of Damascus.

[30] The notion of incomprehensibility of God in Orthodox theology is an integral part of the Orthodox apophatic theological tradition. According to Lossky "all true theology is apophatic." At the same time the Orthodox (Lossky being a more recent example) use the kataphatic language to formulate the doctrine. This seeming contradiction is integrated by viewing theology as fundamentally apophatic, while religious language and doctrinal formulations are viewed "as a ladder by which one ascends to union with God." (Verna E.F. Harison "The Relationship Between Apophatic and Katphatic Theology," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 318-332.)

[31] Vladimir Lossky *Ocherk misticheskogo bogoslovija vostochnoj cerkvi. Dogmaticheskoje bogoslovije*, (Centr SEI: Moskva, 1991), ("A Survey of the Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. Dogmatics" in Russian), 90.

[32] Ibid.

God is the unknowable deep of secrets and the abyss of unspeakable and incomprehensible. Therefore, man who is created in this divine image carries within himself the seal of the incomprehensible and its secret. Man is a mysterious cryptogram that will never be fully understood and satisfactorily read by anyone.[33]

Thus, when it comes to the Orthodox tradition, it seems that a term like "aspect" or "dimension" of *imago* is more appropriate than terms like "position" or "view" would be. It would also be feasible to speak about the aspects or dimensions of the image in light of the fact that all these views are undergirded by a strong teleological orientation, which is characteristic of the Orthodox anthropology in general.[34]

According to archimandrite Cyprian the last two views are especially noteworthy because they open up special depths in human beings and call to the development of all of our spiritual gifts, for "not only much is given to man in his Godlikeness, but even more is assigned to him."[35] This assignment according to the Orthodox tradition is no less than becoming God in a certain sense. In fact, the fourth century Church father Basil the Great has said in exactly those words: "Man was created by God as an animal with a mission to become God."[36]

Personhood and the image of God

In order to become what God has designed humans to be, we have to go through a certain process at the end of which we become personalities as opposed to

---

[33] Kiprian *Antropologia,* 385.

[34] The contemporary Eastern Orthodox theologians, following the tradition of the fathers, tend to view the image of God as something that is not complete at this stage in the redemptive history. Humans are given an assignment, a mandate of sorts, to use their creative abilities in developing the image of God (or more precisely the likeness aspect of the image) in themselves by and through progressive deification. For instance, archimandrite Kiprian in his "Anthropology of Gregory Palamas" writes the following about the teachings of Palamas: "Since the likeness of God is not something completed and given once for all, but only a potential assignment, and since this likeness mainly consists of discovering in oneself the divine eros, creativity takes on a special role in the palamite anthropology." (p. 375) We are basically pushed and urged from within to be creative since "The image of God in man, the spark of divine Eros is seeking the way out." (p. 372)

     Since Gregory of Palamas is regarded as the "chief synthesizer " of the Orthodox spirituality, the view of the dynamic and developing nature of imago Dei has more or less been accepted as normative in Orthodox theology. (P.D. Steeves "The Orthodox tradition" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* p. 807)

[35] Ibid. 355.

[36] Quoted in Vladimir Lossky *Ocherk misticheskogo bogoslovija vostochnoj cerkvi. Dogmaticheskoje bogoslovije,* 243.

individualities that we are by default, unless we work hard to become personalities.[37]
Lossky, anchored in the theological anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa, has described
this process as follows.

According to Gregory of Nyssa, one of the main consequences of man being
created in the image of God is that man first of all is set free form the slavery to his
own immediate needs. He is no longer "a subject to the rule of nature, but he is
capable of free self-determination according to his own understanding."[38] Following
the same argument, Lossky (similar to Emil Brunner's approach discussed in the next
chapter) suggests that this constitutes the "formal"[39] image, which is the necessary
prerequisite for the process of deification. Man who is created in the image of God is
a "personality which should not be determined by its nature, but it should itself
determine the nature making it similar to its own Godly Prototype."[40] Besides, human
personality is not to be viewed as just one part of the human being; it is present in the
entire being. Hence, the image of God similar to personality is present throughout the
human being: "the likeness of God does not refer to one element of the human
constitution, but to the entire human nature as a whole."[41]

---

[37] Ibid, 91-93. Lossky based on the writings of Gregory of Nyssa makes a very important conclusion,
namely that the image of God can be equated with human nature as a whole. This image, which was
given to Adam as a person, was given in Adam (in his personality) to the whole of mankind. Each
personality in Adam's kind was fully and completely the image of God. However, nowadays the terms
personality and individuality are used interchangeably regardless of the fact that, in essence, these two
terms describe two opposites when it comes to Biblical anthropology.

When we speak about the differences between people, we usually speak of that which sets
them apart, what makes them individualities. The things that set apart individualities are the traits of
their character, but those in turn are elements belonging to the "nature at large". Hence, the person who
defines himself according to the distinctives of his natural abilities or "character" is the least personal
being. Such a person defines his "I" against the natures (characters) of other individualities, at which
point he begins to blend with the nature at large. This dynamic is common among the fallen men, and
in the Orthodox tradition it is called *autotēs, filautia.*

Personality, on the other hand, is free from its own nature and is not determined by it. Human
hypostasis can only develop if it surrenders its will, which is responsible for mixing one's personality
with nature. Voluntary surrender of one's will, one's individual freedom, is the aim of Christian
asceticism. When that is done, one can embrace the true freedom, "the freedom of personality, which
is the image of God" (p. 93), that is found in every man.

[38] Ibid, 91.

[39] Emil Brunner uses the term "formal" image of God in reference to *humanitas* in John Calvin's
theological understanding of *imago* as early as 1937, when his *Man in Revolt* was released in German.
Lossky's book was first published in 1944 in French. Even though Lossky uses the term "formal" in a
very similar way to Brunner, he makes reference neither to Brunner, nor to his writings. This is
different from Kiprian who makes a reference to Brunner in his *Antropologia Sv. Grigorija Palami,*
where he calls Brunner's *Man in Revolt* "the best recent creation of Western thought in the area of
Christian anthropology." (p. 427)

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

This profound conclusion serves at the same time as an important premise for discussing the possibility of loss of the image or some part (aspect) of it. Similar to parts of human nature and personality, nothing of the image of God in humans can be lost. Even though a couple of times Lossky uses the term "lost"[42] when referring to the likeness of God, real loss is not implied. Lossky further explains: "He [man] remains a personality even when he walks far away from God, even when he according to his nature becomes not like God. This means that the image of God in man is undestroyable."[43] Yet, it doesn't mean that the image is equally salient in all humans at all times throughout their lives. The present reality and the teleological ideal are not one and the same:

> Man was created perfect. Yet, it doesn't mean that his original state was identical with his final end, or that he was united with God from the moment of his creation. Prior to the fall Adam was neither "pure nature", nor a deified man. As we already stated, cosmology and anthropology of the Eastern Church are characteristically dynamic, and thus they exclude any kind of opposing of the terms "nature" and "grace": they penetrate one another and exist one within the other. Saint John of Damascus sees the greatest mystery in the fact that man was created with a self-perpetuating drive to deification, which draws him to unification with God.[44]

Hence, the image of God is placed, as it were, on the continuum of human deification, and the teleological end of it is full deification of man. This notion in Eastern Orthodox tradition goes as far back in history as the theological discourse of Origen, which is often used as a foundation in contemporary theology of the icons. According to Origen's *On First Principles*, Genesis 1:26 informs us that humans were created in God's image and likeness. Yet immediately the following verse "points to nothing else but this, that man received the honor of God's image in his first creation, whereas the perfection of God's likeness was reserved for him at the consummation."[45] The likeness obtained in the end is a higher perfection, which is brought about by Christ who reveals the Father and gathers the church under his own "shadow". This "shadow" is going to be fulfilled in Christ's Second Coming. Thus, as

---

[42] Lossky uses the term "lost" when talking about the image of God just a few pages later in the same book.

[43] Ibid, 95.

[44] Ibid, 96. This self-perpetuating drive that is described by John of Damascus and also recognized by Lossky and the Orthodox tradition as a whole, is virtually identical with the "openness" of Pannenberg and "self-transcendence" of Niebuhr and Rahner.

[45] Quoted in Alexander J. Sider, "Image, Likeness, and the Ethics of Memory." In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 54, no. 4 (2001), 538.

Origen writes in his treatise, through Christ the believer may progress from the earthly realities to the "heavenly realities which comprise man's destiny."[46] In this, one can see that even though Origen makes a distinction between the image and likeness, he also manages to hold both concepts together in the idea of progressive development:

> Given this, it is evident that Origen is not simply equivocating when he distinguishes our image-as-nature from likeness-as-perfection *and* holds them together in a unity that requires pedagogy in the way of Christ. For Origen it seems, ontology is ethics: Our education and training for the infinite comprise our very being. […] For Origen, Christ the image constructs us truthfully in a way that enables us to put on his likeness. So Origen does not primarily understand truth as an icon because it discloses heavenly realities, but rather because in the process of historical mediation truth forms us.[47]

At the same time, the progressive development the image of God, which is based on the human ability of self-transcendence (self-perpetuating drive to deification), or *theōsis*, does not mean that man somehow eventually dethrones God by taking God's place.

The vision of the uncreated light

Deification in the Orthodox tradition is often described in close relation to the ability to see the uncreated light. According to the Orthodox tradition, as it was developed in the writings of St. Gregory Palamas, deification, the union with God, is always accompanied by seeing the uncreated light. The uncreated light is completely different from the light in the physical world of things. According to St. Silouan the Athonite it is first and foremost the all-encompassing feeling of the Living God to which the vision of the uncreated light is added. The vision of the uncreated light cannot be attained by any means known to the ascetic practice of life; "it is exclusively the gift of God's grace." Moreover, St. Silouan equates the vision of the uncreated light to the life eternal: "The light Divine is eternal life, the Kingdom of God, the uncreated energy of Divinity."[48] Also, archimandrite Vlachos has summarized it well in the following quote:

> Through deification man is deemed worthy of seeing God. And this deification is not an abstract state, but a union of man with God. That is to say, the man

---

[46] Ibid, 539.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Archimandrit Sophrony, *Starets Siluan*. (Moskva: Sretinsky Monastyr, 2001), ("Saint Silouan" in Russian), 242.

who beholds the uncreated light sees it because he is united with God. He sees it with his inner eyes, and also with his bodily eyes, which, however, have been altered by God's action. Consequently *theoria* is union with God. And this union is knowledge of God.[49]

The teaching about the uncreated light is one of the unique contributions of St. Palamas to the Orthodox theological tradition.[50] While it is well beyond the scope of this chapter to go into an exposition of Palamas on the subject, it must be noted that in the context of this discussion, man's ability of self-transcendence is considered as a key component. Palamas describes human self-transcendence as the source of the self-transcendence of the divinized person: "By the very fact of surpassing every cognitive activity, such a person finds himself above vision and knowledge; that means he sees and acts in a way that exceeds us and is already God by grace."[51] Palamas talks about two distinct, yet closely linked forms of transcendence that are operative in *theōsis*. The first form of transcendence results from *theōsis*, enabling the human beings to transcend their natural powers. The second helps the person in the process of deification to move closer to God by understanding how God transcends all. A.N. Wiliams summarizes it this way:

> These two senses of transcending union are inherently connected. If in this union, we transcend ourselves, knowledge, sense perception and even light, it virtually follows that union can only be with the One who himself transcends all. It is because union alone entails self-transcendence through attachment to the all-transcendent that it functions most satisfactorily as a cognate for theosis.[52]

The distinct emphasis of the Orthodox tradition is on the self-transcendence as acquisition of new identity as opposed to simply going out or beyond oneself (which would be a common understanding of self-transcendence in the Western thought). Instead of "exiting" our humanity, we acquire a new identity of the One who makes us divine, and of whose nature we become partakers through *theōsis*.[53] However, according to Palamas and the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the saints who are experiencing deification are not viewed as makers of divine life (in the Western

---

[49] Archimandrite Hierotheos S. Vlachos *Orthodox psychotherapy. The science of the Fathers,* (Levadia, Greece: Birth of Theotokos Monastery, 1994), 348. Archimandrite Kiprian echoes the same thought in his *Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas* saying that for the church fathers deification "is not an idea, not a theory, not a dogma, but first and foremost it is a fact of the personal inner life". (349)
[50] Ibid.
[51] Quoted in A.N. Williams, "Light from Byzantium: The Significance of Palamas' Doctrine of Theosis," In *Pro Ecclesia*, Vol. 3, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 483-496. p. 488.
[52] Ibid, 491.
[53] Ibid.

thought that could possibly imply blurring the distinction between Creature and Creator). The deified persons always remain recipients and not agents of deification, for deification is something that God alone can grant in his grace:

> In deification then, the saints are united to the One who makes divine, not God-in-*se*; they become partakers, but not makers, of divine life. In the very act which seems, at least in Western eyes, to blur the distinction between Creature and Creator, God's uniqueness and sovereign freedom are underlined. It is God alone who grants deification; the deified creature remains always recipient and never agent. Unlike the Western mystical tradition, which reaches for Solomonic bridal imagery to express the union of God and the soul, Palamite theology must rather be described as Marian: union is a divine overshadowing in which human participation consists in reverent acceptance: "Behold the servant of the Lord; let it be unto me according to Your word" (Lk 1:38). [54]

The path leading to the seeing of uncreated light consists of three hierarchical stages, namely purification, illumination and deification.[55] According to Maximus the Confessor, and subsequently other Orthodox theologians, these three stages are described as practical philosophy (negative and positive purification), natural *theoria* (illumination of the *nous*) and mystical theology or deification.[56] One is able to go through these three stages only if one is in Christ and in Christ's church.[57] In other words, these stages describe the full cycle of the Christian life, which "begins with the

---

[54] Ibid. Here it must be noted that the 'reverent acceptance' must not be confused with passivity. According to Silouan, though man is the recipient of *theōsis*, he can by no means be passive. Referring to deification Silouan says the following: "The act of deification can't happen without the agreeing on the part of the man; otherwise, the very possibility of deification vanishes." (Archimandrite Sophrony, 245) Speaking of the Western emphasis in theology, Williams uses the term in reference to the Roman Catholic mystical tradition. The distinction between the creature and the creator is very well maintained in the Lutheran understanding of *theōsis,* as evidenced by Finnish Luther research and the writings of its two major proponents Saarinen and Mannermaa, which will be examined in the following section of this chapter.

[55] When describing the soteriological ramifications of the concept of deification in Orthodox theology, archimandrite Kiprian in his *Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas* (pp. 392-393), highlights deification as the chief identification mark of Orthodox soteriology in contrast to the Catholic and Protestant understanding of what is the essence of man's salvation. According to Kiprian, while Catholics mainly emphasize the earning of one's justification before God by the works of righteousness, and Protestants speak of salvation as catharsis of sorts which leads to man's growing in the moral likeness of Christ, the Orthodox theology accepts the previous two *views* as aspects of man's salvation simultaneously stressing deification of human nature in its fullness as the chief end of the process of salvation.

[56] Vlachos, 70-71.

[57] At this point the Orthodox theology really speaks about the confluence of God's and man's will. Archimandrite Kiprian, in his *Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas* (pp. 395-396), emphasizes that deification is not an act of mechanical nature conducted by God in His omnipotence without any regard for man's desire. Man's will counts in this process. Lossky, in his *Survey of mystical theology* also makes this point very clearly: "One will is necessary to create the image, but two wills are necessary to make the image into a likeness." (p. 244)

baptism, which is purification of the 'image', and continues through ascetic living aimed at attaining 'likeness', which is to say communion with God."[58]

The effects of sin on the image of God

If the image of God is equally present throughout every man's being, and if it is undestroyable, then two very important questions still must be answered with regards to the fall of man. In what way, if any, did the fall of man affect the image of God in humans? And, how does the effect of the fall impact the teleological dimension of the image?

When discussing the effects of sinfulness on the image of God, Lossky, following Gregory of Nyssa, says that man who has strayed away from God is like a mirror flipped around - instead of reflecting God he reflects the formless matter.[59] Such a man is viewed as living abnormally or being ill. When describing sin as a phenomenon of spiritual life, archimandrite Kiprian concludes:

> The ascetic tradition of the church fathers has always looked upon the sinner as a spiritually ill person. It is much more interested in the ill condition of the soul, than in a formal violation of the moral law; more attention was paid to curing the soul wounded by sin, than to what sanction and what punishment should befall the sinner.[60]

This sickness of sin is sometimes referred to, as the loss of God's likeness in man after the first sin was committed. Yet as is mentioned before, the loss of *demûth* is not regarded as a loss a physical part of the *imago Dei*, but rather as a loss of the ability to live a holy life[61]. Living in the fallen condition is not living in the likeness, but rather living in the image.[62]

---

[58] Vlachos, 26. In this sentence from Archimandrite Vlachos one again can see how the terms "image" and "likeness" are used in Orthodox theology. Instead of refering to two separate parts of the *imago Dei* they really refer to two stages of spiritual development in a Christian's life.

[59] Ibid., 101.

[60] Kiprian *Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas,* 405.

[61] Archimandrite Vlachos in his *Orthodox psychotherapy* explains this notion further by saying: "The sickness of the nous is also characterised by the word 'darkening'. The nous as an image of God is 'luminous'. But when it withdraws from God and loses its natural state, it is blackened, darkened." (p.134) Here again one can see that when speaking about the fall, the Orthodox anthropology does not imply a loss of some innate human quality or a part of human substance etc. What is implied really is something more like a disorientation of human life from the originally intended mode of existence (communion with God).

[62] Kiprian *Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas*, 362. This 'living in the image' is again further explained by archimandrite Vlachos in his *Orthodox psychotherapy*: "Thus, man's nous before the fall had a relationship with God, and the word expressed this experience and life with the help of the mind, that particular instrument of the body. But after the fall came the dying and death of soul. As a result, it became impossible for the whole inner world of the soul to function naturally and for all the

At this point one can notice some ambiguity in the Orthodox theology regarding the effects of the fall on the image of God. On one hand it is declared that the image is undestroyable and fully present in every human being. On the other hand it is with equal strength suggested that the ability to live this image out, so to speak, is lost through the fall. It seems that the Orthodox theology speaks of the loss of the material image in ways similar to Emile Brunner (discussed in detail in the next chapter). At the same time (similar to Wolfhart Pannenberg, whose views are discussed in the following section), the issue of the loss of image is left somewhere in the periphery of the discussion while majoring on the progressive, developing nature and teleological design of the *imago Dei.*

This may also have to do with how Eastern Orthodox tradition understands the human person. According to the patristic ontology of communion, the person is not just something that is added to being. Rather it is that which constitutes a being. It is the "constitutive element", or the "hypostasis of being."[63] Here the doctrine of trinity becomes crucial because the persons of the Holy Trinity are persons in constant communication, or in other words, persons in being. This communal ontology of Godhead becomes then "an ontological icon to show that being is perfected in the mystery of communion: each particular moving outside of itself in accord with the inmost law of its essence in order to give itself to the other and to receive the other into itself."[64] Therefore, in Orthodox anthropology personhood does not emerge from an inward journey and intrapsychic introspection; rather in Orthodox anthropology personhood is very closely linked to relationality. Hence, the Orthodox claim:

> Human personhood in order to obtain its metaphysical claim of absolute being cannot be extrapolated from the world or from experience. Only by reference to the Christian doctrine of God wherein the divine being itself is predicated

---

harmonized inner functions to go on. Man's nous was confused, hidden by the passions and overcome by impenetrable darkness. The word, not having to express the experiences of the nous, was identified with the mind. Thus the intelligence was raised above the nous and now holds sway in fallen man. In fact, this is the sickness of the word and of the intelligence. The intelligence is over nourished; it has been raised to a greater position than the nous and has captured the word. The over nourished intelligence is the source of great abnormality in the spiritual organism. Arrogance, with all the energies of egoism, which is the source of the abnormality, is raging there." (pp. 206-207) Employing Lossky's terminology, such a sick person is individuality at the most, but cannot become a personality, which is only possible through the redemptive work of Christ, and its final stage - deification of the individual Christian.

[63] John D Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church,* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 39.

[64] Wesche, 41.

by the person of the Father can we begin to indicate how the human acquires personhood in freedom *vis-à-vis* its own nature.[65]

Here Orthodoxy again clearly speaks about human self-transcendence being the key element in the process of spiritual growth and progress. The more a person seeks the kingdom of God through Christ, the further along he or she advances in the process of deification and is confirmed to the divine prototype of *imago Dei*, Christ Jesus. Again, Orthodox theology emphasizes that this process permeates the entire human being, and transforms its whole personhood. And, just to make sure there is no mistake made about a human being possibly being able to participate in the process of deification solely based on her or his being created as God's own image, and the ability of self-transcendence, Orthodox theology also sets clear boundaries for the process:

> Through incorporation into Christ the human acquires personhood in freedom from the necessity of nature. It is nothing less than the constitution of a new hypostasis received 'from above'. Identity and communion coincide as in the Holy Trinity. In more formal terms hypostatic existence and ecstatic existence are the stuff of personhood.[66]

Being incorporated in Christ, then, is the absolutely indispensable component for the human being to become the recipient of this "hypostatically" new personhood, which is essential for *theōsis*. According to Philotheos of Sinai: "Christ said that the kingdom of heaven is within us, indicating that the divinity dwells in our hearts."[67] A Christian has a mind (*nous*) of Christ (1. Cor 2:16), which "illumines the power of our *nous* with its own quality and conforms the activity of our nous to its own. That is to

---

[65] Ralph Del Colle "'Person' and 'Being' in John Zizoulas' Trinitarian Theology: Conversations With Thomas Torrance and Thomas Aquinas," In *Scottish Journal of Theology,* vol. 54, no. 1 (2001): 70-86. p. 74.

[66] Ibid. 75. The terms "hypostatic" and "ecstatic" existence are in this context borrowed from the theology of Greek Metropolitan and theologian John Zizoulas. Yet, the homogeneity of the Orthodox tradition permits use of terminology and the argument of Zizoulas as a representative example of how the Orthodox tradition views personhood in the context of *theōsis*. Still, both terms as well as the argument itself deserve further explanation. Del Colle has summarized Zizoulas' thought as follows: "Zizoulas' definition of person as a hypostatic and ecstatic, applicable to the divine and the human, requires his particular Trinitarian construction and the redemption that is the measure of humanity's need. Necessity in lieu of freedom and the tendency to subvert personhood by individualism characterize the latter's existential state. Redemption enacted as an ecclesial and Eucharistic mode of being enables the human beyond mere biological existence. The communion-event signifies the ecstatic dimension of personhood. Likewise, the affirmation of identity and particularity coincident with true catholicity of being underscores hypostatic existence raised into the absolute freedom of Trinitarian life. This would not be the case unless the divine communion itself is coincident with the freedom and ecstasy of the divine persons. Relationality is not a byproduct of being but is being." (p. 75)

[67] Quoted in Vlachos, 168.

say, the power of our *nous*, without being lost, is illumined by the energy of Christ."[68]
Such is the anatomy of the process of deification.

Evidently, this teleological development is mostly concerned with the end
result, which is the complete deification of man at the end of the redemptive process.
Hence, it comes as no surprise that Orthodox theology is not focused on defining the
specific things that the man's *imago Dei* lost as a result of the fall. The most
important thing is not what man lost, but what man can gain by fulfilling his God-
ordained destiny and becoming fully deified, able to see the uncreated light, and
remain in God's presence for all eternity as God's intimate friend.

Pannenberg's theological position

German Lutheran theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg (born in 1928) has
developed a unique concept of the image of God in man. It is interesting that in his
first anthropological book entitled "What is Man?" written in 1962 (English
translation 1970), Pannenberg describes humanity from both Biblical and
Anthropological positions, yet the term 'image of God' appears in the book only once.
In his latter fundamental volume devoted to the subject of anthropology
"Anthropology in Theological perspective" (English translation 1985), Pannenberg
makes reference to the concepts developed in the previous book several times,
especially in context of the discussion of image of God.[69]
Since Pannenberg himself later builds on the ideas advanced in "What is Man?" it
would be suitable to summarize the concept of human beings formulated by
Pannenberg in 1962.

In the opening pages of his book, Pannenberg makes an observation that the
traditional, or as he calls it, metaphysical, understanding of human beings as
microcosms which are understood in terms of this world and are destined to duplicate
its structure in their existence, are no longer acceptable to the people of modern age.
The modern man wants to rule the world, for the world "is no longer a home for man:
it is only the material for his transforming activity."[70] Hence, the man of today can no

---

[68] Ibid, 168 - 169.
[69] Such references in "Anthropology in Theological Perspective" (Philadelphia: The Westminster
Press, 1985) are made several times. The first time such a reference is made on p. 23, Pannenberg
writes in the footnote refering back to the ideas formulated in the 1962 book: "... at that time I did not
so consistently correlate the findings of the discipline of anthropology from the standpoint of the
concept of the human being."
[70] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What is Man*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 2.

longer anchor his identity in this world; the question about man's identity is turned back on the man himself. Man is only capable to deal with this question because he is a being fundamentally set apart from the rest of the animal world by a uniquely and exclusively human attribute called the *openness to the world*.[71]

Like animals, man is in many ways dependent on his environment, yet unlike animals man cannot find ultimate satisfaction in this present world. Mans destiny, or as Arnold Gehlen has called it in his book *Der Mensch* – "the indefinite obligation," presses man beyond this world, constantly out into the open.[72] This indefinite obligation or ceaseless drive presupposes man's dependence, which unlike the dependence animals experience, goes beyond the physical surroundings of this world:

> While the needs of animals are limited to their environment, man's needs know no boundary. Man is dependent not just on particular conditions of his surroundings but beyond that, on something that escapes him as often as he reaches for fulfillment. Man's chronic need, his infinite dependence, presupposes something outside himself that is beyond every experience of the world. [...] In his infinite dependence he presupposes with every breath he takes a corresponding, infinite, never ending, otherworldly being before whom he stands, even if he does not know what to call it. [...] Man's infinite dependence on an unknown being before whom he stands has turned out to be the core of the somewhat vague expression "open to the world."[73]

Yet as strong as the openness in man is, according to Pannenbeg, there is another force within man potentially as strong, which is at odds with openness, namely, self-centeredness. The tension between these two poles can not be successfully resolved by man himself, since any progress man would make toward successful resolution of this conflict would play into the hands of man's self-centeredness. Therefore, the unity that ties both opposite forces "together into a meaningful whole can have its basis only outside the ego. Man would really have to have his center outside himself in order to be able to overcome that conflict."[74] This leads man back to the realization that it is impossible to base a successful solution to this conflict in oneself. The solution can only be grounded in God who "by warranting the unity of the world as the creator [...] also warrants salvation, that is, the wholeness

---

[71] Ibid. 3.
[72] Ibid. 8 - 9.
[73] Ibid. 10-11.
[74] Ibid. 59-60.

of our existence in the world, which surmounts the conflict between selfhood and openness to the world."[75]

The openness to the world, which is the cornerstone on which Pannenberg builds his answer to the question formulated in the title of the book "What is man?" leads Pannenberg to two other aspects of humanity which both in turn are related to the Image of God, namely relationships and dominion over the world. With regards to the relational aspect of humanity, Pannenberg sees man as a fundamentally relational being. Hence, his provisional definition of the Image in which Pannenberg emphasizes man's relationship to God as the necessary prerequisite for proper forms of dominion over the world:

> Man pushes beyond everything he meets in the world, and he is not completely and finally satisfied by anything. However, would that not mean an ascetic turning away from the world rather than openness for it? One might easily think so. The fact is, however, man's community with God directs him back into the world. In any case that is the thought involved in the biblical idea about man as the image of God. Man's destiny for God manifests itself in his dominion over the world as the representative of God's dominion over the world.[76]

The Image of God in man is also the guarantee of man's participation in God's "eternal present", or simply put eternal life.

> Man's destiny for dominion over the world as the representative of its Creator also includes the destiny to participate in eternity, for the scope of dominion, as we have seen, is always tied to the scope of what is experienced at present.[77]

Hence, if man has not been faithful to his destiny and the divine calling to be open to life, he becomes an eternally agonizing "shipwreck on eternity" and consequently is excluded from participation in God and his own destiny as a harmonious whole.[78] Yet it must be said that in Pannenberg's thought, man is not left alone with his choice, for God continually works in every person's life to bring the individual closer to Himself, and hence, to salvation: "The sequence of events by which God leads us out beyond our ego constitutes the richness of our life and shapes our life history - the red thread that, in the life of every man, leads to his eternal

---

[75] Ibid., 62.
[76] Ibid., 14.
[77] Ibid., 76.
[78] Ibid., 78 - 79.

destiny."[79] It is interesting to note here that Pannenberg speaks of "life history" here as opposed to just "life". It seems that such usage of the word reflects Pannenberg's emphasis on historicity of revelation and reason as opposed to the so-called Barth-Bultmann tradition.[80] This, in turn, is another evidence of centrality of Hegelian emphasis on universal history as the self-disclosure of God in Pannenberg's theology[81], which in this case would include the individual redemptive history of a particular person as well.

As interesting as "What is Man?" may seem to the reader, Pannenberg's major work with regards to the concept of *imago Dei* is his "Anthropology in Theological Perspective," published first in English translation in 1985. In the opening chapter of this impressive volume, Pannenberg gives three reasons as to why the question "What is Man?", or in other words anthropological issues, has come to the forefront of modern theological thought.[82]

First, it is the ever-growing anthropocentrism or concentrating on anthropology via subjective human experience when dealing with the theological or philosophical idea of God. Second, the anthropological emphasis is due to the fact that Christian theology from the very first days of Church history has been formulated as a response to the individual soteriological quest of man. Thirdly, it has to do with the privatization or segmentation of religion in the modern society, which has been characteristic to recent social history:

> This explains how anthropology, or in any case the discussion of anthropological themes, became so fundamentally important to the public life of the modern age. For just as the Christian religion had been the basis for the spiritual unity of society in the days before the internal division of Christianity and the horrors of the confessional wars, so from the seventeenth century on, a shared conception of the human person, human values, and human rights became the basis for human coexistence.[83]

Hence, the starting point for Pannenberg in a relevant theological discussion is clearly anthropology and nothing else:

> The considerations thus far offered show that in the modern age anthropology has become not only in fact but also with objective neccessity the terrain on

---

[79] Ibid., 66.

[80] B.J.A. Cook "Wolfhart Pannenberg" in *New Dictionary of Theology,* eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, England: Inter Varsity Press, 1988), 487.

[81] Don H. Olive, *Wolfhart Pannenberg,* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1973), 27-28.

[82] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective,* (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1985) , 11 - 13.

[83] Ibid., 15.

which theologians must base their claim of universal validity for what they say.[84]

Having established the significance of Anthropology for theological dialogue with other sciences, Pannenberg moves on to say that in the realm of theological anthropology, besides other questions and themes, two really surface as significant and important even beyond the strictly theological discussion, namely the issues of *imago Dei* and sin.[85] In essence, these two issues are two sides of the same coin because when we speak of the image of God, we speak about the closeness of God and human beings, whereas when speaking about the issue of sin we usually imply distance or separation between God and man. The tension that exists between these two themes permeates the whole human existence and spills over into virtually every aspect of life. Hence, Pannenberg contends that although this theological tension has a specifically Judeo - Christian bent, it may be to the benefit of the larger anthropological discussion to take into consideration the uniquely Biblical contribution to this discussion, because "it may shed a special light on the empirically derived anthropological phenomena."[86]

Having established the significance of the *Imago Dei* for both theology and non-theological anthropology, Pannenberg moves further to discuss various aspects of *Imago Dei* as they would relate to the definition of the phenomenon. As one of the cornerstones, Pannenberg takes his concept of the human openness discussed earlier

---

[84] Ibid. 16.

[85] Pannenberg interprets sin not only as man's separation from God but also as a deep internal conflict within man, which is tied to man's destiny to attain his real identity, the fully developed image of God: "To speak of the image of God in human beings is to speak of their closeness to the divine reality, a closeness that also determines their position in the world of nature. To speak of sin, on the other hand, is to speak of the factual separation from God of human beings whose true destiny nonetheless is union with God; sin is therefore to be thematized as a contradiction of human beings with themselves, an interior conflict in the human person." (p.20) This kind of conflict ensues when human beings fail to live according to the "openness to the world" principle, or exocentrically. When that happens, humans cease to be fully present to others and consequently to themselves, for the "structure of the ego is determined by exocentricity, insofar as human beings can be present to themselves only by being present to what is other than themselves. But to the extent that even when present to others the ego is, in the final analysis, present to itself and not truly present to others, it shuts itself up in a quasi - animal centrality." (p.109) For animals who lack self-reflection, living according to the principle of centrality (i.e. being directed in their immediate environment from an inner center) does not constitute tragedy, while for human beings such shutting up of ego results in inability to relate to other as other, but only to the projection of itself in the other. This tragic dynamic applies to both other human beings and God alike. Man who is shut up in his own ego, speaking in the words of Paul Tillich, is on the way to "self-destruction" because his life is a life of sin. Pannenberg seems to agree with Tillich, who in his "Systematic theology" writes that sin in man's life basically is "estrangement from God in the center of his being." Therefore, a man who lives in sin has put himself outside of "the divine center to which his own center essentially belongs", and has become "the center of himself and of his world". (p. 141)

[86] Ibid. 21.

and traces it as far back as the second half of the 18th century where it first appears in the works of German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder.

Herder views the *imago Dei* as a primarily, but not exclusively, evolving or teleological phenomenon. At least three things can be said about Herder's concept of *imago*. First, *imago Dei's* function is to give direction to human life (somewhat like an instinct gives direction to animal life). Second, the image of God is impressed on human mind as both a teleological concept and a standard for human behavior, and thirdly, that we are only becoming men as we educate ourselves on a daily basis through learning, tradition, reason, experience, and divine providence. In his "Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man" Herder sums this thesis up in the following sentence:

> No, benevolent God, thou didst not leave thy creature to murderous chance. To the brute thou givest instinct; and on the mind of man thou didst impress thy image, religion and humanity: the outline of the statues lies there, deep in the block; but it can not hew out, it cannot fashion itself. Tradition and earning, reason and experience, must do this; and thou hast supplied sufficient means.[87]

Both of these concepts, the fundamental openness of humanity and the teleological *imago Dei* as the map of personal spiritual evolution for humans are indispensable to Panneberg's understanding of the Image of God. Although it is not explicitly stated in the "Anthropology", it seems quite obvious from the development of the discussion that Pannenberg, along with Herder, departs from the two main historical schools of interpretation of *imago Dei*, namely the Reformed conception which saw *imago Dei* as a primarily relational phenomenon and the medieval Catholic conception which contended that *imago Dei* is basically a presupposition to the person's relationship to God. "Herder departs from them (the two traditions) because he does not share the teaching on the original state that is common to them and is so difficult to reconcile with a modern evolutionary view of the human species and its appearance in the history of life."[88] Herder does it because in his thought, the idea of

---

[87] Ibid. 44-46. Quote used from J.G. Herder "Outlines of a philosophy of the History of Man", Transl. T. Churchill (London, 1800, New York, 1966)

[88] Ibid. 50. Such a disagreement on Herder's part with the Catholic and Reformed theological positions is not very surprising in light of his theologically liberal orientation. Latvian philosopher Pēteris Zeile, in his foreword to Herder's anthology in Latvian, writes that Herder "views the Bible not as God's inspired and anointed word, but rather as a significant monument of ancient literature, which reflects the religious views of the ancient peoples." (Johans Gotfrīds Herders *Darbu izlase,* (Rīga: Avots, 1995), 35.) Although Herder is ordained as an adjunct pastor in two Lutheran churches while living in Riga, in his writings he approaches the Biblical data not from theological perspective, but rather from

the image of God "is not mediated through a description of the initial human biological situation, but, like the idea of providence, is introduced into the anthropological data from outside."[89]

Asking the "decisive question" of whether the image of God is to be regarded as having been realized in the beginning of human race and then subsequently lost through falling into sin, Pannenberg sides with such theologians as Paul Althaus, Helmut Thielicke, Karl Barth and others saying that the very being of humans is constituted by "divine creative intention" which can not be lost in principle.[90] Thus, by concluding that nothing has really been lost, Pannenberg at the same time avoids to his mind, the very difficult discussion of the original state of man's union with God. It is difficult because if we say that something of the *imago Dei* has been lost through the fall, it brings up another difficulty, namely the need to defend the idea that this original state of humankind is at the same time the historical beginning of the human race. And such idea according to Pannenberg is neither very significant for theological purposes, nor defensible in light of the historical and scientific discoveries. The idea that once there was a time when all currently valid orders and relations were established belongs to the realm of mythical thinking (that kind of thinking is evidenced by the Yahvist's story of the original paradisal state of the first humans). This, according to Pannenberg, is not in line with both the process of biblical tradition, as well as historical experience of human beings.[91]

If there is nothing that has been lost initially, then there is nothing to be re-gained with regards to anthropology. Therefore, when speaking about the quest of

---

culturally anthropological and sociological perspectives. During his pastorate in Latvia Herder is accused by older colleagues of using too much "philosophical imagination" in his sermons. (Zeile, 13 - 14.)

[89] Ibid. 66.

[90] Ibid. 59-60.

[91] Ibid, 57 - 58. The obvious difficulty that Pannenberg has with reconciling findings of history with the idea of the paradisal original state of human beings contained in the Scripture, has to do with his Hegelian background and the notion that history *is* the revelation. Don H. Olive in his "Wolfhart Pannenberg" writes the following: "Pannenberg's adaptation of Hegel's view of universal history as the self-disclosure of God is so central to his thought and so decisive for his position that he is often accused of merely restating Hegel." (p. 27) Regarding the theological objectives of Pannenberg and his circle of like-minded theologians, Olive writes: "The central motif of the circle set it apart from other prominent schools of theology. The statement that history is the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology presupposes a need for critical historical study of Scripture in a way that neoorthodoxy has never affirmed. The Bible must be totally immersed in the stuff of history. On the other hand, the circle's motif assumes an involvement of Christian theology with the disciplines common to man's life to a degree that that the existential theology of the Bulltmannians has not attained. Theology must not be allowed to retreat into subjective realm where it is separated from the vigorous providence of intellectual activity. It must remain in the world of man's history." (p.29)

humanity, Pannenberg basically talks about evolution and progress (or the lack of it). Theologically speaking it means that the *imago Dei* as a primarily teleological phenomenon is really about "the human destination to communion with God."[92] At this point Pannenberg's definition of human destination comes very close to the Eastern Orthodox understanding of *theōsis*. Central in this discussion is the biblical linking of the image of God with human rule over the earth, which in turn is tied to the idea of human openness to the world.

> Only because in their exocentric self-transcendence they reach beyond the immediately given to the broadest possible horizon of meaning that embraces all finite things - only because of this is it possible for them to grasp an individual object in its determinateness that distinguishes it from other objects. [...] Precisely because human beings reach beyond the given, and therefore ultimately because human exocentricity is characterized by an impulse, inconceivable except in religious terms, to the unconditioned do they have the ability to rule over the objects of their natural world.[93]

Thus, Pannenberg views people as intrinsically religious and self-transcendent by design, having the innate potential to develop into a full-blown image of God, aided throughout their life-cycle by the "red thread" that leads to man's eternal destiny. This eternal destiny, or salvation, is in Herder's words the progressive completion of the divine image in man, which according to Pauline theology and early church tradition, first systematically developed by Irenaeus, is the second Adam - Jesus Christ. According to this tradition the incomplete image of God into which all humans are created is the prototype of Christ, which can be brought to full completion in humans only by the visible appearance of this prototype, namely the incarnation and the communion with God that the incarnation makes possible and brings about.[94] To this position also in principle embraced by Pannenberg himself, he adds another very important aspect, namely the corporate aspect of *imago Dei*, or as he calls it, societal structure. The corporate aspect of imago follows from the corporate aspect of the church, the body of Christ on earth, and is closely tied to the concept of man's as God's representative's rule over the rest of creation in a loving and responsible manner:

> The destiny of human beings to be images of God would then be fulfilled in the reconciliation of the world through the coming of the Messiah. In the New Testament, Christ is described, is he not, as the realized image of God

---

[92] Ibid. 74.
[93] Ibid. 76.
[94] Ibid. 498 - 501.

(2 Cor 4:4)? He is such not for himself alone but as head of his body, the church (Col 1:15,18), in which the community of a human race that is renewed and united under the reign of God already makes its appearance in signs. To that extent the image of God in human beings, when viewed from a standpoint of its realization in Jesus Christ, has in fact a "societal structure".[95]

The life of the church, or the Eucharistic community as Pannenberg calls it, is "anticipatory participation in the final destiny of human beings through a sharing in the spirit"[96]. This final destiny is eternal life of redeemed human beings as completed images of God immersed into communion with God by the divine spirit.

At this point Pannenberg's position comes very close to and significantly overlaps with the Orthodox doctrine of human deification or theosis discussed in detail in the following section. Is this position something that is unique only to Panneberg among Protestant theologians? As it turns out, traces of the idea of theosis as the ultimate human *telos* are found elsewhere in Protestant theology.

The phenomenon of theosis in Protestant theology

According to my experience both in Europe and America, it is commonly believed in Protestant circles (professional theologians included) that the concept and doctrine of *theōsis* is a somewhat "strange" belief that belongs to the realm of mystical Eastern Orthodox theology. That is, when the term is even recognized by the protestant person. Contrary to this misconception recent theological scholarship has found allusions to the concept of deification in the works of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, C.S. Lewis, and even the eminent Baptist scholar of the 19th and 20th century Augustus H. Strong, as well as the early Anglicanism and early Methodism.[97] Strong presence of the idea of *theōsis* can also be found in theological beliefs of the Radical Reformers, the Anabaptists.[98]

In order to accurately discuss the phenomenon of *theōsis*, it first must be carefully defined. Put in a very simple language, *theōsis* is commonly understood as a process by which the saved believer is made a "god". It is the final stage of the process of salvation at which the person is like God in certain respects. However, it

---

[95] Ibid. 531.
[96] Ibid. 532.
[97] Carl Mosser "The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification." In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2002): 36-57.
[98] Norris, Frederick W. "Deification: Consensual and Cogent," In *Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 49, no. 4 (1996): 411-428. p. 421.

must be kept in mind that in the ancient world (especially the Greco-Roman world) the word "god" was used much more loosely than it is in today's Western cultures. The same is true also of the patristic theologians who lived and wrote in the Greco-Roman world. According to Carl Mosser:

> The patristic writers did not intend to teach that believers become the sort of being that the one true God is. Rather, their view was that believers, through union with the one true God, come to possess certain attributes that are natural only to deity, not humanity. Primary among these are immortality and incorruptibility. There are, however, limits. Creatures can never become the kind of being the uncreated Creator is, no matter how many divine qualities they are allowed to partake of.[99]

Considering the above quote, a more careful definition of *theōsis* has been used in the Finnish Lutheran and Russian Orthodox dialogue on deification: deification is "participation in divine life."[100] Such definition of *theōsis* has eventually led the participants of the Finnish-Russian dialogue to find a common ground with regard to the relationship between justification and deification. It has been agreed upon by both parties involved in this dialogue that convergence of justification and deification may be anchored in the theology of love and the idea of participation in the divine life: "The relation between one's extending love and growing in Christ […] is therefore not a simple casual link but a parallel and mutual development."[101]

Such similar understanding of *theōsis* could serve as one explanation why the theologians and theological schools mentioned at the beginning of this section have to varying degree embraced and accepted the idea of the deification of human beings. However, a number of scholars, as well as a number of denominational bodies throughout the world, have sometimes received such conclusions as brave and a bit speculative.[102] This might be one of the probable reasons why Wolfhart Pannenberg,

---

[99] Mosser, 37.

[100] Risto Saarinen "Salvation in the Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue. A Comparative Perspective," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 202-213. p. 203.

[101] Ibid. 206.

[102] As pointed out by Saarinen, as late as the last decade of the 20th century official representatives of such denominational bodies as German Lutheran church and the Church of Greece have not been willing to concede to the position proposed by the Finnish-Russian dialogue. Saarinen even mentions an example from the 9th Finnish-Russian conversations in 1992 where the term *deification* had to be omitted when the ideas of the conversations were presented to the German Lutherans. The very idea of deification at that time was considered incomprehensible to some German Lutheran scholars (Saarinen, 205). Even among the scholars researching the presence of *theōsis* in the works of reformers there are traces of mutual skepticism. For instance, Mosser believes that the Finnish theologians, participants of the Luther research have overstated the presence of the idea of deification in Luther's writings (Mosser, 55).

while speaking about the progress and growth of the believer avoids explicit discussion of *theōsis* in his *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*.

Not all Lutherans, however, have been equally as cautious as evidenced by the pioneering research on the presence of *theōsis* in Luther's theology by Tuomo Mannermaa, the leading figure in Finnish Luther research. While recognizing that to suggest *theōsis* as the formulation of an inner structure of Luther's theology is "extreme", Mannermaa nevertheless observes that the terms *deificatio* and *Vergöttlichung* appear in Luther's theological writings more often than the term *theologia crucis*.[103] Moreover, Mannermaa argues that Luther's understanding of *theōsis* is very similar to that of Athanasius and Irenaeus, which is witnessed by Luther's usage of patristic terminology when discussing deification as a union of logos and flesh. Luther also mirrors patristic teaching in describing how this union actually manifests itself. For instance in his Christmas sermon of 1514, Luther says the following: "God becomes man so that man may become God. […] The logos puts on our form and manner, our image and likeness, so that it may clothe us with its image, its manner, and its likeness."[104] Luther is clear, however, in emphasizing that this union by no means implies change in substance. Man still remains substantially man, and God still remains substantially God.

In order to more clearly elucidate *theōsis*, Mannermaa adopts what he calls "theology of love" or theology of "Golden Rule", which structurally is observable in relationship between faith and love of neighbor in Luther's theology. The main idea in this approach is putting oneself unselfishly in the situation of the other. God has put himself in the person of Jesus Christ in the miserable situation of man in order to save man. Christ takes upon himself man's sin as if it was his own and gives man his (Christ's) righteousness as if it was man's own. In and through faith this can happen to every man. Also, in faith man experiences the real presence of Christ in his life. He then begins to love God and his neighbor according to the Golden Rule. He does to his neighbor as Christ has done to himself, and as he wants to be done unto if he were in a similar situation. However, being a fallen sinner he realizes his weakness and acknowledges that the good he does to his neighbor rests on Christ's love to him, not on his own goodness. If this is done in faith, then faith means participation in being

---

[103] Tuomo Mannermaa "Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research," In *Pro Ecclesia,* vol. 4, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 37-48. p. 37.
[104] Quoted in Mannermaa, p. 43.

and/or in the qualities of God. And, one of these qualities is love, because "Christ is in his essence God and God is love."[105] This love then is what transforms the believer.

This argument rests on the assumption that Luther himself, unlike subsequent Lutheranism, does not differentiate between the person and the work of Christ. For Luther "Christ himself, both his person and his work, is the righteousness of man before God."[106] Mannermaa concludes that according to Luther, God is essentially present in faith, and "the quality of God is the same as the essence of God."[107] Thus, the "divine" nature of the believer is nothing less than Christ himself, and through Christ believers "in a real sense become similar to God, *conformis deo.*"[108]

If rediscovering *theōsis* in Luther is hard, yet seemingly acceptable since Luther sometimes has been regarded as a mystic, then John Calvin and subsequent Reformed tradition would seem to be quite removed from anything resembling deification. However, recent scholarship has suggested that John Calvin has been quite comfortable with the patristic idea of deification. According to Mosser, the evidence is even quite conclusive.

While with regards to *theōsis*, Calvin in his writings has chosen a language far less bold than the patristic theologians, that according to Mosser was most likely done to avoid possible misunderstandings since the pagan and heretical notions of people becoming gods were still quite popular in some circles in Calvin's day.[109] Another reason Mosser mentions is that the very issue of *theōsis* was never in the center of Calvin's debates with his opponents. It is rather in the background of the discussion as something that is assumed virtually every step of the way: "The pervasive but largely presuppositional presence of deification in Calvin's theology is best explained by

---

[105] Ibid. 47.
[106] Ibid. 46.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid. 48. This thought itself is not as new as it may seem at first. There have been Luther interpreters earlier who have written on this subject in the writings of Luther. Perhaps the innovative element in the research by Mannerna is that it places major emphasis on finding *theōsis* as a separate category in Luther's theology, while others have not set that as a particular goal of their research. For instance Bengt R. Hoffman has made the following conclusion about man partaking in God's nature in Luther's theology: "When God saves he saves that which is a part of him in fundamental structure. Yet, this is important common ground with respect to to salvation. Against this background we can speak of mystical unity between the savior and the saved, once the rebirth has taken place. Man is then worthy of becoming 'part of the divine nature.' God's 'being becomes our being.'" (Bengt R. Hoffman *Luther and the Mystics,* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976) p. 148). This is essentially the same conclusion that Mannermaa has come to in his research. The only readily observable difference is that Hoffman is not operating with the term *theōsis*.
[109] Mosser, 53.

patristic influence on his biblical exegesis at a level deeper than what can be detected by merely counting and classifying patristic quotations."[110]

With regards to the image of God in human beings, Calvin believes that humans being created in God's image are reflecting God's glory (Institutes 1.15.4.), and by virtue of this creation are in some sense participating in God (Institutes 2.2.1.). As a result of the fall the Image of God has become deformed, and is blotted out by sin. Hence, our happiness lies in this image being "restored and reformed" in us. Christ Jesus, as God's eternal word, shares his human nature with us, and in this nature there are imprints (*effigies*) of the Father's glory engraved. That provides the basis as it were for Christ to transform the believing humans toward this glory, which is impressed on the believer by the very likeness of Christ. Mosser has summarized it this way: "The goal of salvation, in other words, is for believers to have the image and likeness of God restored in them as fully as it is in Christ and thus to participate in God and reflect his glory."[111] This is a very similar understanding to the one discovered in the writings of Luther by the Finnish Luther research.

After this very brief survey of Protestant views on *theōsis*, a question might be asked how does this phenomenon, and even doctrine in some ecclesiastical bodies, relate to the human capacity for self-transcendence, and thus to this thesis. The connection no doubt exists, and it is quite obvious. Deification, if considered in the patristic-orthodox sense is the highest level of human spiritual evolution, which is made possible by the capacity for self-transcendence. Deification is also the process by which beings that are God's image bearers by design develop their God image to its fullness. Deification is God's answer in Christ to the human self-transcendent yearnings. F.W. Norris has captured this well, emphasizing the importance of Christian symbols (images) as they relate to the issue of *theōsis*:

> We need all these images. But particularly within a world which yearns for spirituality, which in Europe and North America looks to crystals, signs, horoscopes and generic angels for some sense of divine presence and purpose, which finds in eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism both insight and

---

[110] Ibid. 56.

[111] Ibid. 42. Since the purpose of this particular fragment of this thesis is not to discuss in great detail Calvin's theological anthropology, but to simply make a note of the discoveries of contemporary scholars about the presence of *theōsis* in Calvin's works, I have relied on Mosser both for citations from Calvin's works, as well as his expertise in interpreting those citations. In doing so I am fully aware of the fact that there are respected contemporary scholars who would differ from Mosser's position on Calvin and deification. For instance, professor F.W. Norris believes that Calvin has avoided teaching of deification, or has "not known it." (Frederick W. Norris "Deification: Consensual and Cogent," In *Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 49, no. 4 (1996): 411-428. p. 420).

power, Christians ought to speak of deification. Conforming to the world is not our goal. Yet by allowing our minds to be transformed, we may be prepared to contextualize the Gospel for this new wave of spirituality. […] *Koinōnia,* fellowship with God, is actually deification, participation in God.[112]

With this in mind several conclusions can be made about *theōsis* as the God-ordained human *telos*, which is inextricably bound to the doctrine of *imago Dei*.

Conclusion

Both theological perspectives outlined in this chapter have much in common, namely a very strongly teleological approach to the issue of the *imago Dei*. Even though one of these approaches traces its roots back to the very first beginnings of the Christian church, while the other is primarily concerned with the Western European, especially German, philosophical and theological anthropology of the 20th century, they both arrive at the same basic conclusions:

1. When discussing the *imago Dei*, it is really immaterial to focus on what, if anything was lost as a result of the fall. Much more important is the issue of what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God *today*.

2. While coming from totally different starting points, both approaches equally emphasize the centrality and paramount importance of the doctrine of *imago Dei* in theology that claims practical relevancy to an individual's everyday life. Image of God really is the "red thread" that holds together the doctrines of creation, redemption, and glorification of man, and makes them understandable, relevant, and significant to an individual who is concerned about his or her eternal destiny.

3. Image of God in man cannot be lost and has not been lost. There really is no difference whether we speak about *imago* as the "indefinite obligation" (Gehlen), "divine creative intention", fundamental "openness to the world" (Pannenberg), or as the "self-perpetuating drive to deification" (Lossky). The image of God in man as an integral part of man's design, and the reality of being a human has not been lost.

---

[112] Norris, 413. Just a few pages later Norris emphasizes again the importance of recapturing the doctrine of *theōsis* for the church as a whole, but the Protestant church in particular: "Because significant Western theologians confess this deep sense of sharing in the divine nature and others like John Calvin and Bernard of Clairvaux speak of the beatific vision and mystical union with God, deification should be viewed by protestants not as an oddity of Orthodox theology but as an ecumenical consensus, a catholic teaching of the Church, best preserved and developed by the Orthodox." (Ibid. 422)

4. The phenomenon and doctrine of *imago Dei* is of strongly teleological nature. Whether we say that the chief end of man is to "behold the uncreated light" (Vlachos), or that *imago* is "the human destination to communion with God" (Pannenberg), we are saying that the image of God is the vehicle which draws man into intimate relationship with his Creator, and that this process, while it begins here, will continue throughout eternity. The goal of this process is to help man self-transcend and to become progressively complete and whole as God initially intended it. The chief end of this process is man's full redemption and glorification (deification), so he (she) can live eternally in immediate God's presence.

5. The ability of self-transcendence in man designed in God's image is an indispensable component of human makeup, and as such it plays a key role in the process of *theōsis*. The orthodox tradition speaks about two senses of human self-transcendence: our being able to transcend our natural powers, and our being able to grow by moving closer to God by understanding how God transcends all.

In light of these conclusions it is reasonable to say that the image of God in man, along with the previously discussed aspects, definitely has a teleological aspect. A very strong component of this aspect is the God-given ability of self-transcendence, which belongs to human being's design in God's image. Likewise it follows from the above discussion that man's ability of self-transcendence is assumed to have a crucial role in the evolution of man to the fullness of *imago Dei* as intended by God.

Chapter four

THE RELATIONAL DIMENSION OF *IMAGO DEI*

When it comes to the relational aspect of *imago Dei*, it seems that most theologians, even though they have not explicitly addressed the issue, have assumed that the relationship aspect somehow pertains to the image of God, or at least to a discussion about the image of God. Yet, there is a group of theologians who put the relationship aspect at the very center of their understanding of what *imago Dei* is or should be.[1] I have chosen Emil Brunner as the representative "relationalist" and, hence, in this chapter I will more closely examine Brunner's theological position regarding *imago Dei*. I will also compare and contrast it with Karl Barth's position, which is very similar in many ways, yet different. These two great theologians are chosen here as well because both of their names are frequently mentioned in the context of the so-called "relational paradigm" in theology, and theological anthropology, which has gained increasing popularity towards the end of the 20th century. Even though the conclusions drawn in the works of various contemporary theologians are quite different from those reached by Brunner and Barth, one thing does not change: a relational component is still at the very center of what it means to be a human created in God's image. In the second part of the chapter the positions of several contemporary theologians are examined, and some conclusions are drawn about the relational aspect of the *imago Dei*.

A Swiss Reformed theologian and professor of Systematic and Practical Theology at the University of Zurich, Emil Heinrich Brunner (1889 - 1966), along with Karl Barth, is considered the founder of what came to be known as neo-orthodoxy. However, the watershed issue between the two great theologians became the issue of the natural theology in general, and natural revelation in particular,

---

[1] Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest in their *Integrative Theology. Three Volumes in One,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996) place Brunner in the group consisting of Neoorthodox and Theistic Existentialists (pp 128 - 131). Others in this group include Dietrich Bohnhoeffer, Karl Barth, John Macquairrie, Oscar Cullman and several others.

I have chosen Brunner's view as representative of this group primarily due to the significance he gives to *imago Dei* in his overall theological system. According to C.A. Baxter (C.A. Baxter "Emil Brunner"in *new Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 110) from St. John's college, Nottingham, *imago Dei* in Brunner's theology plays a significant soteriological role, for it is the Image of God which enables the fallen man in the fallen state to perceive distorted truth about God, which then is brought in focus by special revelation.

especially as they relate to the doctrine of *Imago Dei*.[2]   This notion is closely tied to and flows out of Brunner's Christology.

When describing Brunner's lasting impact in Theology, Robert Linder says that

> ... his greatest enduring impact has been in the field of Christology and in his insistence that God can be known only through personal encounter. [...] Related to his Christology was his belief that the truth about the Lord is discovered not through theorizing about his nature but through personal encounter with him, which was for Brunner a primary category of faith and theology.[3]

This position is formulated and developed in detail in the "Divine - Human Encounter" (first published in German in 1938), where Brunner takes a middle ground "between historic Calvinism and traditional Arminianism, arguing that the biblical witness shows God always to be God-approaching-man and man as always   man-coming-from-God, and their meeting point as Jesus Christ."[4]   So, God as the "original Person" has created man in his own likeness as the "derivative person"[5] for this very special relationship, which may be called the Divine - human encounter.[6]

Here one can see that Brunner singles out personality as a chief dimension of the *imago Dei*, and this personality is made in relationship and for relationship:

> That man is derivatively what God is originally is for believers in the Old Testament most important of all in this connection. God has a different relation to men from what he has to other creatures. [...] He has intercourse with man; He reveals his will to him and expects obedience and trust from him. It is not that man as he is himself bears God's likeness, but rather that man is designated for and called to a particular *relation* with God.[7]

---

[2] R.D. Linder "Brunner, Heinrich Emil" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 175 - 177. Also, R.V. Schnucker "Barth, Karl" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 126 - 127.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Emil Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter*, trans. Amandus W. Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), 127.

[6] According to J.E. Humphrey this in Brunner's theology, means that: "The Bible does not speak of God as he is in himself nor of man as he is in himself, but always of the two in relation to one another. [...] In this context truth is understood as "personal encounter". [...] God's will to lordship expresses his self-affirmation over against and in the creature, while his will to fellowship expresses his self-communication to the creature. [...] In the Bible, God is "never other than the God of man", and man is "never other than the man of God." In this context, truth, faith, and revelation are inseparable. Here, one not only *knows* the truth, but is *in* it." (J. Edward Humphrey, *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind. Emil Brunner*, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 38-39.

[7] Ibid., pp. 127-128.

The same notion is reiterated in the "Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption" where Brunner sees the relational approach to *imago Dei* as pivotal in resolving some theological contradictions pertaining to the issue of immortality of human soul:

> Almost the whole of Christian tradition in the realm of doctrine regards the immortality of the soul as the distinctive feature of man's being as created in the Image of God. Recently, on strong Biblical grounds, the correctness of this view has been contested; it is now maintained, in vigorous terms, that the idea of immortality is derived from Platonism, and is not an element in Christian thought. In this question too we see how necessary it is to interpret the *Imago Dei* as *relation* and not as *substance*, as something which is part of man's nature. Then we can resolve the contradiction, which exists where the whole doctrinal tradition seems to be opposed to the witness of the Bible.[8]

Thus, as evident from the above quotes, Brunner argues that it is necessary to replace the traditional ontological definition of *imago Dei* by a relational one.[9] The relationship in which the image of God is operational and observable is the defining human "I-Thou" relationship to God, in which all human beings stand, regardless of their beliefs. To make a distinction between people who are just responsible to God by definition of being humans made in the image of God, and the people who actually have conscious relationship with God, Brunner introduces terms "formal" and "material" image of God, which must be further explained and discussed in order to understand Brunner's concept of the Image more completely.

The formal and the material image

The starting point in Brunner's discussion about God's image in man is what he calls the "theological canon", according to which all theological statements must begin with the Word of God Incarnate, Jesus Christ.[10] Practically this means that the discussion does not begin with examination of key texts from the Old Testament to

---

[8] Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 68-69.

[9] There have been attempts in more recent scholarship to reconcile the seeming contradiction between ontology and relationships, which Brunner claims exists in the case of *imago Dei*. An example of that would be the article by Gerald Bray "The Significance of God's Image in Man," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 42, no 2 (1991): 195-225, where the author argues that the image of God is "an ontological reality in the human being", while at the same time maintaining that this ontological reality materializes and becomes observable in the realm of relationships. According to Bray, when man fell into sin, there was no ontological change in man, yet his relationship to God was fundamentally altered from obedience to disobedience. Essentially, it is the same thought that Brunner develops by using the terms "formal" and "material" image.

[10] Ibid, 52.

the New Testament. Instead, Brunner states that he does not want to be "bound by any Biblical passages taken in isolation, and certainly not by isolated sections of the Old Testament."[11] Hence, according to Brunner's "Christo-centric" method the discussion starts with the data from the New Testament and virtually all Old Testament data referring to the Image of God is interpreted through the lens of the New Testament.

God has created man for a special relationship with Himself. God does not want man to simply reflect his glory, as other creatures do. "God wills to possess man as a free being"[12], yet the human freedom about which Brunner talks, is from the outset a "responsible", therefore, a limited freedom:

> This is the heart of his being as man, and it is the "condition" on which he possesses freedom. In other words, this limited human freedom is the very purpose for which man has been created: he possesses *this* freedom in order that he may respond to God, in such a way that through his response God may glorify Himself, and give Himself to His creature.[13]

As far as this limited freedom and human responsibility to God is concerned, Brunner does not distinguish between the believing community and the rest of mankind. Every person, according to Brunner, "is, and remains, responsible, whatever his personal attitude to his Creator may be. [...] That is: the actual existence of man - of every man, not only the man who believes in Christ - consists in the positive fact that he has been *made* to respond - to God."[14] This, as Brunner calls it, "inherent law of responsibility" constitutes the formal essential structure of "human existence as such" and universally applies to every human being by definition.[15] This formal essential structure of existence is what Brunner calls the formal aspect of *Imago Dei*, or *humanum*. Elsewhere he defines *humanum* as "that which distinguishes

---

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid, 55.

[13] Ibid, 56.

[14] Ibid, 56-57.

[15] Brunner does, however, put a condition on this universal statement. He ties this principle to the quality of life. This formal essential structure or human existence as such "ceases where true human living ceases - on the borderline of imbecility or madness." (Ibid., 57) This seems to bring some tension to Brunners system of thought. Throughout his anthropological writings Brunner disavows the medieval scholastic notion that the image of God is primarily to be found in man's reason. Man's "relation to God, not his reason, is the summit of the pyramid, the highest point in the hierarchy; this is the way in which man is built, and this is how man can be understood. Reason is, so to speak, only the organ of man's relation to God, as the soul is the organ of the reason, and the material body is the organ of the soul." (Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), 102.) Hence, the relationship to God in Brunner's thought is made hierarchically dependent on man's reason, and reason is a prerequisite for "human existence as such". This thought carried to its logical consequences may again equate man's cognitive abilities with *Imago Dei*, which is exactly the notion Brunner is so vehemently opposes to.

man - whether he is a believer or an unbeliever - from the non-human creation."[16] This, according to Brunner, is how far the Old Testament goes in describing the image of God in man.

In this formal sense, the image of God or the *humanum*, which consists of freedom, reason, conscience, language, and similar things, hasn't been lost and cannot be lost in principle.[17] This formal aspect of the image is fully present in all people, and is "the starting-point for a 'natural' knowledge of God."[18]

The New Testament is building on the Old Testament anthropology in that it presupposes the fact that man is made in the image of God, yet the focus of the New Testament revelation is the "material" realization of this God-given quality.[19] The New Testament is concerned mainly with two things. First, it speaks about the answer which man should give to his creator. It is man's whole life in devout love to God in response to God imparting Himself to man in Jesus Christ. Second, it speaks about the fact that man has not given the right answer to God, and about what needs to be done to turn this false answer into the right one.[20] Brunner goes on to say that: "Here, therefore, the fact that man has been "made in the image of God" is spoken of as having been lost, and indeed as wholly, and not partially lost. Man no longer possesses this *Imago Dei* [...]."[21] The image of God is restored only thorough Jesus Christ who is the *restauratio imaginis.*[22]

---

[16] Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), 93.
[17] Ibid., 510.
[18] Ibid., 500 - 501. Here Brunner mentions two New Testament passages which speak about the Image of God in this "Old Testament" sense, namely 1 Cor 11:7 and Jas 3:9. According to Brunner, apostle Paul is indirectly alluding to this very understanding of *Imago* when he addresses the pagan audience in Acts 17:28 summoning them as witnesses to this very special relation that all people have to God.
[19] *Doctrine of Creation,* 57.
[20] Ibid., 58.
[21] Ibid. Here Brunner's approach resembles the approach taken by Irenaeus in the 2nd century. Although Brunner objects to Irenaeus' method, namely the notion that image (tselem) and likeness (demûth) meant two different parts of the *Imago Dei*, he highly commends Irenaeus' scholarship and doesn't really object to the fundamental conclusions Irenaeus reached. In his *Man in Revolt* he writes the following about Irenaeus: "The creator of the doctrine of the *Imago* which the church was henceforth to recognize as the standard one, was – as has already been indicated in the text – Irenaeus, the first great genuine theologian, and possibly the most Scriptural of all the theologians of the early Church. […] In spite of this, however, even in his thinking the spirit of Greek rationalism was at work, and precisely in his doctrine of *imago – similitudo*, which otherwise represents an important theological achievement. [...] The *Imago* means the human nature which cannot be lost; the *Similitudo* means man's original relation to God which may be lost, and, since Adam, has been lost. (pp. 504-505)
[22] Ibid.

According to Brunner the Image of God in the New Testament, or in the "material" sense of the term, is "identical with 'being-in-the-word' of God".[23]   Only by being in the word humans regain the lost image of God in the material sense. That happens when they are in Christ, because Christ is the word of God incarnate, or in other words – Christ is the true *Imago Dei*.[24]   Brunner goes on to elaborate this concept:

> True humanity is not genius but love, that love which man does not possess from or in himself but which he receives from God, who is love. True humanity does not spring from the full development of human potentialities, but it arises through the reception, the perception, and the acceptance of the love of God, and it develops and is preserved by "abiding" in communion with the God who reveals Himself as Love. Hence, separation from God, sin, is the loss of the true human quality, and the destruction of the quality of "being made in the Image of God". When the heart of man no longer reflects the love of God, but himself and the world, he no longer bears the "Image of God", which simply consists in the fact that God's love is reflected in the human heart. [25]

As it was stated before, in essence Brunner is saying that the *material* aspect of the Image of God is completely lost in a non-believer. In fact, it is lost in all people since all people live in a fallen state. It is only possible for a person who is in-Christ to receive once again "God's Primal Word of love" through which "the divine Image (*Urbild*) is reflected" in that person, and hence, the once lost *Imago Dei* is again restored.[26] Thus, the material image of God in Brunner's theology is identical with a relationship, which in turn is based on the responsibility[27] that God has endowed man with:

---

[23] Ibid. In *Man in Revolt* Brunner elaborates on this concept by saying that when the New Testament speaks about the relationship between God and man, it speaks about the need for man to imitate God (e.g. being holy even as He is holy), and about the sonship of man in relation to God. These ideas, especially in light of the original sonship of Jesus and the doctrine of *Imago Dei*, stand in the very center of the New Testament message. Thus, the relation of the human *Imago* to the primal *Imago*, Jesus Christ who is also the Word of God incarnate   is of utmost importance and relevance. It is largely by and through this idea that "the concept of the *Imago* is torn out of its Old Testament structural or morphological rigidity, and the dynamic understanding of the *Imago*, as being-in-the-word-of-God through faith, is established." (*Man in Revolt*, p. 501) It is exactly this idea, through which "the concept of the *Imago* has gained such an outstanding position in Christian doctrine, and especially in that of the theologians of the Reformation." (Ibid.)

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 58-59.

[26] Ibid., 59.

[27] Just a little bit further in the text Brunner makes a strong point that when it comes to responsibility there is no difference between a believer and a non-believer: "The fact that man misusing his freedom and denying his responsibility, turns his back on God, does not mean that he no longer stands "before God". On the contrary, he stands before God in a wrong attitude, hence he is "under the wrath of God". [...] I want to do this: to make it clear that the loss of the *Imago*, in the material sense, does not remove

The *Imago Dei*, in the sense of true humanity - not in the sense of formal or structural humanity   - is thus identical with the true attitude of man in relation to God, in accordance with God's purpose in Creation. Your attitude to God determines what you are. If your attitude towards God is "right", in harmony with the purpose of Creation, that is, if in faith you receive the love of God, then you *are* right; if your attitude to God is wrong, then *you* are wrong as a whole.[28]

And, in order to avoid any possible misunderstandings, Brunner very clearly emphasizes that "responsibility is a relation; it is not a substance."[29] Thus, he definitely and sharply draws a line between his own interpretation of the image of God, and traditional Catholic theology where the *Imago Dei* is viewed primarily in substantial terms, or employing Brunner's terminology - in a formal sense only. Also, it is interesting to note that Brunners' relational interpretation of the *Imago* includes a definite teleological component, for the final phase of the renewal of *Imago Dei* is something to look forward too as a part of the final stage of redemption of humanity:

Now, the presupposition of this new doctrine of the *Imago* - that is, the doctrine of the New Testament - in contrast to that of the Old Testament, is the following: the fact that man has been created in the Image of God has been lost, that it must be renewed in man, so that the whole work of Jesus Christ in reconciliation and redemption may be summed up in this central conception of the renewal and consummation of the Divine Image in man.[30]

---

responsibility from man; he still stands "before God", and he is still a human being. Only human beings can be sinners; to be a sinner it is not necessary to possess that quality which distinguishes man from the animals. The loss of the *Imago*, in the material sense, presupposes the *Imago* in the formal sense. To be a sinner is the negative way of being responsible. (p. 60) It seems that this is sort of a disclaimer that Brunner has to insert in the flow of text at this point, because otherwise the line of reasoning that Brunner pursues, if taken to a logical consequence, would postulate that not all people are people to the same degree. That could and probably would in turn mean that the degree of responsibility for what people do is directly dependent on how Christian and thus, how "human" they are.

Still, some tension in Brunners' theology remains with regard to the lost part of the *Imago*, and its impact on the relationship that a human being has to God. This tension mainly has to do with the fact that both the lost and the retained aspects of the *Imago* in Brunners theology are so closely linked together, that it almost seems impossible to lose one while fully retaining the other. Some of the questions addressing this tension have been formulated by Anthony A. Hoekema in his *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), where on p. 58 he writes the following: "... Brunner insists that the image of God in the formal sense has been retained despite man's sinfulness: man still remains a being who is answerable to God, even when he gives God the wrong answer. Yet, as we have seen the formal image in Brunner has content: freedom, reason, conscience, and language are included in it. Is it then correct to say that this formal image has been completely retained? Has it been retained in its full integrity? Has not sin also affected this formal image, in the sense that man's reason, conscience, and freedom have been corrupted and perverted by sin (as Calvin so strongly affirmed)?"

[28] Ibid., p. 501.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

Differences and commonalties between Brunner's and Barth's understanding of
Imago Dei

When it comes to theology, for Karl Barth "the heart of the enterprise, both methodologically and substantively, is Christology. For Barth, Christology is not simply one doctrine alongside others but the center from which all other doctrines radiate."[31]   This is very true also with regards to the Image of God, but first the question is in order: what constitutes the Image of God in Barthian theology?

In the third volume of his Church Dogmatics where Barth speaks about Biblical anthropology at length he proposes that the starting point in understanding the being of God and the being of man is Genesis 1:26 where in the creation narrative God himself says: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (NIV) The real key in this text for Barth is the plural pronoun "us" and the dynamics within Godhead it signifies. This pronoun indicates that within God there is a "differentiation and relationship between the 'I' and the 'Thou'."[32] In other words, there is a very close, intimate face-to-face relationship within Godhead.

This kind of relationship becomes the defining element in the Image of God in which God creates man. Commenting on Genesis 1:27, where the creation narrative says: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (NIV) Barth writes the following:

> Is it not astonishing that again and again expositors have ignored the definitive explanation given by the text itself, and instead of reflecting on it pursued all kinds of arbitrarily invented interpretations of the *imago Dei*? … Could anything be more obvious than to conclude from this clear indication that the image and likeness of the being created by God signifies existence in confrontation, in the juxtaposition and conjunction of man and man which is that of male and female...?[33]

A few sentences prior to these words Barth writes the following to emphasize the relational essence of *imago Dei*:

> It is expressed in a confrontation, conjunction and inter-relatedness of man as male and female which can not be defined as an existing quality or intrinsic capacity, possibly or structure of his being, but which simply occur. In this

---

[31]   J.B. Webster "Barth, Karl" in *New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 76 - 80.
[32]   Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), 192.
[33] Ibid, 195.

relationship which is absolutely given and posited there is revealed freedom and therefore the divine likeness. As God is free for man, so man is free for man; but only inasmuch as God is for him, so that the *analogia relationis* as the meaning of the divine likeness cannot be equated with an *analogia entis*.[34]

This relationship, or rather the God-given capacity and ability to enter the "I-Thou" kind of relationship, are what in essence constitute the Image of God in man. This capacity is given to man so that he or she could and would enter into the "I-Thou" kind of relationship both with God and their fellow human beings:

> Man is created by God in correspondence with this relationship and differentiation [between the I and the Thou] in god Himself: created as a Thou that can be addressed by God but also an I responsible to God; in the relationship of man and woman in which man is a Thou to his fellow and therefore himself an I in responsibility to this claim.[35]

At this point a logical question may be asked about the possible loss of the Image of God, or some aspect and/or part of it. To this Barth has given a very definite negative answer. For instance in the fourth volume of his Dogmatics he writes the following when describing the fallen state of sinner:

---

[34] Ibid. This very pronounced and categorical emphasis on the *imago Dei* being an exclusively relational phenomenon is perhaps tied to and stemming from the anti-Catholic notions in Barthian theology. For instance, in the original preface to his *Church Dogmatics* Barth writes the following: "I take the *analogia entis* to be *the* crucial invention of the antichrist and *the* crucial reason for not becoming Catholic." (Quoted in Hans Kung *Justification. The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection.* Trans. Thomas Collins, Edmund E. Tolk and David Granskou. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964. p. xxv.) As pointed out by Hoekema and a number of others even from within the Reformed camp, since a human being cannot function without a certain structure, we must conclude that, "structure and function are both involved when we think of man as the image of God." (Anthony A Hoekema *Created in God's Image.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986. p. 69.)

Also, in other traditions the argument has been made that *analogia relationis* is conditioned upon and stemming from the *analogia entis* (Barth's terminology). A case has been made by the Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas who has formulated a trinitarian communal ontology in his essay "Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church" in *Contemporary Greek Theologians # 4* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985. pp.16-17). Zizioulas, based on the teachings of the Cappadocian fathers, has argued that being means communion, and that human beings can only speak about God through the relational language of communion. This in turn, is anchored in the being of God who as three persons in one is inherently relational and dynamic, and can be viewed as a triune "person" because each member of trinity derives his personhood from the reciprocal relationships with the other two. Human personhood is bound up with relationality, but the fullness of relationality lies ultimately in relationship to the triune God.

[35] Ibid, 198. The notion of equating *Imago Dei* with the male-ness and female-ness of human beings seems untenable to Brunner who has responded to this Barthian idea in his *Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*: "It is going too far to assert that the male and female existence of humanity is identified with the *Imago Dei*. Sex polarity is indeed not the distinctive element in man, which differentiates him from all other creatures. The fact that the human pair are not simply male and female, but are husband and wife, presupposes that the twofold character of sex is not in itself the distinctive human element, but that it is one strand in this element. But there is truth in this conception, to this extent, that this sex polarity belongs not only to the nature which has been created by God, but also to the *Imago Dei*." p. 63.

'Perversion' is the term that we must use - not transformation or destruction. Even in that which he is in virtue of his folly in all its forms, he is the good creature of God. Even in his sickness he does not lack any of his members or organs. All the features, which make him a man, still remain. He has not become a devil or an animal or a plant. Even in his misery he is not half a man, but a whole man.[36]

This is a significant difference between the views of Barth and Brunner on the image of God. Even though Barth speaks about a transformation[37] that takes place in a person after his or her conversion to God and justification, it is very different from the way Brunner speaks about the renewal of the once completely lost material, part of the *Imago Dei*. Barth contends that man never ceases to be in the image of God because of sin; whenever man enters the "I – Thou" kind of relationship he images God as a communal being.[38]

In other words, it seems that Barth views the Image of God simply as a capacity to enter relationship both with God and with ones fellow human beings. This capacity does not look much different from what Brunner has defined as the formal part of the *Imago*. Since this capacity belongs to the basic human structure it can never be lost and/or altered. This leads to a certain amount of tension in Barth's understanding of *Imago*, because if something is so permanently fixed and ineradicable, a question can be asked whether it can be a subject to change, improvement, transformation etc.[39]

One of the aspects of *Imago*, which cannot be omitted and about which Barth and Brunner are in agreement, is the role of Christ Jesus in defining the true humanity. According to David Mueller: "For Barth, man can neither know that he is a sinner nor that he is created in the image of God apart from faith in Jesus Christ. Thus the person of Jesus Christ is constitutive both for determining the basic structure

---

[36] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* IV/2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), 488.

[37] Barth speaks about this transformation somewhat vaguely without going into analysis of the mechanics of it. For Barth unlike Brunner this transformation seems more like the capacity man has always had, which after justification is applied in the new context and thus is endowed with a new meaning for the justified person: "The sanctification of man, his conversion to God, is like his justification, a transformation, a new determination, which has taken place *de jure* for the world and therefore for all men. *De facto*, however, it is not known by all men, just as justification has not *de facto* been grasped and acknowledged and known, and confessed by all men, but only by those who are awakened to faith." (Ibid., 511.)

[38] David L. Mueller, *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind. Karl Barth.* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972), 119.

[39] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image.* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 51.

(ontologically) and for our knowledge of it (noetically)."[40] This is so because only in Jesus Christ the "highest communion of God with man takes place."[41] In this communion the justified man enters a very special covenent relationship with God through Christ, in which he shares his humanity with God and vice versa:

> God's deity is thus no prison in which He can exist only in and for Himself. It is rather His freedom to be in and for Himself but also with and for us, to assert but also to sacrifice Himself, to be wholly exalted but also completely humble, not only almighty but also almighty mercy, not only Lord but also servant, not only judge but also Himself the judged, not only man's eternal king but also his brother in time. […] It is when we look at Jesus Christ that we know decisively that God's deity does not exclude, but includes His *humanity*.[42]

While expressed in different words, this seems to be a very similar position to the one developed by Brunner. Perhaps it can be said that Barth and Brunner are talking about two sides of the same coin. Although Brunner does not speak about the humanity of God, he spends a great deal of time speaking about Christ as the true *Imago Dei* and even *restauratio imaginis*. Through Christ the Christ-likeness (the God-likeness) of those whose lives may be described as "being-in-the-word" is restored completely, and the relationship between God and man, and between man and man becomes radically different because of that.

The relational aspect of *imago Dei* and self-transcendence

In the works of Brunner and Barth, the word transcendence does not appear too often in a "pure" form. For instance, the glossary to Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik* gives only 10 references of the word *Transzendenz* in the entire 12 volumes.[43] The phenomenon of transcendence, however, is very present throughout the theological discourse of both, Brunner and Barth. In fact, the very fabric of their theological thinking rests on the assumption that self-transcendence is an inseparable part of the human constitution as the Image of God. I will now look more closely to Barth's theology and his usage of the term "transcendence."

---

[40] Mueller, *Makers of*, 119.
[41] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. Thomas Wieser and John Newton Thomas (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1960), 49.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Helmut Krause *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik von Karl Barth. Registerband*, (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1970), 276.

As it is stated in the previous section, for Barth, in and through the person of Jesus Christ alone one can approach the understanding of what true humanity, the *imago Dei*, is. Only through Jesus we can be justified, and only in Jesus' humanity we can truly see and comprehend what our divinely designed humanity (*imago Dei*) is:

> Therefore God can indeed (and this is His transcendence) be sufficiently beyond the creature to be his Creator out of nothing and at the same time be free enough partially or completely to transform its being or to take it from it again as first he gave it. But, if the expression may be allowed, God can do even more than this. He can (and this is His immanence) so indwell the other that, while He does not take away this life, He does not withdraw His presence from this creaturely existence which is so different from his divine life. […] God can allow this other which is so utterly distinct to from Himself to live and move and have its being within Himself. He can grant and leave it its own special being distinct from his own and yet even in this way, and therefore in its creaturely freedom, sustain, uphold and govern it by his own divine being, thus being its beginning, centre and end. [44]

This is what Garry Deddo calls the "movement of double transcendence." Despite His otherness, God transcends Himself in revealing Himself, and in making Himself known to man. At the same time, God in His grace also instigates our transcendence. He "enables us, by his Spirit, to transcend ourselves and receive a knowledge of God. God in Jesus Christ initiates and establishes a history of interaction which is a double movement which constitutes the being of humankind."[45] This notion has a very strongly teleological component, because in Christ Jesus we can become the kind of humans God has designed us to be. Therefore, in Barthian anthropology a person in Christ is a person who has taken up a task of becoming a Christ-like person. This in turn means that: "The character of humanity's being is open, not fixed. Humankind is engaged in a process of becoming what it is designated to be in Christ. […] As such there is the a continuing 'transformation' towards one's God-given *telos*."[46] Barth strongly emphasizes that God alone is a person because God is the one "who loves in Himself and in his relationship to His creation."[47] There is only one person who can do that, and it is God. Man, on the other hand, is not a person in this sense, because he is wholly other from God: "Man is not a person, but

---

[44] Karl Barth *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2. Trans. T.H.L. Parker et.al, (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1957), 313-314.

[45] Deddo, Gary "The Grammar of Barth's Theology of Personal Relations," In *The Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 47, no. 2 (1994), 213-214.

[46] Ibid, 208.

[47] Barth, C*hurch Dogmatics*, vol. 2*,* 285.

he becomes one on the basis that he is loved by God and can love God in return."[48] In Barth's theology, this idea of becoming is closely linked to the notion of God being transcendent and immanent at the same time. For Barth, the idea of God is the highest idea conceivable to man. This idea, however, serves as the background against which we can see our own limits:

> For what is the idea of the infinite, the unconditioned or the absolute but the idea of our own limits, which suggest to us both our transcendent goal and origin, but which in themselves can be understood only as our limits and therefore as the negation, the non-being of all that we are? If we interpret this our non-being as pointing to true being, if we make our limits the object of an apotheosis, we are in no sense testifying to God. On the contrary, by this abuse of the name of God, we are affirming our awareness that these limits suggest our transcendent goal and origin. We are expressing the deep appreciation and esteem we feel for this our goal and origin, and for our own ideal image, carefully purged of all imperfection, but still only postulated as far as its being (even its divine being) is concerned.[49]

In other words, we are created in the image of God who is our transcendent goal and origin. As *imago Dei* we have the capacity for self-transcendence just as our "origin" does, but it has a very strictly determined relational scope. In our vertical relationship to God we transcend our existence in and through the relationship with Jesus Christ, thus moving toward the perfected *imago Dei*.

There is a horizontal dimension to our self-transcendence as well in the Barthian thought. We are called to become in our relationships the covenant partners with God and with others, which is the *telos* of our existence. Part of this is imaging the Image of God Jesus Christ in our relations and communication with others. This needs to be done in obedience to God in our everyday lives, but "Christian obedience consists in being an image of the Image."[50] This, in Barthian terms, according to Deddo, means that the image of God in man reflects in relational sense the intra-Trinitarian life of God. This also means that on the level of human-to-human relations "we are to become the image of the Image of God, Jesus Christ. Our lives […] are to be a participation in this history of the encounter and interaction of God with humanity in Jesus Christ."[51]

Thus based on the theological anthropology of Karl Barth, it is possible to make a conclusion that the relational aspect of *imago Dei* also involves the discussion

---

[48] Ibid, 284.
[49] Ibid, 303-304.
[50] Deddo, 194.
[51] Ibid.

of the human ability of self-transcendence. While it is well beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss Karl Barth's understanding of human transcendence in detail, one can see quite clearly that Barth views the phenomenon of transcendence as something that belongs to the discussion about *imago Dei*.

The position of Brunner in terms of relationship between transcendence and *imago Dei* is very similar to that of Barth. While the term "transcendence" hardly appears in the anthropological works of Brunner, similar to Barth he affirms the openness of human character. For Brunner, "created in the image of God" is a parable, whose meaning lies beneath the surface.[52] One implication of this parable is that man, in contrast to all other forms of created life is created "unfinished", or in other words, man is created as an open being who is endowed with reason. This, in turn, makes man capable of responding to God's call:

> The characteristic imprint of man, however, only develops on the basis of the Divine determination, as an answer to a call, by means of a decision. […] Man is destined to answer God in believing, responsive love, to accept in grateful dependence his destiny to which God has called him, as his life. Thus here we are concerned not with an 'image' and a 'reflection' but with a 'word' and an 'answer'; this is the exposition which the New Testament gives of the Old Testament story of creation, the idea of the *imago Dei*. The intrinsic worth of man's being lies in the Word of God, hence his nature is: responsibility in love, from love, for love.[53]

The word "transcendence" does not appear in the above quote, yet one could rightly assume that the concept of self-transcendence is very present in the terms 'word' and 'answer'. Also, it is quite obvious that Brunner ties them inextricably to the doctrine of *Imago Dei*. This thought is elaborated further when Brunner speaks about the human being as a "citizen of two worlds." Here Brunner states that man belongs simultaneously to "two spheres of being." Man is made of body and spirit, and as a spirit he springs from God and is made for God.[54]

Brunner strongly opposes the substantial idea, according to which man is perceived as a *particula Dei*. Brunner stresses the functional aspect of the *imago* by bringing out dependence and responsibility as the key characteristics of man as an image of God. God has willed to create the man in such a way that he can share in the life of God. Man can perceive the Word of God and he can respond to it by reason

---

[52] Brunner, *Man in revolt*, 96.

[53] Ibid, 97-99.

[54] Ibid, 108. Brunner develops his argument very similar to Reinhold Niebuhr, who talks about the constant tension man experiences because he is being torn between the nature and the spirit, between the limitations and the ability to self-transcend.

and self-determining will. Precisely through this participation in the divine life, man can stand 'over against' the world and be its master according to God's will. As a creature endowed with reason "man is able to look at the world from a distance, with the detachment of an outside observer; he is able to know it, and through this knowledge he is able to master it."[55] Moreover, through the ability to spiritually transcend the world man is also able to create "something which is other than the world, namely, culture, the work of the mind and spirit."[56]

This is sufficient to demonstrate that the idea of self-transcendence is very firmly woven into the understanding of God's image as it is developed in the works of the two great theologians who have interpreted *imago Dei* in primarily relational terms. As mentioned above, the term "transcendence" hardly even appears in the anthropological discourses of Brunner and Barth. Various substitutes, such as 'openness', 'becoming', 'observing from outside', and the like are used when man's ability of going beyond himself, his earthly limitations, or man's reaching towards God are discussed. In fact, the fundamentally relational approach to the doctrine of *imago Dei* taken by both theologians makes the human ability of self-transcendence much more understandable, and much more integrated into the whole doctrine of man as the image of God.

In the following section of this chapter I will look at some more recent approaches where the authors have attempted to look at the human being as a mainly, primarily, or exclusively relational creature. Most of them also deal with a wider relational context, which in the works of Barth and Brunner appears only briefly, in passing. It is the so-called "ecological" perspective, which brings the created nature as the third player to the center of theological stage previously taken up almost exclusively by the bipolar man-God relationship.

Relational aspect of *imago Dei* and ecological perspective

Since the time of Brunner and Barth the relational approach to the image of God has been developed further, and even taken to the next level. In the writings of the two great theologians one can find occasional references to the relationship between human beings and the rest of creation taking the image of God as a starting point. Unfortunately, neither one of them develops this particular relationship aspect

---

[55] Ibid, 109.
[56] Ibid.

at greater length. In the recent decades, however, a shift has taken place in the theological thinking with regards to the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation. The relationships between humans and God, and between humans themselves are still considered just as important as they have been in the previous decades and even centuries, and somewhat viewed as a theological given to which not many new insights can be added. The relationship between humanity and the rest of creation, on the other hand, partially do to the ever increasing environmental concerns and partially do to the fact that it has not been debated as intensely in the past, seems to have become the area where the contemporary theological-anthropological thought is tested, debated, molded and formulated.

Even though theological emphasis on exercising wisdom, kindness and gentleness in caring for the rest of creation can be traced back in the church history as far as the 4th century commentary on the six days of creation by Basil the Great and the writings of Basil's contemporaries Ambrose and Chrysostom[57], since 1970-1975 the emphasis on "green" thinking in theology has increased with every passing year.[58] By the time of the Reformation, references to the need for humans to be wise and responsible stewards of God's creation already appear in some confessional documents. For instance, The Walloon or the Belgic Confession, composed by Guido de Brass in 1561, says the following in article II answering to the question by what means is God made known to us: "By the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God."[59]

During the last few decades of the 20th century the ecological dimension of theology and especially theological anthropology has been developed and advocated by a number of Christian organizations and individuals. All those activities have to various degrees contributed to the development of the so-called creation ethics, which has been developed as a God-centered approach to the environmental issues.[60]

---

[57] David N. Livingstone, Calvin B. DeWitt, Loren Wilkinson, and Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Eco-Myths." In *Christianity Today*, April 4th (1994): 22-33.
[58] Randy Frame, "Greening of the Gospel?" In *Christianity Today*, November 11th (1996): 82-84.
[59] Quoted in Livingstone et.al. 27-28.
[60] Oliver Barclay, "The Nature of Christian Morality" in *Readings in Christian Ethics, vol.1*. Eds. David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw (Grand Rapids: Baker Books: 1994): 41-49. According to Barclay the creation ethics are different from the natural law in that the natural law always begins with experience, and based on that experience attempts are made to get from there to what ought to be. In the process the "naturalistic fallacy" is usually committed (i.e. it is; therefore it ought to be). Creation

The creation ethics views all people as God's creatures that bear the imprint of His purposes regardless their differences. Therefore, "creation ethic stands against any ethical subjectivism that reduces moral beliefs to subjective feelings or attitudes devoid of objective basis."[61]

In this approach the relational aspect comes to the forefront of the anthropological debate. For instance, a number of theologians have emphasized that the relational aspect, which is so intrinsic to being a human made in God's image, is also the key to biblically sound attitude towards God's creation. For example, over a decade ago Brigitte Kahl said the following:

> If relationship is now the key notion in ecology and if our approach to nature is affected by what we believe about humankind (and vice versa), it is clear that the Genesis creation stories tell a lot about relationships between humanity and nature. The human being as the "crown" of creation is at the same time integrated into a manifold network of relationships: It is Adam-in-relation-to Adama (earth), Adam-in-relation-to-Eve, Cain-in-relation-to-Abel, Noah-in-relation-to-the-animals. This dialectical and complex human-earth-relationship of at once domination and dependence/service/responsibility can be expressed by a circle…[62]

The most interesting aspect of the manifold relationships of humanity for the present discussion is the Adam-in-relation-to Adama. "Adama" is the Hebrew word that is used for the ground or earth in the Genesis creation account. Adam's body is formed from the ground, so Adam's physical origin is earth. Adam is commanded by God to till the ground, to be the keeper of the earth (Gen 1:26-28, 2:25). Even after the fall God sends Adam away from the garden to "till the ground from which he was taken" (Gen 3:23). The Hebrew words for "to till the ground" are *abad adama*, which connotes that Adam is responsible for the earth and has to serve it (*abad*- to serve). Kahl sees in this God's care for the earth, which in this case is demonstrated by sending Adam away from the garden, towards the earth:

> Does that not indicate that Yahweh wishes to guarantee that Adam continues to serve the earth? Eating the fruit of the tree of life would make humanity independent of the fruits of earth (cf. 2:9,16) and thus negligent in serving the

---

ethics, on the other hand "start with God and his will for living in his creation. […] Natural law starts with the world and tries to work to moral imperatives. Creation ethics start with God and his revelation and, looking at the world as his creation, works toward moral imperatives that are both divine commands and also good sense…" (Ibid. 42.)

[61] A.F. Holmes, "Creation." In *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, Eds. David J. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 269.

[62] Brigitte Kahl, "Human Culture and the Integrity of Creation." In *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1987): 128-137.

earth. This service according to 2:5 is important for the human being; to refuse it would mean the loss of an important part of being human. If Adam is the master of creation he is at the same time also bound to the earth as its servant.[63]

Kahl explores the same principle also in the context of relationships between the brothers Cain and Abel. Based on the narrative of the first homicide in Genesis chapter 4, and especially on the usage of Hebrew in 4:10-12, she concludes that earth or ground (*adama*) may be viewed here as an allay of Abel, which after receiving Abel's blood instead of seeds from Cain's hand becomes a witness which reflects Cain's homicidal action and refuses to further yield its strength to the murderer. As a result of that, Cain, who is called in Genesis 4:2 the servant of the earth (*obed adama*), is no longer able to maintain harmony in his relationship to the earth. The first homicide is a dreadful example and predecessor of the current lack of harmony in the human-earth relationship:

> If the human being is part and head of the ecosystem, the ecosystem is also part of the sociosystem. The interhuman and the human-earth relationships are closely linked. Justice and peace have an ecological dimension and are the main condition for preserving the integrity of creation.[64]

This in turn has profound implications for what Ronald Preston calls the category of the personal.[65] Most of 20th century theology and philosophy of religion have concentrated on the significance of the personal. This emphasis has led to several important theological and anthropological conclusions and shaped some key theological documents of the 20th century.[66] The first conclusion is that "persons are constituted by the mutuality of their relationships; the independent individual, the isolated self is an illusion, a non-entity."[67] The second conclusion based on this so-

---

[63] Ibid. 130.

[64] Ibid. 135.

[65] Ronald Preston "Humanity, Nature and the Integrity of Creation." In *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol.41, No. 4 (1989): 552-563.

[66] Ibid. 559. As an example of this the author mentions the document of the Second Vatican Council on the Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes.

[67] Ibid. 559. There are voices in the modern theology that are very strongly opposed to the essentially materialistic idea of man and woman being the sum total of the relationships they are a part of. Recently Harriet Harris in her article "Should we say that the personhood is relational?" (*Scottisch Journal of Theology* Vol. 51, No. 2 (1998): 214-234) has rejected the claim that personhood is relational. Harris makes a clear distinction between the pastorally illumining relational emphasis in theological anthropology according to which we become persons through our relations to others, and the notion that humans fundamentally relational to the degree that a culture is needed to bring our personhood fully into being. Harris maintains that the relationality involved in being a person does not abrogate the fact that we are persons ontologically prior to relationships. She writes: "Recognition that we develop as selves and that we gain self-awareness through relations does not justify either ontological or normative claims that personhood is relational – claims which I regard as logically and ethically problematic." (p.233) Harris warns against the dangers of attaching the human value to the

called "personalist" emphasis is the concern to relate persons to Nature (since the human world is built on the organic, which in turn is built on the inorganic).[68] This is important because the fact that humans are made in the image of God, among other things, means that they have the capacity to make moral judgments.[69] At the same time they have also been placed in this world as "kind of viceroy under God, or a responsible steward, or like a shepherd or a farm manager."[70]   Because of that, humans have a choice to either become co-creators with God, or to simply exploit nature. However, becoming a co-creator may lead to certain extremes where the role of created nature is overestimated and blown out of proportion.[71] In fact, humans have been called to be co-creators, and that is what God expects us to be, provided we put to use the ethical decision-making capacity that is a dimension of the image of God in us. This, in turn helps to ensure that the ecological dimension of justice and peace that Kahl writes about is paid attention to, and the integrity of creation is preserved.

Preston ends the discussion by stating six principles (Preston's term is "conclusions") about nature, which are important to remember when it comes to relating ourselves to nature in a Biblically correct way:

1. It is ordered, intelligible and open to rational investigation.
2. It is inter-related, from fundamental particles upward.
3. It is not static but has an inbuilt creativity, which proceeds through chance within the laws of physics, and chemistry in what Preston describes as a "groping" of what we might say is a "do it yourself" manner.

---

richness of her relationships, as one of the logical ethical consequences resulting from the claim that personhood is relational. She continues: "We should therefore not take ideas about the relationality of self-development to imply that either personhood or personal identity are themselves in constant flux or development. A normative concept of personhood should recognize that relations are crucial to self-development, and inform our ethics accordingly. But it has to include more than that, otherwise a person's value is dependent on the richness of her relations." (p. 233)

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid. 556.

[70] Ibid. 557.

[71] Here Preston refers to the thought advocated in some World Council of Churches documents that churches should enter into "fellowship with Nature". Preston strongly objects to this notion by saying that: "We can understand fellowship only by an analogy with the personal, and see it as a possibility according to the level of personal being in Nature." (Ibid. 557) While recognizing that humans have exploited nature for a long time, and now our attitude towards it must be rethought, Preston seriously questions the position according to which God suffers with the nature since He is always on the side of the oppressed. Likewise, he objects to the perspective offered by process theology, which suggests: "God seeks the whole universe in God's experience, human and sub-human, in a kind of memory." (Ibid.) According to Preston, such idea "is thin gruel compared with the traditional Christian hopes for humanity." (Ibid.) According to the traditional Christian understanding: "A pre-cosmic Fall is paralleled with a post-cosmic Restoration; Revelation 22 restores the situation of Genesis 1. The goal of Creation is the eternal Sabbath involving God, humanity and Nature alike." (Ibid.)

4. There is conflict in nature: both an ecological balance and a death of old forms.

5. Humans are the crown of the process with the greatest self-awareness, the greatest possibility of suffering, and with the possibility of modifying the ongoing process of nature for good or ill.

6. It is ultimately mysterious; at a basic level quarks are, and at the highest level so are persons.[72]

Though Preston has formulated his principles as a sort of response to the influence of process theology in the debate between theology and ecology, they can be viewed as somewhat complementary with some of the principles posited by panentheism. According to the panentheistic paradigm God is related to the world because though God transcends the world, He at the same time encompasses it. The panentheistic model can be imaged as concentric circles:

> This panentheistic model can roughly be imaged by a circle bounded by a solid line (the world) encompassed in a larger circle bordered by a dotted line (God). The solid line of the small enclosed circle indicates that, while the world is embraced by God, the human creatures who exist upon it are limited to being human and are not divine. The dotted line of the larger circle indicates that who God is not exhausted by our capacity to understand from the context of the bounded circle in which we exist. The location of the bounded smaller circle in the larger unbounded one signifies that who God is in the divine freedom includes the world and the limitations of creaturely existence. In this model, immanence is just as fundamental to the being of God as is transcendence. Immanence is in fact included in the divine transcendence even as humanity is included in the divinity. God's relationship to the world is included in who God is.[73]

In other words, according to this model without losing the distinction between God and the world, one would still be able to argue that the world is in God, and humanity is in divinity.[74] God who encompasses the world loves the world and shares the joys and sorrows of each creature in the world.[75] Rigby, similar to one of

---

[72] Ibid.561.

[73] Rigby, Cynthia L. "Free to be Human. Limits, Possibilities, and the Sovereignty of God." In *Theology Today*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (1996): 47-62.

[74] Ibid. 58. Here panentheism is "a form of theism when it upholds the aseity of God, maintaining the distinction between God and the world." According to Rigby some theologians have espoused this view without recognizing it. For example, she believes that Karl Barth is one of those theologians: "His description of the God-world relationship in *Church Dogmatics,* vol. II/1, § 28.3, however, is in significant ways consistent with the model of panentheism I am developing here, which maintains that the world is in God, and humanity in divinity, without losing the distinction between God and the world." (Ibid.)

[75] Franklin, Stephen T. "Panentheism" In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984. Similar positions are developed and discussed also by

the leading process theologians Hartshorne,[76] describes this relationship using the metaphor of a person relating to her body, or a mother relating to her child who is both part of her body and at the same time distinct from it.[77]

For the sake of the present discussion, the most interesting aspect of this relationship is the role of human beings in this equation. Goodness in creation is not exclusively determined by God's all-embracing presence. The response of the human subject to this presence is also required. Because: "Where human beings do not live in awareness of the presence of God as relational, responsible, and life-embracing subjects, evil becomes manifest."[78] This statement is to some extent simply elaborating on what Preston says, namely that humans must be ethically responsible co-creators with God. Only then humans are able to relate properly to the rest of creation.

An ethically responsible co-creator with God, however, presupposes a certain identity, which would in turn ensure that ethical responsibility is exercised in the process of co-creating. Such an identity of a human person must be anchored in the freedom of God.[79] According to Adriaan Geense, the freedom of God and the identity of the human are concepts that are very closely bound together. Both of these concepts are very well defined in the discussion about relationship between gospel and culture. Thus gospel is defined as "the freedom of God to restore the identity of the human person", while culture is "the way in which a person as an individual and social being strives for and expresses one's identity."[80] In other

---

theologians who are not associated with process theology. For instance, Japanese theologian Kazoh Kitamori who has formulated the so-called "Pain of God Theology," develops similar view of God's compassion for the world and creation. According to Kitamori, God becomes immanent in the historical reality of human suffering. Humans experience suffering and pain because they have sinned and are separated from God, and this situation causes God to experience pain as well. Therefore, the bridge between man and God is pain, and God uses this bridge to communicating his love to the world. (Ro, Bong R. "Pain of God Theology" In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.)

[76] Beck, W.D. "Panentheism" In *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

[77] Rigby, 58-59.

[78] Ibid. 59. While the debate regarding some theoretical underpinnings of process theology and panentheism is far from being over, when it comes to the relational aspect of *imago Dei*, and especially of the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation, the contribution of process theology is quite significant. If nothing more, it alerts us to the fact that God, humanity, and nature may be linked closer than it may seem at the first glance, and that our relationship to God very much affects our relationship to fellow humans and nature, and vice versa.

[79] Adrian Geense "The Freedom of God and the Identity of the Human Person." In *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 39, Nr. 2 (1987): 148-153.

[80] Ibid. 149-150.

words: "Freedom is a capacity to exercise identity, identity is restored freedom."[81] The lost identity of a human being is restored through the highest expression of God's freedom in the person of Jesus Christ. As Geense concludes: "The theological basis for the relation between the gospel and culture should not be sought primarily in creation (man created in the image of God) but in the incarnation: the human being restored to this image."[82]

This restored image is anchored in and reflective of God's own freedom. Freedom, in turn is "the possibility to be oneself, a people, culture."[83] Hence, culture is at the same time the expression of identity and of freedom. Therefore, if the possibilities of relating gospel to culture (and through it to creation) are discussed, it is important to establish a foundational starting point:

> It is of fundamental importance for the establishing of the relation between gospel and culture that we do not rush hastily to what the human person hopes to obtain and achieve from this relation, but that we begin reflecting on God's freedom, God's own identity in this relation. This is not a dogmatic exercise, but belongs to the essence of the gospel. The freedom of God involves respecting the honour, the being, the identity of God, God's "doxa". It is an act of doxology in which we acknowledge that in the relation of God and the human being God comes first. […] Responsible, vital and coherent theology comes out of affirming the divine identity: God is God. […] Vital, essential theology has as its first responsibility to see that God is not put into a context where we can make God understandable in theory and manipulative in practice.[84]

If such theology is taken as a starting point, then gospel will eventually establish a given culture's identity as an open, dynamic identity. This liberated culture in response to the freedom of God will then be ready to use the identity and freedom it has received as a freedom for serving others. In other words, when the relationship between people belonging to a certain culture and God is established according to these principles, it ceases to be a threat to itself, to others and to the creation.

In light of the above line of reasoning it can be argued that such an approach would require seemingly small, yet immensely significant revision of some of the creeds that churches use to affirm their faith. According to George E. Tinker, instead of starting the creeds with the emphasis on fall/redemption or the reconciling work of

---

[81] Ibid. 149.
[82] Ibid. This essentially is what both Barth and Brunner affirm in their anthropology. Namely, that it is infinitely more important who people become in Jesus as images of God, instead of who they were when they were created in the beginning.
[83] Ibid. 151.
[84] Ibid. 150.

Jesus Christ, the doctrine of creation must be placed in the first article followed by fall/redemption.[85] That would put the doctrine of creation at the starting point in theological reflection, and thus help us to see more clearly what is God's relationship to the creation, and what should our relationship to the creation look like:

> If we are to recover an appropriate prioritizing of Creation/First Article theological emphases and to respond to the modern crisis of disintegration of creation, then our theology must begin to lend itself to a new imaging of ourselves as human beings and our relationship to creation. We must become creative and articulate in our theological reflection in ways that will facilitate a new imaging of the tensive connection between self and creation on the part of individual members of our churches, and between whole communities and creation, meaning, of course, especially the bodies ecclesia. Only then will we be in position to speak creatively and forcefully to the other social institutions of our world.[86]

Basically Tinker argues here for an approach he calls "a theology of creation", at the very foundation of which he places the self-understanding of individuals and communities as part of creation. In this theological approach all things are inter-related and humans are but one aspect of creation, since our health and welfare are inextricably linked to the health and welfare of the whole of creation. In this equation we are both capable of and responsible for establishment of balance and harmony on earth.[87]

---

[85] George E. Tinker "The Integrity of Creation. Restoring Trinitarian Balance." In *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (1989): 527-536. Even though at the first glance this seems to be at odds with the notion proposed by Geense that the theological basis for establishing the relationship between the gospel and culture must be primarily sought in the human being restored to the image of God through the act of incarnation, as opposed to human being created in the image of God, I believe Tinker and Geense are both talking about two sides of the same coin. If the starting point for our theological reflection is creation and our relationship to it, then the fact that this relationship has and still is far from being perfect readily becomes obvious. At that point a need for a new human identity (both individual and cultural) emerges. According to Geense this new human identity is found in Christ through whom our true *imago* identity is restored, or more precisely, re-created by and through the freedom of God. This new identity combined with the "value added dimension of freedom" (Geense, p. 151) results in a gospel-based culture, which is open, dynamic and change oriented. This culture though not problem-free, would be harmonious and non-threatening both inwardly and outwardly. In such a cultural milieu it would be infinitely easier for our theology to "lend itself to a new imaging of ourselves as human beings and our relationship to creation." (Tinker, p. 535)

[86] Ibid. 535.

[87] Ibid. 536.

Conclusion

In conclusion it is safe to say that even if one does not define the Image of God exclusively as a relational phenomenon, *Imago Dei* certainly has a very strong and pronounced relational dimension or aspect. Starting the middle of the 20th century there has been a strong emphasis to place the relational aspect of *imago Dei* at the very center of the theological-anthropological debate. Towards the end of the century this emphasis has evolved in new theological directions and even paradigms where the relational aspect of *imago* is placed at the very foundation of the approach (the ecological perspective). Regardless of where the relational aspect of the image of God is placed in the theological discourse it is obviously an indispensable and vital part of it. It involves man's relationship both to God, other human beings, and creation, and is in a state of continuous change[88] and progressive development. And, as much as it is in the process of development and movement toward Christ-likeness (God-likeness), it also includes a teleological component, which in turn is very closely bound to the human ability of self-transcendence as a part of the man and woman being created in the image of God. The teleological aspect of *Imago Dei* is discussed in more depth in the chapter covering theological anthropology of Wolfhart Pannenberg and the anthropological thought in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

---

[88] Theologically this can be asserted with a great deal of certainty only with regards to the justified community of faith.

Chapter five

THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR

Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man* is often referred to as one of his most influential, and perhaps even his most significant book. It is regarded as "the fullest theological statement" he ever made, and "a masterpiece of contemporary exposition of fundamental Christian themes."[1] In this book Niebuhr has formulated his theological anthropology in general and his interpretation of the doctrine of *imago Dei* in particular, using it as the key to his overall theological system:

> Niebuhr never attempted to explicate all Christian theology. His system finds its beginning in the doctrine of man, and other doctrines are dealt with by indirection. This doctrine, his chief contribution to theology, is determinative for his ethics, his view of history, his Christology, his doctrine of the atonement, and his eschatology. But he understood that man is not an isolated doctrine unrelated to the total Christian faith. He dedicated his writings to the subject of man although he was a number of years arriving at his full view.[2]

The two volumes of *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, which include Niebuhr's Gifford lectures of 1939, and were first published in 1941 and 1943 respectively, are a systematic treatment of what Niebuhr called man's most "vexing problem: How shall he think of himself?"[3] This question used as the opening question of the Gifford lectures represents the very core of Niebuhr's thought and "his controlling theological principle", which, since leaving his Detroit pastorate in 1928, had been moving Niebuhr towards a unifying theme of Christian selfhood.[4]

---

[1] J.W. Gladwin "Niebuhr, Reinhold" In *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright, (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 469-470.

[2] Bob E Patterson,. *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind. Reinhold Niebuhr*. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977), 63.

[3] Mark A. Noll "Niebuhr, Reinhold" In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Walter A. Elwell. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 776-777.

[4] Bob E Patterson, *Makers*, 41. It seems to be widely accepted among theologians that Niebuhr's anthropology is considered the backbone of his entire theological system. For instance, William John Wolf commenting on Niebuhr's anthropology has said the following: "Niebuhr's most significant contribution to the restatement of Christian theology in our generation is his exposition of the doctrine of man. Unlike systematicians like Aquinas or Barth who cover the whole corpus of Christian truth by the method of a *Summa*, Niebuhr makes one doctrine, brilliantly plumbed to its depths, the basis of his whole thought. Articulated in terms of man's relations with his fellow men, the doctrine of man is determinative for his social ethics and for his interpretation of the meaningfulness of history. Concentrated in terms of personality, and brought into correlation with the historic Christian revelation, it defines his understanding of Christology, atonement and eschatology. (William J. Wolf "Reinhold Niebuhr's Doctrine of Man" in Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), 230. Niebuhr himself approaches this subject much more modestly. In the introduction of the book edited by Keagly and Bretall entitled "Intellectual Autobiography of Reinhold Niebuhr," he writes in the opening paragraph: "It is somewhat embarrassing to be made the subject of a study which assumes theology as the primary interest. I cannot and do not claim to be a theologian." (p.3) Then he elaborates a bit

In the preface to the Scribner Library edition of *The Nature and Destiny of Man* in 1963, Niebuhr identifies two main emphases of Western culture, namely a sense of individuality and a sense of a meaningful history. Both of these emphases are rooted in the Bible-based faith and have primarily Hebraic roots.[5] For the context of the present discussion the first emphasis is much more significant.

Further, Niebuhr formulates three key problems (or principles) in regard to the Western emphasis on the individual:

1. Individual selfhood is expressed in the self's capacity for self-transcendence, as opposed to human rational capacity for conceptual and analytic procedures.

2. The human self is united in its body, mind, spirit, and "its freedom from natural necessity and its involvement as creature in all these necessities." Niebuhr views this unity not as something static, but rather as something dynamic that is in constant tension. Further into the book he writes:

   In its purest form the Christian view of man regards man as a unity of God-likeness and creatureliness in which he remains a creature even in the highest spiritual dimensions of his existence and may reveal elements of the image of God even in the lowliest aspects of his natural life.[6]

3. Human evil is a corruption of human freedom, which grows with freedom. This human evil is primarily expressed in undue self-concern. The attempts to equate evil with only ignorance of the mind and/or with the passions of the body are erroneous. [7]

Even though Niebuhr looks at man as essentially ambiguous, these three themes or problems are foundational as he develops the phenomenology of selfhood, which by many is considered to be the profoundest and the most original theme running through *The Nature and Destiny of Man*.[8] According to Niebuhr man is both the image of God and a self-venerating sinner at the same time. Man is free and finite

---

further by saying: "When I was invited to give the Gifford Lectures in 1939 at the University of Edinburgh, I chose the only subject which I could have chosen, because the other fields of Christian thought were beyond my competence." (p. 9).
[5] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. Vol. 1. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), vii – ix.
[6] Ibid. 150.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Patterson, 41-42.

at the same time, because man is a creature. Still, as the image of God man is a united self, capable of self-transcendence and self-consciousness.[9]

Historically alternative views to this view of man have usually more emphasized either man's creatureliness at the expense of man's freedom, or vice versa. Classic examples of that are views found in the Renaissance and the Reformation. Reformation looked at man as a totally corrupt sinner who even after becoming a repentant and regenerate child of God still continues in egotistical and sinful behavior. Renaissance philosophers, on the other hand looked at man as a basically good creature that is self-sufficient and can shape his own destiny without the help of God.

An answer to this situation is a synthesis between the Renaissance and Reformation views, which is based on the Biblical faith. The Biblical faith, Niebuhr argues, makes both of these truths about man equally important. Man's creaturehood and his being made in the image of God must both be upheld with equal seriousness.[10]

The dialectical method[11] by which Niebuhr has arrived at his position has been called "the Niebuhrian analysis" [12] and "the Christian realism"[13]. According to this analysis two opposite facets of a problem are taken, and then positive and negative aspects of each facet are explored. Then, the next step is to "correlate the sub-negation of the basic affirmation with the sub-positive of the basic negation, then to show how the Christian answer meets these complexities, but only in the wholeness of the problem." Such an approach would be criticized by those who take one statement or concept out of Niebuhr's system of thought thus detaching it from its "full context in

---

[9] Ibid. 43.

[10] Ibid.44-45.

[11] Even though the term "dialectic" is frequently used in reference to Niebuhr's approach to theology, it should be used with some caution. Emil Brunner has said the following in reference to Niebuhr's method: "Theologically he has no doubt learned most from the dialectical theology, which for him was more understandable, more accessible, and more easily digestible in my version than in Karl Barth's. But Niebuhr has made out of the dialectical theology something quite new, something genuinely American, while translating its concepts from the theological language into that of the philosophy of culture and social criticism, and kindling them with his prophetic spirit. In his hands the new theological concepts were used to throw a light upon the spiritual and social framework of modern civilization and lay bare its fundamental flaws and errors. By virtue of an unusual facility of dealing with the abstractions of cultural history he succeeds in relating social facts, cultural principles, and spiritual tendencies to the teachings and concerns of Christian faith. (Emil Brunner "Some Remarks on Reinhold Niebuhr's Work as a Christian Thinker" in Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), 29.)

[12] William J. Wolf "Reinhold Niebuhr's Doctrine of Man" in Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), 231.

[13] Patterson, 45.

a total system of relationships." Therefore, to avoid the criticisms that can be avoided by setting proper parameters to Niebuhr's system of thought, Wolf suggests calling it the "relational thought" instead of "the dialectical thought".[14] This term seems to be accurate and very appropriate especially as it relates to the thesis of this product, because the relationship context is simply a prerequisite in order for pastoral care and counseling to take place. Therefore, the terms "dialectical thought" and "relational thought" will be used interchangeably in the following discussion of Niebuhr's thought.

Self-transcendence as the key to anthropological questions

After stating that man is his own most vexing problem Niebuhr goes on to say that all of the paradoxes of human self-knowledge can basically be reduced to two facts about man. First, man is a child of nature who stands in nature with both of his feet. However, while it is true that man is a subject to nature's vicissitudes and that he is driven by its impulses, he is at the same time a spirit that stands outside of nature and has the ability to make himself his own object. That is the second fact about man, which in one word is called man's self-transcendence.[15]

For Niebuhr the concept of self-transcendence is central to understanding and defining first the phenomenon and then the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. The starting point for him is St. Augustine's[16] analysis of human memory, which for Augustine is a symbol for man's capacity to transcend time and himself:

> The concept of self-transcendence and the infinite outreach of memory into this self-transcendence [...] is of the greatest importance for his system of theology. The concept of a transcendence beyond rationality paves the way for

---

[14] Wolf, 232.

[15] Another good definition of self-transcendence is "going beyond" the physical limitations of human life. According to Larry Rassmussen the key to understanding human nature in Niebuhr's theology is the so-called "vertical dialectic" (as opposed to the temporal dialectic which deals with the relationship between the past and the present) between creatureliness and transcendence, between finitude and possibility. In Niebuhr's thought: "Human beings are themselves understood as both creature and image of God. This means human beings are finite, partial and contingent, subject to all the necessities of their embeddedness in nature and their place in history; and at the same time they are self-transcendent, with the capacity to stand 'beyond' their world, time and society. In Gilkey's phrase, we rise 'vertically from a finite and particular base, and *thus*' we are human." (Larry Rasmussen ed. *Reinhold Niebuhr – Theologian of Public Life*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 30).

[16] Niebuhr in many ways is using Augustine's theological thought and building upon it as he formulates his own anthropology and his theological position on *imago Dei*. In his *Nature and Destiny* Niebuhr writes: "When some of Augustine's earlier lapses into neo-Platonism are discounted, it must be recognized that no Christian theologian has ever arrived at a more convincing statement of the relevance and distance between the human and divine than he. All subsequent statements of the essential character of the image of God in man are indebted to him, particularly if they manage to escape the shallows of a too simple rationalism." (*Nature and Destiny*, vol. 1, 158.)

a biblical revelation that is not disclosed by an analysis of human experience. Niebuhr took with equal seriousness both man's involvement in, and his transcendence over, the process of nature. This stress on the essential unity of man was the crux of Niebuhr's position.[17]

Niebuhr himself postulates that very clearly in the beginning of the Gifford lectures, pointing to the chief difference between an animal and the human: "Human consciousness involves the sharp distinction between the self and the totality of the world. Self-knowledge is thus the basis of discrete individuality. […] Human consciousness not only transcends natural process but it transcends itself."[18] Self-transcendence, which is based on the self-knowledge, according to Niebuhr is equally important for both: getting an accurate view of the doctrine of *imago Dei*, and understanding human conflicts and problems.

In order to more fully understand and appreciate the modern conflicts in regard to human nature, Niebuhr suggests that all modern anthropological positions are adaptations and or compounds of two major views of man, namely the view of classical antiquity (Greco-Roman world) and the Biblical view.[19] According to the classical view "man is to be understood primarily from the standpoint of the uniqueness of his rational faculties, while the Biblical view of man juxtaposes in a paradoxical way the high estimate of the human stature implied in the concept of "image of God" with the low estimate of the human virtue (evil) in Christian thought."[20]

The high estimate of the human being is closely tied to the previously mentioned principle of individuality, which in a modern sense begins in Protestantism and in Renaissance. Reformation represents the final development of individuality in Christian thought, while Renaissance takes it step further setting the stage for the autonomous individual who "ushers in modern civilization, and who is completely annihilated in the final stages of that civilization."[21] Further, using Christian revelation and human situation as his sources, Niebuhr formulates four categories of difficulties or confusions that are characteristic to the modern anthropology:

---

[17] Patterson, 67.
[18] *The Nature and Destiny*, vol. 1, p. 55.
[19] *The Nature and Destiny*, vol.1, p. 5. The only exception Niebuhr allows for is the medieval Catholic view of man, which is a synthesis of the two distinct and partly incompatible views described in more detail in the first chapter of *The Nature and Destiny of Man*.
[20] Ibid. 16.
[21] Ibid., 59-60.

1. The relation of spiritual transcendence and the laws and limitations of nature has caused a deadlock debate between naturalistic and idealistic rationalists.

2. This debate is made even more complex by the protest of the romantic naturalists against the emphasis of the first two categories of rationalists.

3. The concept of individuality has been lost by modern culture in trying to liberate man as an individual *imago Dei* related to his creator God (classic Christian doctrine), through the infinite possibilities of the human spirit. As the result of this liberation the human self has been lost.

4. Contrary to the testimony of the human history, modern culture has tried to explain away the problem of evil, thus elevating the idea of progress to the level of a philosophy of history.[22]

According to Niebuhr, all of the philosophies, which have tried to explain what man is, have in the final resort failed. Idealism is concerned with helping the individual transcend the forces of nature. Yet, this process ends in the individual being absorbed in the universalities of the impersonal mind. In the older forms of naturalism due to the interplay of natural forces, the individual is able to experience a certain sense of individuality for a brief moment, but true individuality is lost because such concepts as self-transcendence, freedom, and self-identity (the real marks of individuality) are foreign to naturalism. Next comes the romantic naturalism, which subordinates the individuality of a person to the individuality of the social collective. Last but not least Niebuhr mentions Nietzschean romanticism, which preserves the individuality of a person while making it a vehicle for a demonic religion where the ambition of the person becomes the only God there is.[23] The balancing answer to the above-mentioned views, according to Niebuhr, lays in the Christian faith:

> Without the presuppositions of the Christian faith the individual is either nothing or becomes everything. In the Christian faith man's insignificance as a creature, involved in the process of nature and time, is lifted into significance by the mercy and power of God in which his life is sustained. But his significance as a free spirit is understood as subordinate to the freedom of God. His inclination to abuse his freedom, to overestimate his power and significance, and to become everything is understood as the primal sin. It is because man is inevitably involved in this primal sin that he is bound to meet God first of all as a judge, who humbles his pride and brings his vain imagination to naught.[24]

---

[22] Patterson, *Makers*, 67-68. Niebuhr discusses these problem areas in Chapter 2, vol. 1 of his *Nature and Destiny* (pp 26-53), entitled "The Problem of Vitality and Form in Human Nature".

[23] Niebuhr, *The Nature*, vol.1. 92.

[24] Ibid.

The above quote is just one of the examples that suggests his approach to theology may be characterized as relational, even though Niebuhr himself does not use the term "relational" in regard to his thought, because throughout Niebuhr's writings man and his problems are viewed in the context of relationships between man and God, man and society, man and the rest of the created order. For instance, the capacity for self-transcendence, which for Niebuhr is the key to understanding the doctrine of *imago Dei*, is not viewed or described as a relational phenomenon in itself. Yet, it underlies and enables human interaction and actions. In the following section I will look at the phenomenon of self-transcendence from various perspectives as Reinhold Niebuhr develops it.

Self-transcendence and the idea of good and evil

As stated above, anthropology lays at the very core of Niebuhr's theological thought. And, man's capacity for self-transcendence is viewed by Niebuhr as the key to unlocking the meaning of the doctrine of *imago Dei*. At the same time the capacity for self-transcendence, being integral to man's psychological makeup, plays an important role when it comes to man's choosing between good and evil. In fact: "The problem of evil in human nature lies precisely in the character of man as a being who in reason and imagination can transcend particular historical circumstance."[25] In other words, man's self-transcendence, instead of offering guarantee from an evil, is itself the source of "profoundest evils in human life"[26]

The contrast between good and evil is most powerfully presented in Niebuhr's polemic against liberalism and in his defense of democracy. In the *Children of Light and The Children of Darkness*, where Niebuhr defends democracy and objects to its overly optimistic and hence, problematic estimate of man's moral capacities, he writes the following:

> Evil is always the assertion of some self-interest without regard to the whole, whether the whole be conceived as the immediate community, or the total community of mankind, or the total order of the world. The good is, on the other hand, always the harmony of the whole on various levels.[27]

---

[25] Daniel D. Williams "Niebuhr and Liberalism" in Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), 199.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 9.

The distinction between an evil person and a basically good person lies in their willingness to follow a certain moral standard; the good person, a child of light, will follow this standard[28], while the evil person, the child of darkness, will only follow his own self-interest. In both cases self-knowledge and self-transcendence of the individual plays the key role:

> The children of darkness are evil because they know no law beyond the self. They are wise, though evil, because they understand the power of self-interest. The children of light are virtuous because they have some conception of a higher law than their own will. They are usually foolish because they do not know the power of self-will.[29]

The link between transcendence and evil is clearly seen in Niebuhr's critique of liberalism.[30] The greatest problem of liberalism is that it has an inadequate and erroneous view of human nature. What is lacking in this view, both in secular as well as Christian liberalism, is the ability to see the full dimension of man's being. Because man is a creature and a spirit at the same time, he is able to live in the "depths of nature" and on the "heights of spirit". This duality of sorts is the source of man's

---

[28] In Niebuhr's thought, following a moral standard is not be equated with following rules and regulations. In his discussion of the prophetic messianism and Jesus' encounters with the Pharisees, Niebuhr warns against the possibility of following the law being used for evil purposes: "Law cannot restrain evil; for the freedom of man is such that he can make the keeping of the law the instrument of evil. He can screen evil motives by outward conformity to the law […]. He can also use observance of the law as the vehicle for sinful pride. (*The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol.2. p.40.)

[29] Ibid.10-11.

[30] In this context it is useful and also necessary to find out what precisely is meant when Niebuhr talks about liberalism. According to Williams, Niebuhr sees a very close connection between what he calls the liberal culture, and liberal Christianity: "Liberal culture is essentially the spirit and outlook of the middle classes in the modern period. It is a phenomenon of the ascendancy of the bourgeois. The most characteristic idea of the liberal is his faith in the historical progress. The values which are usually placed foremost as criteria of progress are individual freedom and the practice of tolerance. John Locke, John Stuart Mill, and John Dewey are among the typical interpreters of the liberal faith in its widest context.
[…] Christian liberalism then for Niebuhr is that phase of modern Christianity which has taken over from the Enlightenment a conception of man's goodness and his potentiality for moral improvement, and which has reinterpreted the gospel according to rational methods, and with a system of values which includes individualism, tolerance, and progressive achievement of a free and just order of society.
(Daniel D. Williams "Niebuhr and Liberalism" in Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), 197-198.) Niebuhr himself has defined Christian liberalism very succinctly and powerfully in the Winter of 1940 issue of *Radical Religion*, in an article entitled "Christian Moralism in America": "This 'Pure Gospel' which we claim to have rescued from the obscuritanists and dogmatists, including St. Paul, is little more than eighteen-century rationalism and optimism, compounded with a little perfectionism, derived from the sanctificationist illusions of sectarian Christianity." (Quoted in Williams, p. 198.)

deepest anxieties, which lead to the sins of pride and sensuality. It is man's mind that gives man the power to transcend himself to a limited degree, yet man's reason is not as powerful as the liberal would tend to believe: "Liberals generally have assumed that mind can lift man beyond the frustrations of nature, and seize control of history. But they forget that mind itself is limited in its search, and is subject to the corruptions of fear and pride."[31]

The prophetic conception of the Biblical faith is in stark contrast to the liberal view of human mind. The Biblical prophetic religion is able to escape a romantic glorification of impulse while subjecting the impulse to transcendent criteria. The prophetic conception believes that "moral evil lies at the juncture of nature and spirit."[32] The reality of moral guilt is possible according to this view because "the forces and impulses of nature never move by absolute necessity, but under and in the freedom of spirit."[33]

The clues to the moral evil in man, along with the assertion of moral responsibility, are to be found in the myth of the Fall. The myth of the Fall pictures God as a jealous God who forbids man to eat from the tree of knowledge. This jealousy on God's part is not a primitive fear of rivalry, as the modern culture believes. It is a necessity based on God's love for his creature, because man's pretension of making himself a god lies at the very foundation of man's problems. This pretension would not be possible if "man were not created in the "image of God" – *i.e.*, if he did not have capacities for self-transcendence which permitted him to see his finite existence under the perspective of its eternal essence."[34] Thus, image of God, self-transcendence, and the ability to do evil are inextricably bound together in Niebuhr's thought: "The human capacity for self-transcendence, the ability to see beyond an immediate world to more and more inclusive loyalties and values, is the basis of all that is good and all that is evil in human life."[35]

According to Niebuhr, evil is not only possible, but also inevitable. Man is a finite creature who at the same time enjoys a certain degree of freedom. This situation leads to guilt and sin. In his finiteness man makes pretensions to be absolute in an attempt "to translate his finite existence into a more permanent and absolute form of

---

[31] Ibid. 200.
[32] Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1935), 51.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid. 53.
[35] Ibid. 56.

existence."[36] According to an ideal case scenario men always seek to subject their unsafe existence to an absolute reality. In reality, however, men always mix the finite with the eternal as a result of which they claim a special status and put themselves (their social group, their nation etc) at the center of things. In short, man tries to make himself God. The consequence of this is the inevitability of evil:

> Thus the moral urge to establish order in life is mixed with the ambition to make oneself the center of that order; and devotion to every transcendent value is corrupted by the effort to insert the interests of the self into that value. […] This explanation of the matter not only emphasizes the spiritual, rather than natural, character of human evil, but also involves the doctrine of its inevitability.[37]

Therefore, as is evidenced by the above-discussion, it is safe to conclude that, for Niebuhr, man's ability of self-transcendence is anchored in man being created in the image of God, and is linked to evil (and vice versa). Man as a spirit self-transcends his creatureliness to a certain degree, yet the tension between being a spirit and a creature at the same time produces deep anxiety, which in turn leads man into sin thus multiplying evil.

Self-transcendence in hamartiology

The idea of good and evil and its relation to self-transcendence in Niebuhr's theology cannot be divorced from the larger context of theological discussion, which includes hamartiology. In a number of his writings Niebuhr has clearly articulated and described the connection between man's ability of self-transcendence and sin, which results from the tension between man's finiteness and freedom. Niebuhr's discussion of sin can be grouped around three intertwined and interdependent factors or aspects:

1. Man, as a free creature, is in a unique position between nature and spirit.
2. The devil tempts man to reject the position to which God has appointed him.
3. Man's anxiety to secure his own position in contrast to the original order of God.[38]

The starting point in this discussion for Niebuhr are the "modern estimates of man", which are erroneous in that they do not adequately measure man deep enough or high enough to do full justice to man's capacity for good and evil. They also don't

---

[36] Ibid. 52.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Patterson, 83.

have an adequate understanding of the total environment in which man can express and find himself. A good workable and adequate definition of man's environment must include both time and eternity:

> The eternity which is a part of the environment of man is neither the infinity of time nor yet a realm of undifferentiated unity of being. It is the changeless source of man's changing being. As a creature who is involved in flux but who is also conscious of the fact that he is so involved, he cannot be totally involved. A spirit who can set time, nature, the world and being *per se* into juxtaposition to himself and inquire after the meaning of these things, proves that in some sense he stands outside and beyond them. This ability to stand outside and beyond the world tempts man to megalomania and persuades him to regard himself as the god around and about whom the universe centers.[39]

Man is bound to his environment physically, and yet he transcends it mentally and spiritually. As mentioned previously, the capacity for transcendence itself is not sin, nor should it automatically be regarded as evil. Man's search for God and meaning in life, which is the mark of man's uniqueness according to God's design is what sets the stage for sin. The temptation is for oneself to become god instead of persevering in the search for relationship with God, which requires humility in realizing one's limitedness and fallenness:

> The fact that man can transcend himself in infinite regression and cannot find the end of life except in God is the mark of his creativity and uniqueness; closely related to this capacity is his inclination to transmute his partial and finite self and his partial and finite values into the infinite good. Therein lies his sin.[40]

It must be noted here that Niebuhr often times uses the terms sin and evil interchangeably as is evidenced by his discussion of sin and evil in "An interpretation of Christian Ethics". In my mind it is useful, however, to look at each of these phenomena separately, simply because sin is primarily a theological concept, while evil (at least in today's culture) seems to be used more widely and, depending on the context of the particular discussion, it may or may not be related to sin in the Biblical sense of the word. Both of these terms, however, in Niebuhr's thought are closely linked to the concept of anxiety.

---

[39] *The Nature*, vol.1. 124.
[40] Ibid. 122.

The role of anxiety in hamartiology

Niebuhr begins with a statement referenced back to Albert Ritschl's thought that the problem of finiteness and freedom underlies all religion. Niebuhr agrees with this principle adding that in the Biblical approach to the human problem finiteness is subordinated to the problem of sin, for the Biblical religion seeks redemption from sin, which is occasioned by the contradiction in which man stands.[41] Man's inevitable involvement in natural contingency generates insecurity, which man is trying to overcome somehow. In essence all these attempts eventually lead to two basic forms of sin – pride and sensuality.

Man falls into the sin of pride because he tries to overcome his insecurity by will-to-power, which reaches over the limits that are set on man as a created being. Man's mind is limited, yet he believes and acts as if he can gradually transcend the limitations of his mind, and develop his mind to the level of the universal mind. Therefore, all of man's intellectual and cultural pursuits become infected with pride. Man's pride affects both man's relation to God and his relation to the rest of the created order. In relationship with God man, instead of subjecting himself to God, rebels against God. In man's relationship to the rest of created order, this rebellion translates as injustice in moral and social dimensions of man's existence.

The other extreme is the sin of sensuality. Man commits the sin of sensuality when he attempts to deny and hide his freedom by immersing himself into some of the world's vitalities. Niebuhr strongly emphasizes that human sensuality is never just an expression of some natural impulse in man. Instead, "it always betrays some aspect of his abortive effort to solve the faintness and freedom."[42]

Man's situation of being at once free and finite provides the occasion for sin. The temptation of man, as it is depicted in the myth of the Fall, is based on the Devil's analysis of the human situation. Man is tempted to transcend the limits, which are set by God, for his existence. This temptation is based on the false interpretation of man's situation, which the Devil offers to man. Man falls because man is a finite spirit lacking identity with the whole, yet at the same time able to somehow envision the whole, and thus to commit the error of imagining himself to be the whole he

---

[41] Ibid. 178. Here Niebuhr clearly emphasizes that man's situation itself does not cause one to sin, for there is "no absolute necessity that man should be betrayed into sin by the ambiguity of his position, as standing in and yet above the nature". At the same time it is also obvious that man's condition does provide occasion for his sin.

[42] Ibid. 179.

envisions.[43]   Sin, according to Niebuhr, is never man's ignorance of his ignorance: "It is always partly an effort to obscure his blindness by overestimating the degree of his sight and to obscure his insecurity by stretching his power beyond its limits."[44] In short, man seeks to protect himself against nature's contingencies, which is impossible to do without transgressing the limits that have been set for his life by God.

At his point it is logical to ask what is it that drives man to sin by seeking security. According to Niebuhr it is anxiety:

> Anxiety is the inevitable concomitant of the paradox of freedom and finiteness in which man is involved. Anxiety is the eternal precondition of sin. It is the inevitable spiritual state of man, standing in the paradoxical of freedom and finiteness. Anxiety is the internal description of the state of temptation.[45]

Here Niebuhr's thought comes very close to the thought of Kierkegaard, whose view on anxiety described in *Der Begriff der Angst* he also quotes: "Anxiety is the psychological condition which precedes sin. It is so near, so fearfully near to sin, and yet it is not the explanation for sin."[46] The same position is embraced also by Niebuhr[47] who stresses that anxiety should not be identified with sin, for it is possible

---

[43] This concept, which at first seems difficult to comprehend, is elucidated elsewhere in Niebuhr's writings. When discussing what he calls "the depth dimension" of life in *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* Niebuhr writes the following: "The human spirit is set in this dimension of depth in such a way that it is able to apprehend, but not to comprehend, the total dimension. The human mind is forced to relate all finite events to causes and consummations beyond themselves. It is thus constantly conceives all particular things in their relations to the totality of reality, and can adequately apprehend totality only in terms of a principle of unity "beyond, behind, and above the passing flux of things" (Whitehead). But this same human reason is itself imbedded in the passing flux, a tool of a finite organism, the instrument of its physical necessities, and the prisoner of the partial perspectives of a limited time and space. The consequence is that it is always capable of envisaging possibilities of order, unity, and harmony above and beyond the contingent and arbitrary realities of its physical existence; but it is not capable (because of its finiteness) of incarnating all the higher values which it discerns, not even of adequately defining the unconditional good which it dimly apprehends as the ground and goal of all its contingent values. (p. 40) Even though man is not capable of incarnating the higher values, he does not stop trying to do exactly that. This process leads the man to envision himself as the whole he is trying to envision.

[44] Ibid. 181.

[45] Ibid. 182.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Soren Kierkegaard has been refered to as one of the most significant theological thinkers who has influenced Niebuhr. According to Richard Kroner there is a strong Kierkegaardian influence in Niebuhr's thought. Yet this influence is primarily to be understood not as learning, since probably there wasn't much Niebuhr could learn from Kierkegaard. This influence is more likely to be viewed as companionship of two great thinkers, for in Kierkegaard Niebuhr was able to find "a companion of his own inner plight and of his spiritual uncertainty. […] Kierkegaard justified and expressed Niebuhr's own deepest interests." (Richard Kroner "The Historical Roots of Niebuhr's Thought," in Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961. p. 182) According to Kroner, with regards to sin Niebuhr is closer to Kierkegaard, than he is to Calvin. Kierkegaard believed that sin

that faith and the ultimate security in God's love would purge anxiety of the sinful tendency toward self-assertion. Also, the anxiety that is the precondition to sin has another side. It is the basis of all human creativity, for man does not know the limit of his possibilities. Every new achievement reveals new and higher possibilities to improve upon it: "Anxiety as a permanent concomitant of freedom, is thus both the source of creativity and a temptation to sin."[48]

The sin of pride

As discussed in the previous section, man in Niebuhr's thought is in a position between nature and spirit. The Devil tempts man in this situation by simply misinterpreting it. Man is tempted along three avenues:

1. Man's natural limitations and finitude as a part of nature create in him a sense of insecurity.

2. Man's insecurity is furthered by his ability of self-transcendence, because through that ability man can anticipate the dangers of the future (death being the ultimate danger).

3. Through the ability of self-transcendence man can envision infinite possibilities of perfection at the same time overestimating his ability.[49]

It is man's insecurity that drives him to achieve ever more perfection before he falls pray to death. Various insecurities that man experiences cause him anxiety discussed previously, which leads to sin:

When anxiety has conceived it brings forth both pride and sensuality. Man falls into pride, when he seeks to raise his contingent in some natural existence to unconditioned significance; he falls into sensuality when he seeks to escape from his unlimited possibilities of freedom, from the perils and responsibilities of self-determination, by immersing himself into a "mutable good," by losing himself in some natural vitality.[50]

In the analysis of the sin of pride, Niebuhr further sub-divides it into three sins, or which may be more correct, into three different aspects of pride:

---

can never be separated from man, and that Adam was a potential sinner who was disclosed as such as a result of temptation. (This position is different from Calvin's who did not believe in the intrinsic inevitability of sin, but regarded it as something accidental instead.) For Kierkegaard it is because of man's free will in combination with the lack of power to resist temptation that sin can be imputed to him. Man falls "not because he lacks freedom of decision, but rather because he owns this freedom but does not own sufficient ability to withstand the lure of the devil." (Ibid. 183)

[48] *The Nature*, vol.1. 185.

[49] Patterson, 85.

[50] *The Nature*, vol.1. 186.

1. The pride of power,
2. The pride of knowledge,
3. The pride of virtue.[51]

All three subcategories or aspects of the sin of pride are very closely related to one another and, in most cases, result from one another. The sin of pride is manifested either as self-sufficiency and a false sense of security, or as the opposite of these two things, namely the sense of insecurity. In both cases this sin is related to man's striving for power, which Niebuhr calls "the will-to-power." This will-to-power may manifest itself as greed in man's relationship to creation (the more man can take from nature, the seemingly more secure he feels against the unpredictability of nature). It may manifest itself as injustice in man's relation to other human beings (the peril of a competing human will is overcome by simply subordinating it to one's own will and ego). It also manifests itself in fear, because the more a person has for himself, the greater the fear of losing it. In essence the pride of power can be equated with man trying to establish himself as god: "Thus man seeks to make himself God because he is betrayed by both his greatness and his weakness; and there is no level of greatness and power in which the lash of fear is not at least one strand in the whip of ambition."[52] Hence, Niebuhr concludes: "The will-to-power is in short both a direct form and an indirect instrument of the pride which Christianity regards as sin in its quintessential form."[53]

The pride of knowledge is very closely related to the pride of power, because it is simply a more spiritual sublimation of the previous form of pride. In fact, "sometimes it is so deeply involved in the more brutal and obvious pride of power that the two cannot be distinguished."[54] The pride of knowledge or the intellectual pride is essentially constituted by the reason "which forgets that it is involved in a temporal process and imagines itself in complete transcendence over history."[55] Or, in other words, intellectual pride is pride about the view, perspective, or theory one has arrived at, thinking that it is the final truth. The limitations of the person who formulates that kind of truth, as well as the limitations of the mechanism by which one has arrived at this truth are ignored. However, according to Niebuhr, ignorance

---

[51] Ibid. 188.
[52] Ibid. 194.
[53] Ibid. 192.
[54] Ibid. 194.
[55] Ibid.

about ignorance is never just ignorance. This kind of ignorance always presupposes pride, because ideally human beings have the capacity and the ability to recognize their limitations.

Finally, there is moral pride that is anchored in intellectual pride. With very few exceptions men always try to establish their good as an unconditioned moral value by which all other values are measured and/or judged. Human-self judges itself by its own standards, and finds itself good. Naturally, when others are judged by this standard, they don't measure up to it. Hence, they are deemed no-good, or simply evil. That is self-righteousness, which is the sin of moral pride, and the first step towards cruelty toward others.

The most interesting part in this discussion pertaining to the sin of pride is Niebuhr's conclusion, according to which the previous three forms of pride all eventually lead up to the ultimate sin – spiritual pride:

> The ultimate sin is the religious sin of making the self-deification implied in moral pride explicit. This is done when our partial standards and relative attainments are explicitly related to the unconditioned good, and claim divine sanctification. For this reason religion is not simply as is generally supposed an inherently virtuous human quest for God. It is merely a final battleground between God and man's self-esteem. In that battle even the most pious practices may be instruments of human pride.[56]

The great advantage of Christianity in this context is that it does not claim to be a religion of man's quest for God, but rather a religion of revelation where an infinite and loving God reveals himself to man as the source and ultimate fulfillment of life, thus completely taking away the very logical reason for religious pride. In reality, however, man can and often times makes the very fact of revelation as the foundation for viewing themselves as more holy and better than others, thus increasing their self-righteousness, and making the very religion that was intended to safeguard them from pride into a tool of their pride. The claim of the Catholic Church that it is identical with the kingdom of God is as much a tool of pride as the protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers taken to an individualistic extreme.[57]   This

---

[56] Ibid. 200.

[57] Ibid. 201-202. Niebuhr is very clear in his critique of the Catholic claim to unconditioned truth for the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Niebuhr sees such notion untenable, for a religious institution "involved in all the relativities of history," claiming the status of absolute truth for its doctrines is simply a clear example of people making religion into a tool of human pride. This position has been seriously questioned and criticized by catholic theologians. For example Father Weigel in his Catholic response to Niebuhr's position, reduces the whole issue to one question. If Niebuhr accuses Catholic

all leads Niebuhr to conclude that: "Religion, by whatever name, is the inevitable fruit of the spiritual stature of man; and religious intolerance is the final expression of his sinfulness."[58]

Sin in general and the sin of pride in particular is always related to deception and vice versa. This dynamic has been observed and described by Marxism with regards to social deception, and by modern psychologies with regards to individual rationalizations of certain behaviors. Yet, according to Niebuhr, only the Christian view adequately describes the connection between the self-transcendent yet determinate self, and the "sinful self-love," which is stemming from the lies. In order to explain the intrapsychic genesis of lie and deception, Niebuhr talks about the dynamic relationship between the "sinful state of the self" and the "essential self."[59] The sinful state of the self is the state in which the self denies its limitations and requires self-glorification. The essential self, on the other hand, is the part of the self whose knowledge of the truth can never be fully obscured, and who knows that the self is finite and determinate, and that it does not deserve unconditioned devotion. Therefore, the sinful state of the self requires ever more deceptions to quench the voice of the essential self, yet these deceptions "are never wholly convincing because the self is the only ego fully privy to the dishonesties by which it has hidden its own

---

Church of arrogance in its claim to have *the* truth, then the question is: who is arrogant in this situation? According to Weigel, arrogant is the party which oversteps the limits of competence, and it is certainly not the Catholic Church. (Weigel, Gustave S.J. "Authority in Theology" In Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.) To this challenge Niebuhr has responded gracefully, yet firmly, maintaining his position: "I appreciate Father Weigel's friendly essay the more because my frequent accusations against what seems to me to be the "pretension" and the "intolerance" of the Church must seem very trying. Father Weigel neatly brings the whole issue to a head in his statement that either the Church or I am arrogant and one must take one's choice between the pretension of the private individual and that of a great historic institution which has been the treasury of the "oracles of God." This is a "palpable hit" which may well leave the private critic reeling. Of course, every individual is in the same predicament with regard to this contrast and what is at stake is the whole Reformation insistence on the right of private judgment and on the "priesthood of all believers." […] I don't think that the danger of individual pretension and arrogance is quite as great as Father Weigel suggests. All who have become Christian will find their own convictions formed by the witness of the whole Christian Church through the ages, beginning with the witness of the of Scripture, including, of course, the Scripture which gives the witness of the Church before the Church; namely Israel. A responsible theologian, as distinguished from an irresponsible speculator, will think and live within the discipline of this Church, though he will feel free to correct what seem to him to be errors of the past. He will be under the corresponding hazard of propagating more grievous errors than he may have corrected. (Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism." In Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961. pp. 443-445.)

[58] Ibid. 203.
[59] Ibid. 206.

interests behind a façade of general interest."[60] As a result of this the self is caught in yet another vicious cycle: it is driven to ever more deceptions and lies which are directed at others in attempt to persuade them to believe the self, and thus to aid the self to believe in the deceptions it cannot easily believe itself (because it is itself the author of deception). The more lies and deceptions are produced to maintain the façade, the more the self is afraid of being unmasked: "Thus sin compounds the insecurity of nature with a fresh insecurity of spirit."[61] Such is the mechanism of the fallen self created in the image of God trying to self-transcend and to become god itself.

The sin of sensuality

The sin of sensuality in Niebuhr's writings is not discussed as extensively and meticulously as the sin of pride. This is most likely because pride is considered by Niebuhr to be a more basic or primary sin, while sensuality seems to be a kind of derivative from pride. If pride is the result of man trying to use the ability of self-transcendence in order to transcend the limitations of his existence until "his mind becomes identical with the universal mind,"[62] then sensuality is the opposite extreme of this struggle. It not so much man trying to become a god; it is rather man obeying his appetites and impulses:

> If selfishness is the destruction of life's harmony by the self's attempt to center life around itself, sensuality would seem to be the destruction of life's harmony within the self, by the self's undue identification with and devotion to particular impulses and desires within itself.[63]

Another way of saying it would be that if pride and selfishness drive man to try and become god, the sin of sensuality is driving man to identify his self with nature.[64] These impulses, however, are not mere natural impulses or appetites. They are consequences of man's unsuccessful attempts to solve the problem of finiteness and freedom. According to Niebuhr, one of the mistakes of conventional Christianity is the identification of sin and sensuality, which has given its critics partial justification for looking at Christianity as judgmental and harsh in regards to sexuality

---

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid. 207.
[62] Ibid. 179.
[63] Ibid. 208.
[64] Patterson 92.

and sexual sin. In order to arrive at a more accurate definition of what is sensuality one must answer two questions:

1. Is sensuality a form of idolatry, which makes the self god?

2. Or is it an alternative form of idolatry in which the self feeling its inadequacy in self-worship, is attempting to find some other god as the means of escape?[65]

Niebuhr finds answer to these questions in the Pauline-Augustinian tradition concluding that sensuality must be defined in light of the first chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans. This passage of Scripture is quite clear in treating lust (sensuality) as a consequence of and punishment for a more basic form of sin – pride and self- deification. St. Augustine in his works follows this same principle. To illustrate this thought Niebuhr uses the dynamics of sex. Sex is not sinful in itself. However, once the original harmony of nature is disturbed by man's sinful self-love, sex becomes an effective tool for:

> […] both assertion of the self and the flight from the self. This is what gives man's sex life the quality of uneasiness. It is both a vehicle of the primal sin of self-deification and the expression of an uneasy conscience, seeking to escape from self by the deification of another. […] An analysis of sexual passion thus verifies the correctness of the seemingly contradictory Christian interpretation of the relation of sensuality to self-love. It contains both a further extension of the sin of self-love and an effort to escape from it, an effort which results in the futility of worshipping the "creature rather than the creator.[66]

In the final analysis sensuality is:

1. The final form of self-love.

2. An effort to escape self-love by the deification of another.

3. An escape from the futilities of both forms of idolatry by a plunge into unconsciousness.[67]

Niebuhr's discussion of the sin of selfishness has come under much more attack than his discussion of pride. The objections have been very different and diverse both in form and content. First, theologians who are sympathetic to Niebuhr's thought have expressed regret that he has spent much less time and effort developing a comprehensive Christian view of sensuality, as a result of which his treatment of

---

[65] *The Nature*, vol.1. 233.
[66] Ibid. 237.
[67] Ibid. 239.

sensuality lacks "the convincing power found in his approach to pride,"[68] and sensuality is viewed as a degraded form of pride. This a valid critique since Niebuhr spends only about 12 pages in *Nature and Destiny* vol. 1. to discuss the sin of sensuality, while his treatment of pride is much more extensive and elaborate.

Second, Niebuhr has also come under attack by feminist scholars. For instance as early as 1960, Valerie Saiving objected Niebuhr's view of sin saying that the chief problem of Niebuhr's hamartiology is making a universal declaration about the nature of sin based on exclusively male experience.[69] According to Saiving, women have specific forms of temptation and specific forms of sin, which are "outgrowths of the basic feminine character structure […]. They are better suggested by such terms as … underdevelopment or negation of the self."[70] The same basic principle would hold true for groups that are marginal and subordinate in a society and have a diffuse personal center or a lack of personal agency (the people belonging to such groups would rather have to repent from the lack of self-assertion).[71] Judith Plaskow has been even more specific in her critique of Niebuhr's hamartiology in her 1980 book *Sex, Sin and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich*, saying that one of the chief mistakes of Niebuhr is focusing "only on those aspects of sensuality which do seem to flow from pride, entirely rejecting important dimensions of the human flight from freedom."[72] Thus, Plaskow concludes, Niebuhr is "unable to speak to or evaluate those patterns of human behavior which are particularly characteristic of women."[73] These criticisms at least partially are true.

---

[68] Ibid. 93.

[69] Rebecca Chopp "Eve's Knowing: Feminist Theology's Resistance to Malestream Epistemological Frameworks," *Concilium* 1996/1 (1996): 116-123. It is interesting to note, that Chopp, while speaking highly of Saiving's critique, allows for a possibility of the feminist critique possibly committing the very same error it is speaking against: "Though feminist critique would itself have to learn to be resistant to any one notion of universal woman's experience, the logic remains the same: knowledge is reflective-consciously or unconsciously-of the speaker and his or her particular social location." (p. 118.)

[70] Quoted in Clayton E. Beish "The Doctrines of Sin and Atonement in Reinhold Niebuhr's Theology: An Analysis and a Proposed Corrective," *Consensus* Vol. 23, no 2 (1997): 27-42.

[71] Lois Malcolm "The Gospel and Feminism: A Proposal for Lutheran Dogmatics," *Word and World*, vol. Xv, No. 3 (Summer 1995): 290-298.

[72] Ibid. 33.

[73] Ibid. It must be noted here that, though in passing, Niebuhr does say something about this issue in the discussion of human sexuality: "While the more active part of the male and the more passive part of the female in the relation of the sexes may seem to point to self-deification as the particular sin of the male and the idolatry of the other as the particular temptation of the woman in the sexual act, yet both elements of sin are undoubtedly involved in both sexes." (*The Nature*, vol.1. 237.) Therefore, it seems that for Niebuhr it is not of primary importance to address "the sins of the women." It seems more important for him to address the sinful situation as such not going into details as to what are the proportions of certain sins in the representatives of different genders. This kind of addressing the

Indeed, it seems that Niebuhr is inclined to treat sensuality as a kind of an afterthought to his discussion of pride. However, basing the argument on the "basic feminine character structure", which at least sociologically speaking is subject to certain norms in a given society at a given time, seems to be doing injustice to the flow of Niebuhr's argument in general. For instance, it would be quite plausible to speculate that a top-level female executive in the 21st century would not be immune to sensuality as an outgrowth of pride in certain contexts (this may or may not have been the case in the 1960's). Likewise, to say that underdevelopment and negation of the self is a completely feminine problem also does not seem to be entirely accurate. This problem could easily apply to males of the 21st century, especially if they would be less educated than an average woman, if they would have a low-paying job, if they would be unemployed for long periods of time etc.[74] However, the length and the scope of this thesis do not allow going deeper into the feminist critique of Niebuhr's thought. The important observation for the theme of this thesis is the fact that the relation between sin (regardless of its gender affiliation) and self-transcendence (an attribute of *imago Dei*), as Niebuhr describes it, does not come under reasonable criticism by the feminist scholars.

Third, it has been argued that Niebuhr is wrong in claiming that the sin of sensuality is secondary to the sin of pride. If such were the case, then the remedy required for pride (destruction and shattering of it)[75] would basically be the same as the remedy for sensuality. However, as Clayton E. Beish has rightly observed, in the case of sensuality one has to deal with a self weakened and dissipated through self-

---

"sinful situation as such" relative to the human pride across gender lines is characteristic to some recent feminist authors as well. It will suffice to mention just one such author. Sara Maitland, in her *A Big Enough God* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), has said the following about the unending human quest for importance regardless of gender: "This may be because of a profound arrogance: our desire to be special, to be the most important thing in the universe – indeed to have the universe made for us, for our benefit. Human pride is undoubtedly one of the most serious problems the universe has to deal with, but a false humility, a denial of any subjectivity is no better." (p. 72)

[74] Even among feminist scholars objections have been raised against a universalized definition of a "woman's sin". For instance, Susan Thistlethwaite in her book *Sex, Race, and God: A Christian Feminism in Black and White* (New York: Crossroad, 1989) points out that Saiving's definition of women's sins is too limited because it does not take into consideration social and ethnic factors: "Saiving's contribution to understanding 'sin for women' is misleading." (Quoted in Kathryn Greene-McCreight "Gender, Sin, and Grace: Feminist Theologies Meet Karl Barth's Hamartiology." In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 50, no. 4 (1997): 418)

[75] Such is the remedy for the sin of pride, which Niebuhr suggests based on apostle Paul's writings: "We have previously noted that St. Paul is fond of interpreting the destruction of the old life and the birth of the new in the symbolism of the death and resurrection of Christ. The first assertion of this interpretation is that the old, the sinful self, the self which is centered in itself, must be "crucified." It must be shattered and destroyed." (*The Nature and Destiny*, vol. 2, 108.)

assertion, as opposed to a self which would be inflated with self-assertive will (the case of pride). [76] Therefore, according to Beish, in order to formulate an adequate theory of atonement one must treat pride and sensuality as co-lateral. [77] If such is the case, then one is able to view the atoning work of Christ as not only shattering pride, but also salvaging the forfeited selfhood and affirming human freedom.[78] It must be noted, however, that Niebuhr himself does make allusions to the transformations that take place in the self as a result of the redemptive work of Christ: "… only God in Christ can break and reconstruct the sinful self."[79] Apparently such allusions are not extensive and detailed enough to supply the answers to questions asked by Beish and other scholars who hold similar positions.

Self-transcendence and the redemptive work of Christ

In order to keep focused on the topic of this thesis, I will refrain from detailed discussions of various developmental phases in Niebuhr's Christological thought. My primary concern is what role transcendence as an essential attribute of man made in *imago Dei*, plays in Niebuhr's Christology. Though time and again Niebuhr has said that he is not a theologian (also with respect to his own treatment of Christology), he has also admitted that it is impossible to divorce anthropology from Christology if one really wants to find solution to man's problems:

> The situation is that I have come gradually to realize that it is possible to look at the human situation without illusion and without despair only from the standpoint of the Christ-revelation. It has come to be more and more the ultimate truth. […] Thus the Christological center of my thought has become more explicit and more important.[80]

---

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] It appears that Niebuhr, when talking about the sinner "being crucified with Christ" in the Pauline sense, seems to be assuming that once the proud and sinful self is broken through crucifixion, a new self emerges. This new self is able to perceive God's judgment, and mercy much more adequately, and is transformed in the process: "The self is shattered whenever it s confronted by the power and holiness of God and becomes genuinely conscious of the real source and center of all life. In Christian faith Christ mediates the confrontation of the self by God; for it is in Christ that the vague sense of divine, which human life never loses, is crystallized into a revelation of a divine mercy and judgment. […] Yet, when the sinful self is broken and the real self is fulfilled from beyond itself, the consequence is a new life rather than destruction. In the Christian doctrine the self is therefore both more impotent and more valuable, both more dependent and more indestructible than in the alternate doctrines." (*Nature and Destiny*, vol. 2, 110-114). It is unfortunate, however, that Niebuhr does not elaborate further on what are the inner dynamics of the real self in relation to the sin of sensuality, and the weakened self that is at the root of sensuality.

[79] *The Nature*, vol. 2. 118.

[80] Niebuhr, "Reply." 439.

First, when turning to Niebuhr's Christological thought three things must be kept in mind:

1. In Niebuhr's theology Christology is pivotal, not peripheral.[81]
2. Niebuhr's ideas about the person and work of Jesus Christ are more implicit than explicit.
3. Niebuhr's Christology is reverse, not regular.[82]

To formulate his Christology, however, Niebuhr starts with two very important presuppositions resulting from his cultural and theological observations. First, he observes that both classical and modern Western cultures do not have an adequate view of man:

> The fact that culture identifies God with some level of order of human consciousness, either rational or super-rational, or with some order of nature, invariably falsifies the human situation and fails to appreciate either the total stature of freedom in man or the complexity of the problem of evil in him, is the most telling negative proof of the Biblical faith. Man does not know himself truly except as he knows himself confronted by God.[83]

Second, he states that the problem of the modern Christologies is that they do not recognize the full stature and freedom of man. The man "standing in his ultimate freedom and self-transcendence beyond time and nature, he cannot regard anything in the flux of nature and history as his final norm. Man is a creature who cannot find a true norm short of the nature of ultimate reality."[84] Man's sinful condition makes him equally unable to know the truth by reason, and to obey the truth by will. Both man's

---

[81] Bob Patterson has put it very well saying: "In the first reading of Niebuhr's works it is not obvious that Christology is the leitmotif of his theology; but when his works are read with this admitted key, they show an intrinsic unity. Although he was late in emphasizing Christology, he once remarked that his theology was nothing more than an analysis of the truth about "Christ for us" in its significance for man." (p. 104)

[82] Paul Lehmann, "The Christology of Reinhold Niebuhr," in Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought.* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961) p. 255. What Lehmann means by reverse Christology is that initially Niebuhr sides with the 19th century liberalism in reversing the orthodox Christology, according to which exposition of Christ's person comes before the exposition of His saving work. But as Niebuhr develops, he moves away from the traditionally liberal approach to Christology, which abandons the classical orthodox distinction between the person and the work of Christ, concentrating on the "Jesus of history" instead. Niebuhr in his Christology comes up with a unique Christological synthesis in which: "Niebuhr, without surrendering the "Jesus of history," and without returning to a scholastic Christological scheme, nevertheless comes at the end to the view that Jesus' relation to God is the basis of and the key to Jesus' historical significance." (Ibid. 256) In other words, Niebuhr moves from the transforming power of Christ in man and the society (his early emphasis – "Christ in us") to the transcendent reality and truth of Christ (his latter emphasis – "Christ for us").

[83] *The Nature*, vol.1. 131.

[84] Ibid. 146.

will and man's reason must be set free from the bondage of sin. God in his grace gives man:

1. The truth as a norm. This truth is Christ Jesus who is the Son of God and second Adam at the same time.

2. Also, in Christ God has given man the power to fulfill the self's norm provided by Christ.[85]

In the beginning of his Christological discourse Niebuhr reiterates again that two basic factor's of man's existence are man's involvement in the natural process (including the instinct of survival), and man's transcendence over the natural process (including the uneasy conscience over the significant role that the instinct of survival plays in his ethical decision-making process). A satisfactory answer to this problem cannot be found in the natural historical process:

> But the actual situation is that, though we are subject to the conditions and limitations of nature, we are not absolutely conditioned or limited. The human spirit rises in indefinite transcendence over the natural conditions of life; and there is no particular point at which conscience can be made easy by the assurance that an action beyond this point would mean loss of life or sacrifice of our interests. There is always the possibility of sacrificing our life and interest; and this possibility always has the corresponding assurance that to lose our life thus is to gain it. But such a gain cannot be measured in terms of the history which is bound to nature. The gain can only be integrity of spirit which has validity in "eternity." It can have meaning only when life is measured in a dimension which includes the fulfillment of life beyond the present conditions of history.[86]

Examination of the problems of man in nature-history has clearly revealed that the history points beyond itself. This pointing is made possible by the freedom and transcendence of the human spirit, which is never satisfied with the historical-natural process no matter to what levels this process may rise.

However, no matter how free human beings are, they will never be so free as to solve the mystery of evil that enslaves them.[87] Hence, they look for the "essential reality" which transcends the realities of history and can only be found in the character of God. God's character is revealed in the sacrificial love or *agape* revealed upon the cross of Christ.[88] The nature of *agape* love that the cross of Christ reveals

---

[85] Patterson. 104.

[86] *The Nature*, vol.2. 74-75.

[87] Andrew Flescher "Love and Justice in Reinhold Niebuhr's Prophetic Christian Realism and Emanuel Levina's Ethics of Responsibility: Treading between Pacifism and Just-War Theory." In *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (January 2000): p. 70.

[88] *The Nature*, vol.2. 96-97.

can't be reduced to the limits of history. Nor can it be dismissed because it transcends the history: "It transcends history as history transcends itself. It is the final norm of a human nature which has no final norm in history because it is not completely contained in history."[89] This *agape*-perfection of cross represents the fulfillment and the end of historical ethics. This is a concept that can only be understood in the wisdom of faith.

The meaning of the Christian doctrine of the normative man being revealed in Christ as the "second Adam" is that the *agape* love of God is conceived in terms "which make the divine involvement in history a consequence of precisely the divine transcendence over the structures of history."[90] The *agape* of God is both an expression of God's majesty and of His relation to history. Therefore, in the cross of Christ we see the paradoxical relation between God's *agape*, "which stoops to conquer, and the human *agape* which rises above history in a sacrificial act."[91] Hence, Niebuhr concludes Christ's sacrificial *agape* love is the highest possibility of human existence. Such *agape* love would not be possible had man not been created in the image of God with the innate ability of self-transcendence, and it certainly would not be possible without the redeeming work of Christ.

Conclusion

As evidenced by the above-discussion, the idea of man being created in the image of God with the ability of self-transcendence as the key characteristic of this image lies at the very foundation of Niebuhr's theological anthropology. The ability of self-transcendence over the limitations of nature to which man is subjected is involved to a certain extent in man's fall into sin. It helps to understand the tragic dynamics of the two basic sins of man – pride and sensuality. It is also involved in the redemption of man through the cross of Christ. Likewise, it illumines and helps to grasp the concept of *agape* love as the highest possibility of human existence. In short, the ability of self-transcendence belongs to man's design in the image of God, and it has powerful and far-reaching implications in virtually every sphere of human life.

---

[89] Ibid. 75.
[90] Ibid. 71.
[91] Ibid.

The most important point, however, in the context of this thesis is that none of the Niebuhr critics I have examined have seriously questioned or tried to refute the connection between self-transcendence as an indispensable feature of *imago Dei*, and the basic problems of humanity as Niebuhr describes them. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the ability for self-transcendence is an integral part of man's design as a creature created in the image of God. Hence, it plays a key role in the deepest existential and religious processes of human spirit, and it must be considered when the issues of pastoral care are dealt with.

Chapter six

THE VIEW OF MAN IN PASTORAL COUNSELING (CARE)

In order to even begin to talk about the view of man in pastoral counseling, first the very term "pastoral counseling" must be carefully defined. This is what I will try to do in the first part of the present chapter. In doing so I will mostly interact with the Anglo-American context and with the Anglo-American tradition in the area discussed here. There are three reasons (assumptions) for choosing the Anglo-American context, which I will further explain and illustrate throughout this chapter. For now, however, I will only briefly sketch them below.

First, there is infinitely more scientific literature produced and available in English on the subject than there is in any other major language used for theological research and discussions today. Besides, it is not just because of literature that is available in English along with translations and compilations from works produced in other languages. It is mostly because the vast majority of authors, practitioners, and researchers who write about pastoral counseling (pastoral care, pastoral psychotherapy) belong in one way or another to the Anglo-American cultural milieu and theological traditions that are dominant in the Anglo-American countries.[1]

---

[1] I am fully aware of the fact that in the world, which presently lives under the sign of immanent globalization, such terms as Anglo-American cultural milieu are at best very vague abstractions. They are, however, describing certain historical realities. Namely, the fact that almost all of the "forefathers" of what today is known as pastoral counseling have come from the US or the UK, and as such they have been products of their cultural contexts and traditions of "doing theology".

It also seems that for several reasons the pastoral counseling movement is still experiencing a much wider flourishing in North America than elsewhere in the world. Holifield has identified several reasons as to why this has been the case over the past several decades (E.B. Holifield, "Pastoral Care Movement" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Gen. Ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990): 845-849): 1. Since the late seventies psychotherapy has exerted profound influence on the North American culture as a whole, and the church in particular. 2. There has been a strong institutional network of clinical pastoral educators established, which has created and nurtured among theology students an interest in pastoral counseling. 3. American economy has sustained a great number of chaplaincy positions in hospitals and other institutions over the years. 4. A number of American private foundations have been active in financing and subsidizing the expansion of the pastoral counseling and care movement mostly through establishing clinical training programs at theological seminaries, and through funding of professional organizations such as the *American Association of Pastoral Counselors.* 5. Americans in the past few decades have been much more active in the area of debates over the accreditation of counselors and organizations, the nature of pastoral counseling centers, and the practice of pastoral psychotherapy. Europeans, in contrast to the Americans, have shown much less interest in this area, and "have tended to follow the nomenclature that became standard in the international movement, which linked pastoral counseling closely to pastoral care." (p. 849)

Second, the very term "pastoral counseling" comes out of the Anglo-American culture in general and North American culture in particular.[2] At least linguistically (and in certain contexts even conceptually) "pastoral counseling" is different for instance from the German *seelsorge*, or the Russian *dushepopechitelstvo*.[3] In the recent decades, however, mostly due to the influence of the American Clinical Pastoral movement, there has been a shift taking place both in the traditional Russian and the traditional German approach to pastoral care, which in some cases has moved the traditional approaches closer to what might be called (though with caution) the American version of pastoral counseling.

---

[2] Patton names four theologians who are considered to be the four pioneers, or "gospel writers" for the modern pastoral counseling. They are also largely responsible for how the very term pastoral counseling has been constructed, defined, and understood by larger Christian community. Their names are: Seward Hiltner, Caroll Wise, Paul Johnson, and Wayne Oates. Incidentally, they all happen to Americans. (J. Patton, "Pastoral Counseling" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Gen. Ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990): 849-854). Some would also include Howrd Clinebell, the first president of the American Association for Pastoral Counselors in the group of pioneers, mostly due to the fact that his 1966 book *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* is considered a landmark volume in the field, which builds on the work of the first four "pioneers" at the same time offering new insights into the discipline of pastoral counseling.

[3] Both the German *seelsorge* and the Russian *dushepopechitelstvo* literally mean "the care of the soul". This term comes perhaps closer of all to the English "pastoral care", yet even there is a readily observable difference. Both the Russian and the German terms describe an activity whose object is the human soul for which someone cares. It may, and in most cases is done by an ordained and specially trained clergy person. It can, however, be done by a non-clergy person as well. However, it is expected that the person executing pastoral care will be a spiritual authority to whom the person (soul) being cared for is accountable. This may include everything from an elder in a local church all the way to a nun, or a monk. In the recent decades as the spectrum of pastoral care providers in the German-speaking and the Russian-speaking countries is widening, more and more trained professionals from other humanities (e.g. psychology) are included in the group that can provide pastoral care. It is strongly emphasized (especially in the Russian Orthodox context) that the care provider still has to be accountable to the church for what she or he does.

The English term, on the other hand, presupposes that the care (counseling) of the soul will be conducted by a pastor. Though in the last four decades the fundamental assumptions behind the term "pastoral counseling" have changed in favor of the non-pastors, the very notion of the soul care provider being a very highly and specifically trained individual has become even stronger and in some cases more rigid.

Something similar has also taken place in the context of the German *seelsorge*. While it is recognized that traditionally the role of the pastoral care provider has been understood as the proclamation of the word of God to the person (representative E. Thurneysen), since the mid-sixties the American pastoral care in tradition of the Rogerian client-centered therapy has exerted great influence on the German traditional *seelsorge* (Karl E. Schiller "Seelsorge" in Gastager, H., u.a. (Hrsg.), *Praktisches Wörterbuch Der Pastoranthropologie. Sorge Um Den Menschen*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht, 1975), 956). This has also lead to the shift in understanding as to who may or may not provide *seelsorge* to a person. While traditionally it has been a person ordained by the church for that purpose (e.g. a pastor or a deacon), in recent decades the spectrum of the providers of *seelsorge* has been widened to include also people trained in psychology and sociology. This widening of spectrum, according to one view, again is due influence of the American movement of Clinical Pastoral Education movement on the German-speaking pastoral care providers. (Karl E. Schiller "Seelsorger" in Gastager, H., u.a. (Hrsg.), *Praktisches Wörterbuch Der Pastoranthropologie. Sorge Um Den Menschen*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht, 1975), 957-958).

Third, the weight of the current discussions and debates about the present situation and the future perspectives of pastoral counseling is being carried by the practitioners and theoreticians who belong to what I have chosen to call the Anglo-American milieu and tradition.[4] I will refrain from going into social, psychological, and anthropological speculations as to why it is this way. I will limit myself to simply stating the obvious, namely that the person who wants to learn about pastoral counseling today in all of its diversity and colorfulness will sooner or later discover that though the roots of it are hidden in the European philosophical and Religious tradition, its present life is largely determined by the North American and, in some cases, by the English scholars and practitioners.

As stated above these three assumptions upon which my approach to the subject of pastoral counseling will be built are going to be further discussed and illustrated throughout this chapter. With these three assumptions in mind I will now turn to the definition of terms as they are used in contemporary literature devoted to pastoral counseling.

There seems to be a consensus among the scholars that when it comes to the area of practical theology that involves caring for a person's spiritual needs and/or wellbeing, there are three different forms of helping: pastoral care, pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy. I will now turn to defining and briefly discussing all three forms of helping, taking as a starting point the criteria formulated by the eminent scholar of practical theology, Donald S. Browning.

Pastoral care

Browning defines all three forms of helping based on the criteria of the extent to which pastor distances "himself or herself from an explicitly moral stance in

---

[4] It is noteworthy that the trend toward widening both the theoretical basis for *seelsorge*, as well as the spectrum of those who can provide pastoral care services has become increasingly stronger among the German-speaking theologians during recent decades. Likewise, the American influence on these processes is still recognized as the major factor in this widening. For instance, Ladenhauf argues for integration of the psychotherapeutic methods (Gestalt in particular) into the educational framework of *seelsorge* providers. He simply concludes that the dialogue between theology and other humanities in the realm of *seelsorge* is a fact, and that the trend towards integration of both is continuing to grow. (Karl Heinz Ladenhauf "Integrative Therapie und Seelsorge – Lernen" in Isidor Baumgartner (Hrsg.), *Handbuch der Pastoralpsychologie*. (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1990), 181-186).

working with people and focuses instead on the psychological dynamics involved."[5] Based on the distance of the caregiver from the moral stance in working with people, pastoral care is perhaps the most inclusive of the three forms listed. It includes basically everything that is done for an individual or a group with the purpose of promoting the wellbeing of an individual and/or group. Pastoral care, as Browning puts it, takes place anywhere from a street corner to the hospital room, and it may involve anything from an unstructured work with youth all the way to formal dialogues with individuals, couples and groups. This is where the supportive nature of pastoral care as a ministry becomes obvious.[6] The overarching purpose of pastoral care is to hold together religious, ethical, psychological, and moral perspectives to each personal exchange as a form of Christian witness. Put succinctly, pastoral care may be defined as "that aspect of the ministry of the Church which is concerned with the wellbeing of individuals and of communities."[7]

Even though the origins of the pastoral care movement as an organized theoretical framework date back to the mid-fifties and the processes in American theology[8] after the end of World War II, pastoral care as a complex of Christian activities is believed to be the oldest of the three forms of helping mentioned here. The origins of pastoral care are traced back to the first days of the Christian church when it was mostly understood as either an expression of love and care for one another among the Christians, or as a means of "inculcating the ideals and discipline of the Church among its members."[9] There is a consensus among scholars that

---

[5] Donald S. Browning, "Introduction to Pastoral Care," In Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling.* (NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985), 5.

[6] Hulme defines pastoral care as a "supportive ministry to people and those close to them who are experiencing the familiar trials that characterize life in this world, such as illness, surgery, incapacitation, death, and bereavement." Wiliam E. Hulme, *Pastoral Care and Counseling.* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), 9.

[7] Alastair V. Campbell "The Nature of Pastoral Care" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care.* Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987), 188.

[8] E.B. Holifield "Pastoral Care Movement" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling.* Gen. Ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 845. According to Holifield, pastoral care as an academic subject in its own right began to be taught in the American protestant seminaries in 1808 and that marks the beginning of a movement as it is known today in all its complexity. At the same time Holifield also claims that there is no fundamental and qualitative difference between the earliest forms of Christian pastoral care and the modern movement. The essential philosophical approach is the same, namely the desire to enrich pastoral ministry by exploiting the resources of philosophy, medicine, and psychology.

[9] W.H.C. Frend "Pastoral Care: History – The Early Church" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care.* Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987), 190.

historically pastoral care has had four major functions: healing, guiding, sustaining, and reconciling.[10]

There is also a somewhat united view of those who can practice pastoral care. It is recognized that all Christians are called to care for others. It is also argued that the role of pastors as explicated in the Bible is to equip the whole people of God for doing ministry in the world. Hence, according to one view, pastoral care can and should be practiced by all Christians who are equipped by their pastors, and who care for others. To make pastoral care into a professional function of the clerical minority in the Church "loses sight of its main purpose which is the arduous and lifelong task of loving one's neighbor in need."[11]

Pastoral psychotherapy

Pastoral psychotherapy lies at the other end of the spectrum in that it is very specialized (even more so than pastoral counseling).[12] It is still pastoral in that it works within the framework of the Judeo-Christian religious and moral tradition. In this tradition there is a discernable set of moral and ethical values, as well as shared anthropological assumptions about human origin, constitution, and nature. On the other hand it is therapy because it employs certain techniques and practices that set it apart from pastoral care and counseling. Generally speaking pastoral psychotherapy is characterized by:

- Time limited contracts covering length and frequency of pastoral conversation (this holds true for the counseling as well).
- Specialized setting such as a pastoral psychotherapy center which is located at a distance from the church building where worship takes place.

---

[10] Alastair, 188. The same standard view is also reflected in most reference works in the field. See for example Hurding, R.F. "Pastoral Care, Counseling and Psychotherapy" in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*. Eds. David J. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1995): 78-87.

[11] Campbell, 188.

[12] In defining pastoral psychotherapy Browning refers to a specifically North American context. Such limiting of a certain practice to one cultural context has its downsides in that it paints a broad brush picture at the expense of other contexts where the same practice may be understood and/or practiced differently (e.g. Orthodox psychotherapy in the Eastern Orthodox context). At the same time, as stated before, in today's world North America has assumed the leading role in defining pastoral counseling and psychotherapy as branches of practical theology, as well as clinical disciplines. Hence, anyone attempting to define pastoral psychotherapy and/or counseling in today's world will have to at least refer to if not exclusively base his or her definition on the North American context.

- Specialized goals. While pastoral psychotherapy similar to counseling deals with the religious discernment, it also focuses in a concentrated way on the "psychological and developmental obstacles within a person's life which may be impediments to free and confident thinking, decision making and action."[13]

Here Browning very closely echoes the definition of pastoral psychotherapy formulated by Clinebell some years earlier. For Clinebell pastoral psychotherapy is a more complex and lengthier form of pastoral counseling in that "it is the utilization of long-term, reconstructive therapeutic methods when growth (of a person) is deeply and/chronically diminished by need-depriving early life experiences or by multiple crises in adult life."[14] At the same time Clinebell sees pastoral counseling and psychotherapy as having virtually the same overarching goal: "Counseling and therapy are methods of helping people to learn to love themselves, their neighbor, and God more fully and freely."[15] In short, it is believed that of the three areas identified here, pastoral psychotherapy is the closest one to the secular psychotherapies, which at least partly explains why it is at times shaped and influenced heavily by the techniques and intervention strategies designed within the framework of current psychotherapeutic systems.

There is also another view, which cannot be overlooked under this category. According to this view all pastoral counseling, in essence, is therapy, and therefore the term "pastoral counseling" must be dealt away with as incomplete and somewhat misleading. One of the proponents of this view is Carroll Wise who claims that when a pastor works with a person over an extended period of time in a structured relationship he is doing nothing less than engaging in a form of psychotherapy:

> Both in a broad and also in a narrow sense, the pastor does a form of psychotherapy. By psychotherapy we mean process, engaged in by two or more persons in which one is accepted as a healer or helper, who aims at assisting the other to change feelings, attitudes, and behavior, or, in other words, become in some ways a different person. Psychotherapy deals with intrapsychic processes, with interpersonal relationships, and with the person's response to his total environment, including his cultural milieu. [..] In using the word *psychotherapy* rather than *counseling* we are returning to the roots of our religious tradition.[16]

---

[13] Browning, 6.
[14] Howard Clinebell, *Basic types of Pastoral Care & Counseling.* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 26.
[15] Ibid. 65-66.
[16] Caroll A. Wise, *Pastoral Psychotherapy. Theory and Practice.* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1983), 3.

The roots of "our religious tradition" in this context are defined as a holistic approach to healing a person. Wise bases his argument on the biblical idea of the Greek word *psyche* describing the human person in her or his totality, as opposed to just one part of the person. This person is an organic unity within herself; she is broken and needs healing. Again, healing is necessary not just for one part of the person, but for the total, integrated person.

This view, though it certainly merits serious attention, has not gained wide popularity among the people involved in the field. The lack of popularity perhaps has to do with the fact that the activities currently defined as psychotherapies encompass too broad a spectrum of theoretical approaches and practical techniques to be all put in the same category. Perhaps one seemingly legitimate option would be to view pastoral counseling as *one* of the psychotherapeutic systems, in which case it could be viewed as something belonging to the discipline of psychotherapy. The eminent physician and author Edgar Draper represents this view in his book *Psychiatry and Pastoral Care*:

> Pastoral counseling must be considered as a form of psychotherapy in which the therapist is a pastor. Although models, methods, training, accoutrements, skills, theories and goals may be different, our definition of psychotherapy includes him along with the psychoanalyst, psychiatrist, case worker, physician, psychologist, shaman and quack. How good or qualified or skilled or capable a psychotherapist is forms a different though *crucial* question.[17]

In fact, even Wise concedes to this view when he writes: "Pastoral counseling is a form of psychotherapy, and should be dealt with as such."[18] At the same time he still is somewhat reluctant to treat counseling as a separate therapeutic system in its own right, because "the word counseling has long been an ambiguous word, subject to many definitions."[19]

Based on the above discussion, it seems safe to conclude that while the dividing line between pastoral psychotherapy and counseling seems to be very fluid

---

[17] Quoted in Wise, p. 11. From Edgar Draper, *Psychiatry and Pastoral Care,* (Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 79.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid. Perhaps what must be borne in mind here is the fact that Wise's work is written and published in 1983 and, hence, it reflects the linguistic and therapeutic concerns of that time period.

and perhaps even fuzzy at times,[20] both disciplines may be treated as very closely related yet separate. As far as the recent normative texts in the field are concerned, it seems that the consensus at the beginning of the 21st century is still to define these activities as separate realms of practice and expertise.[21]

For the purposes of the present discussion I have decided to limit myself to the use of the term pastoral counseling for the following reasons:

1. It is a narrower and more specific term than pastoral care, and describes a much more structured relationship between the caregiver and the care receiver than the term pastoral care.

2. It is a term that denotes an activity that may legitimately be considered as a subset within the realm of psychotherapeutic systems. Therefore, whenever the term pastoral counseling will be used, a therapeutic process similar to psychotherapy will be also implied.

3. There seems to be much more recent literature available that operates with the term pastoral counseling, than there is literature operating with the two other terms used for the forms of helping within the Christian church.[22]

Pastoral counseling

Pastoral counseling is different from pastoral care in that first, counseling presupposes a more structured approach from the pastoral caregiver to the individual requesting help, and his or her situation. It is, however, less structured and specialized than the pastoral psychotherapy.[23] Pastoral counseling usually involves a specific time

---

[20] R.F. Hurding "Pastoral Care, Counseling and Psychotherapy" in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*. Eds. David J. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 80.

[21] Hurding, R.F. "Pastoral Care, Counseling and Psychotherapy" in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*. Eds. David J. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1995): 78-87.

[22] Also, a fair number of sources use both terms pastoral care and pastoral counseling in the title of a book, or interchangeably throughout the text. In such cases I will simply work with the material, which has direct bearing upon the discipline of pastoral counseling as a much more specifically defined term than pastoral care.

[23] Ibid. Here other authorities in the field are in full agreement with Browning, and they seem to form the current majority view. For instance Hurding defines pastoral counseling "as that activity which seeks to help others towards constructive change in any or all aspects of life within a caring relationship that has agreed boundaries." At the same time Hurding stresses that there is continuity and overlap between pastoral counseling and psychotherapy. It suggested by Hurding that the term pastoral psychotherapy is best used when "the aim of 'constructive change' makes more deliberate and consistent use of psychological mechanisms and processes, and where the 'caring relationship' is put on a more professional basis."
In other words the emphasis here is on a higher degree of professional education of the helper, broader expertise, membership in a relevant organization and/or institution and so on. Here Hurding basically echoes the position of Wise, according to which the counseling/therapy distinction is mostly

commitment and a specific place. The focus in the counseling relationships is on the individual and his/her problems. The problems may range from ambivalence and lack of confidence to various forms of depression. Put very simply, it has been established from the sixties that "the generic aim of counseling of whatever kind is to help people to help themselves by gaining understanding of their problems and more especially of their inner conflicts."[24] The same notion is captured in the definition of pastoral counseling in contrast to pastoral care as it was formulated by Howard Clinebell as early as 1966. It is still considered more or less accurate and relevant:

> Pastoral care and counseling involve the utilization by persons in ministry of one-to-one or small group relationships to enable healing empowerment and growth to take place within individuals and their relationships. Pastoral care is the broad, inclusive ministry of mutual healing and growth within a congregation and its community, through the life cycle. Pastoral counseling, one dimension of pastoral care, is the utilization of a variety of healing (therapeutic) methods to help people handle their problems and crises more growthfully and thus experience healing of their brokenness. Pastoral counseling is a reparative function needed when the growth of persons is seriously jeopardized or blocked by crises. People need pastoral care throughout their lives.[25]

With regards to the moral stance on various issues, it is suggested that during the course of a pastoral counseling relationship, "the pastor or religious counselor should bracket or temporarily set aside moral or normative concerns and concentrate instead on the psychological blocks and developmental impediments which seem to be stifling personal growth."[26]

There may be times, however, when the issue at stake is either a moral or ethical concern. In short it can be said that the major factor which has motivated the development of pastoral counseling movement is the insight that "most human problems are various mixtures of both conflicted human freedom and moral and religious discernment."[27] So, it is recognized within the limits of pastoral counseling that psychological and developmental issues can be correlated with moral and religious perspectives of human behavior. In other words:

---

determined by "building professional fences" either out of ignorance, or out of concern for the market. (Wise, 5-9)

[24] John R. Cavanagh, *Fundamental Pastoral Counseling. Technic and Psychology.* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962), 3. Here Cavanagh is referring to the Roman Catholic theologian father William C. Bier who has suggested this formulation in his article "Goals in Pastoral Counseling" published in the *Pastoral psychology* magazine in February 1959.

[25] Clinebell, 26. 1966 is when the first edition of *The Basic Types* was published.

[26] Browning, 5-6.

[27] Ibid.

> Broadly speaking, what happens in pastoral counseling is the telling of stories, genuinely understanding them as they are presented, and interpreting them in the light of the religious community's larger story of life's meaning. It usually involves assisting the counselee to experience and interpret new possibilities of selfhood, relationship and behavior.[28]

The definition of pastoral counseling present in this statement is discussed at greater length by Gerry Collins, who has "broken it up" into five goals of pastoral counseling.[29] The five goals for pastoral[30] counseling are:

1. Self-understanding. To understand others one first must understand oneself to a certain degree; therefore, pastoral counseling must promote and encourage self-understanding on the part of the counselee.

2. Communication. Pastoral counseling must be oriented toward improving the counselee's communication skills, for more often than not a lack of communication skills is at the root of many relational difficulties a person may have.

3. Learning and behavior change.

4. Self-actualization. This term, which originates in the humanistic psychologies, would have a specific slant in the context of pastoral counseling. Collins proposes to perhaps use the term "Christ-actualization" instead. This means that the Christians' goal in life is to be complete in Christ.

5. Support. This would include a kind of "burden-bearing" by counselor to sustain the counselee through a period of emotional crisis.[31]

---

[28] Patton, 853.

[29] It is interesting to note that the set of goals for pastoral counseling identified by Collins significantly overlap with the ones identified by Browning for the pastoral psychotherapy.

[30] Gary Collins does not use the term "pastoral" when speaking about counseling. He limits himself to the word "Christian" when referring to counseling. It is evident from the text that Collins does not define technically what is Christian counseling, as opposed to Pastoral counseling. Christian counseling in Collins' book, especially in the examples he provides, is conducted either by pastors or by people holding some authority positions in the church. In chapter 3 of his book Collins provides some characteristics of Christian counselors. According to those characteristics Biblical counseling can be practiced by both clergy and laity as long as the counselor is specifically trained and abides by the ethical standards of the profession, which in turn are based on the ethics of pastoral ministry. Therefore, I believe that for the purposes of this thesis it is permissible to use the terms "Christian counseling", "Pastoral counseling" and "Biblical counseling" interchangeably. At the same time it must be borne in mind that different faith traditions may define and apply these terms differently. Here again, for the purposes of developing a more or less coherent discussion within the limits of the thesis I must confine myself to some boundaries. Those boundaries, as stated in the beginning of the chapter are determined by the Anglo-American (predominantly protestant) context, which today has a defining role when it comes to the consensus in the realm of pastoral counseling.

[31] Garry R. Collins, *Christian Counseling.* (Milton Keynes, England: Word Publishing, 1980), 23-24.

Perhaps because Collins is building on several decades of intensive discussions about the nature of pastoral counseling, the 1980 goals list does not seem too preoccupied with the distinctiveness of the profession. However, virtually from the first days of the counseling movement in the church there has been a strong trend towards very carefully defining the specific distinctive traits of pastoral counseling. Or, put simply, to find an answer to the question: "What makes counseling pastoral?" This may perhaps best be explained by the need of the pioneers in the field to forge and formulate the identity of the pastoral counselor in the earlier days of the pastoral counseling movement. To illustrate that trend it will suffice to look at one of the four pioneering theoreticians Wayne Oates, who has identified 8 areas which set apart pastoral counseling as an approach to counseling in its own right.[32] I will limit myself to simply listing them, and explaining in a few words what is meant by some, because these distinctives will reappear throughout the present chapter in various forms and contexts:

1. The God-in-Relation-to-Persons Consciousness in Counseling. This means that instead of a dialogue the counseling conversation becomes a *trialoge* where God is the third participant.

2. God as Reality. For a pastoral counselor awareness of God is a reality. Oates likens the awareness of God to the ultimate concern for persons introduced by Paul Tillich.

3. Conversation about faith in God. Here Oates means that a pastoral counselor must know how, using Dietrich Bohnhoeffer's term, to speak of God in a secular manner. This, however, is not to be mistaken for a simplistic religious chatter.

4. The Basic Data Bank of the Expertise of the Pastoral Counselor. First, this is pastoral counselor's expertise in the basic literature of his religious tradition is meant. Second, it means that the counselor has "detailed historical and contemporary data about the variegated forms of religious culture in the lives of the counselees with whom he counsels."[33]

5. The Specific Community resources of the Church. Here Oates talks about the fact that the pastoral counselor always represents his church in the eyes of the counselee, which depending on various circumstances may be good or bad. It

---

[32] Wayne E. Oates, *Pastoral Counseling.* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 11-25.
[33] Ibid, 17.

also means that he may be a link between the counselee and the community of the church, which may offer a variety of miniature life-support systems to the counselee.

6. The Prophetic Context of Pastoral Counseling. This context means that the pastoral counselor according to his position cannot be morally and ethically neutral. He is representing certain ethical standards and moral norms of the religious group he is accountable to.

7. The Pastoral Counselor as an Ethicist. Here, similar to the previous distinctive, Oates stresses the prophetic role of a pastoral counselor in that he takes responsibility for dealing directly and frankly with ethical issues. In doing so he relies on the technical data and conceptual frames of reference acquired in and through his training.

8. The Power to Bless or Withhold the Blessing. This is the distinctive that perhaps more than the other 7 sets a pastor apart from other helpers, healers and caretakers. The pastor may agree with certain things in the counselee's life and choices thus blessing them, or he may disagree with them thus withholding his blessing. To relinquish or fear to use this power is to give up that which makes their counseling unique and moves them closer to a more secularized approach.[34]

The dialogical nature of pastoral counseling

In some ways it seems that Oates in formulating the above-listed eight areas, is building upon and expanding the 6 basic assumptions of pastoral counseling formulated by Seward Hiltner in his book *Pastoral Counseling.*[35] It is interesting to

---

[34] It is important to note here that for Oates the pastoral counselor necessarily means an ordained minister. Therefore, some of the distinctive traits presented here may have limited applicability for the non-ordained pastoral counselors. Those persons would include people who are on the church pastoral team but are not officially ordained (women in some contexts), or it may include Christian counselors who are educated and licensed according to certain standards and work in close relationship with the church, yet are not for some reason officially ordained as pastors (deacons or evangelists in certain traditions). It is noteworthy to mention in this context that by the end of the 20th century ordination as a qualification of the pastoral counselor has been rendered virtually irrelevant. The books dealing with the subject are simply stating that there are both ordained and lay pastoral counselors. The criteria are limited to one's training and expertise, as well as to one's loyalty and accountability to a specific religious tradition. A classic example of this approach would be Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger's book *Theology and Pastoral Counseling. A New Interdisciplinary Approach.* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995).

[35] Seward Hiltner, *Pastoral Counseling.* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1949), 19-26. The six assumptions of pastoral counseling by Hiltner are formulated more like situational descriptions out of a case study in contrast to Oates' careful formulations. Here are Hiltner's six assumptions: 1.The parishioner senses

note, however, that as early as 1949 Hiltner also speaks of the "dialogical"[36] nature of counseling when he describes the counseling task. There are four main types of assumptions on which the aims of counseling as a practice in the United States are grounded. Hiltner describes them as views regarding human nature:

1. The social adjustment view. According to this view the etiology of various problems people have is explained in terms of inability to adjust to certain realities of life. The difficulty with this approach is that it often uncritically gives rise to "a superficial view of human nature, and that this in turn affects the counseling itself."[37]

2. The inner-release view. According to this view, which has evolved from classical psychoanalysis, the unconsciously repressed desires of a person eventually result in some psychological difficulties. Hiltner himself favors this particular view to some extent, as is evident from his very prophetic phrase: "There is a sense in which we may say that our pastoral counseling during the next few years will improve in the degree to which we accept and use the practical importance of the inner-release view, properly interpreted."[38] However, Hiltner points out the greatest difficulty of this view, which is its very narrow focus.

3. The objective ethical view. Here Hiltner basically talks about the relativity and cultural conditioning of the term "neurotic". The stress here is on trying to find that which is universally human, as opposed to specifically cultural when dealing with emotional problems or maladjusted behaviors.

4. The Christian-theological view. This view is presented as a kind of an overarching and somewhat synthesized version of all three previous views. If adopted carefully, this view may provide room for the best insights from all

---

that something is wrong, and at least in a measure the difficulty may be seen within himself. 2. Counseling proceeds by understanding, and not by agreement or disagreement. 3. Counseling is usually helping another person to help himself, not doing something for him. 4. Counseling involves clarification on ethical issues, but not coercion. 5. The counseling situation involves real respect for the parishioner, and does not proceed through use of a bag of tricks. 6. The situations that give occasion for counseling are viewed by the counselor, and eventually by the parishioner, not only as difficulties to be overcome but also as opportunities for growth and development.

[36] Hiltner himself does not use the term "dialogical," though conceptually Hiltner speaks out of a strictly dialogical framework. The term itself is used in latter years by some other authors. For instance William Hulme describes both pastoral care and counseling as "dialogical ministries" that are oriented to the healing process in pain and suffering. (Hulme, 9).

[37] Ibid, 27.

[38] Ibid, 29-30.

other views along with the realization of God's grace being at work in a person's life.

While emphasizing the dialogical nature of pastoral counseling Hiltner is very clear that the position from which the pastoral counselor operates is religion (or more specifically – his faith tradition). Because of the counselor being grounded in the religious tradition, he has a number of religious resources that are helpful in the process of counseling. Since more detailed analysis of Hiltner's approach goes beyond the scope of this thesis, I will limit myself to one concluding remark about Hiltner's essentially religious approach from a secondary source:

> Religion is a "channel of access" the pastor has to personality. It is by means of this channel that the counselee can recapture belief in himself and pull himself together on the basis of his self-transcendence. Man, made in the image of God, can't come to himself through secondary channels like selfish comfort and success. Only an existential awareness of "the ultimate concern" can give man the strength to prevail and to conquer.[39]

The trend of viewing and evaluating pastoral counseling from the standpoint of its relation to other pastoral functions, or its dialogue with various faith traditions, has gained increasingly wider acceptance in the decades after Hiltner's 1949 book. Some have tried to define the uniqueness and distinctiveness of pastoral counseling by looking at the profession through the lens of the accountability relationships in which the pastoral counselor is or should be involved. For instance, J. Patton has discussed the aspects of the ongoing pastoral counselor's accountability dialogues, which the counselor is a part of. There are three such dialogues:

1. Dialogue with the faith tradition. Here the pastoral counselor's ongoing and continuous relationship with her or his particular religious tradition is emphasized as an indispensable prerequisite for being a counselor.

2. Dialogue with ministerial role, function and identity. There also must be an ongoing process of refining, and in some cases redefining the roles that are involved in being a pastoral counselor.

3. Dialogue with the specific religious community. This is defined as participating in a certain community of faith "as it celebrates and interprets

---

[39] J.S. Hielema, *Pastoral or Christian Counseling: A Confrontation with American Pastoral Theology in particular Seward Hiltner and Jay E. Adams.* (Leeuwarden: De Tille, 1975), 81.

faith, thus maintaining a common experience with all members of that communion."[40]

In these three dialogues the pastoral counselor is presented as someone who is in a living and dynamic relationship with the community of faith, which in turn empowers him or her for the other dialogues. Patton, in his book *Pastoral Counseling: a Ministry of the Church* (1983), first formulates these three central dialogues. There they are tied to the very strongly pronounced emphasis on the "pastoral relationship", which Patton puts at the center of his theory. The centrality of the pastoral relationship is what ought to "claim or reclaim the pastoral counseling as an authentic ministry of the church."[41] Elsewhere Patton has clarified this statement by saying that it would perhaps be more accurate to say that pastoral counseling is "a dimension of the church's unified ministry in the name of Christ."[42] Pastoral relationship or the relational humanness is defined by Patton as the "offering of humanness in relationship which is in some way patterned after the humanness of Christ for us."[43] Relational humanness is made possible and sustained by the three dialogues listed above. As such it is "a normative concept for describing what pastoral counseling should offer and for determining whether or not a particular type of counseling can be understood as pastoral."[44]

The same basic approach using the concept of dialogue when defining the distinctive marks or traits of pastoral counseling has been used by Hurding.[45] Hurding has identified four "cardinal aspects" that are instrumental in the dialogue between psychology and theology, and through which assimilation and reaction has in the recent years given way to dialogue:

1. Professionalism. This cardinal aspect mainly has to do with the establishment and activities of national organizations for pastoral counseling. The chief examples here are The American Association of Pastoral Counselors (est.

---

[40] Patton, "Pastoral counseling," 850-851.

[41] John Patton, *Pastoral Counseling, a Ministry of the Church.* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1983), 10.

[42] John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context. An Introduction to Pastoral Care.* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 213.

[43] Ibid, 14. Here Patton does something quite characteristic of the pastoral counseling literature in general. When speaking about the vitally important truths of theological anthropology Patton limits his analysis to a rather vague statement. Instead, he could have explored in more detail what exactly is this "humanness of Christ for us" and how exactly it works in the pastoral counseling relationship. I think it would be quite legitimate to speculate that such exploration would eventually lead to the theological questions pertaining to the doctrine of *imago Dei* (perhaps even to the concept of *imago Christi* as a subset of the doctrine of *imago Dei*).

[44] Ibid.

[45] Hurding, 85-86.

1963), and The Association for Pastoral Care and Counseling in Great Britain (est. 1975). In more recent years the trend toward the accreditation and licensing of pastoral counselors has been growing. An organization that has been working in those areas is the Association of Christian Counselors in the US (est. 1992).

2. Ethics. Traditionally in pastoral counseling (apparently the Anglo-American context is meant) the pastoral and paracletic has been emphasized at the expense of the prophetic and the nouthetic. Recently, however, the trend is growing towards balancing the consolation and confrontation aspects in pastoral counseling.

3. Social concern. It has become more pronounced and more present in the profession since the 1980s when Christians have "rediscovered the corporate and structural perspectives of biblical revelation, and a greater awareness of human context has entered the counseling relationship."[46]

4. Spirituality. During the latter decades of the 20th century there has been a renewed interest in Christian spirituality, and a shift towards the transcendent.

Pastoral counselor as the key to pastoral counseling

The above-mentioned four areas of dialogue identified by Hurding are a vivid example of the paradigm shift in the field of pastoral counseling towards the end of the 20th century, which is reflected by the shift in the defining question of the profession: "What makes counseling pastoral?" At the end of the 20th century the "Oatian" question had been permanently transformed into a different question. This new question is succinctly formulated in Charles V. Gerkin's book *The Living Human Document: Re-Visioning Pastoral Counseling in a Hermeneutical Mode*: "How can a pastoral counseling be at the same time an authentically theological and a scientifically psychological discipline?"[47] This so-called "root question" (Gerkin's term) of the present pastoral counseling movement simply states among others, at least one very obvious thing. Namely, that pastoral counseling as a ministry of the church is essentially interdisciplinary. This in turn, seems to imply that the main emphasis of this discussion has shifted from the distinctive characteristics of pastoral

---

[46] Ibid.

[47] Quoted in Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling. A New Interdisciplinary Approach.* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 2.

counseling as a profession to the pastoral counselor as a professional. The counselor now is at the center of discussion as the "arena" of the meeting and cross-pollenization among different disciplines.[48]

The realization and establishing of the fact that pastoral counseling is essentially interdisciplinary in turn has posited a new and important question. Should the pastoral counseling (emphasis on the profession) quit its flirting with the modern psychological theories, or should the pastoral counselor (emphasis on the professional) become bilingual in terms of being equally well-versed into the languages of theology and psychology? According to Van Deusen Hunsinger the languages of psychology and theology cannot be integrated with one another in a systematic way because they do not exist on the same level in that each has its own aims, subject matters, methods and linguistic conventions.[49] At the same time she draws a sharp and, to my mind, very helpful boundary by stating that this is true only as far as *concepts,* as opposed to *realities* are concerned:

> The presence of the former aspects would not invalidate the significance of the latter, nor would the presence of the presence of the latter aspects invalidate the significance of the former. Although they could be conceptually differentiated they could not finally be separated or divided from one another. At one level the psychological aspects would be significant for their own sake, while at another level they would be significant within a larger pattern of meaning. The spiritual or theological aspects, on the other hand, would be significant in themselves as well as for the way in which they would establish the larger pattern of meaning within which the psychological aspects were ordered.[50]

---

[48] It is interesting to note, however, that the very idea of seeing the counselor as the decisive factor in determining whether or not counseling can be considered Christian is not new. It is just that as a result of emphasizing certain things, while moving some other things to the periphery of the discussion has shifted the emphasis of the discussion. Just to mention one example, Clinebell, as early as 1966, has indicated that there are several crucial characteristics of a pastoral counselor, which determine the uniqueness of pastoral counseling: 1. It is the unique pastoral heritage and the dual training of pastoral counselors (theology and psychology of religion). 2. The counselor's basic premise that "spiritual growth is an essential objective in all caring and counseling." 3. The counselor's ability and readiness to use the resources of their religious tradition as an integral part of their counseling. 4. The setting and context of the counselor being a part of a larger community of faith makes the pastoral counseling unique as well, because the counselors are usually perceived as "representatives Christian counselors." (Clinebell, 67-71.)

[49] When Van Deusen Hunsinger speaks about the relationship of psychology and theology, she uses what she calls the "Calcedonian pattern," which according to her closely resembles Karl Barth's theological perspective. According to the Calcedonian pattern it is possible to view both psychology and theology "without separation or division, without confusion or change, and with the conceptual priority of theology over psychology." She further argues that on the practical level the "bilingual competencies" of the pastoral counselor can (and should in the modern context) be viewed and used according to the stipulations of the Chalcedonian pattern. (Van Deusen Hunsinger, 10.)

[50] Ibid, 67. This is illustrated by Van Deusen Hunsinger's method of contrasting the approach of the eminent theologian Barth with the work and approach of Anna-Maria Rizutto a psychiatrist, object relations psychotherapist and a Catholic laywoman.

In other words, in real life the theological and psychological realities may and do come together at times (e.g. the paralytic from the gospels who is both forgiven and healed at the same time). With regards to counseling, then, the only place where the two can be integrated is in the person of the pastoral counselor while each language still remains a language in its own right:

> To practice pastoral counseling with bilingual fluency, therefore, would mean that one interprets the counselee's material by employing two logically diverse perspectives, the psychological and the theological. Each language would have its own integrity and make its own contribution. Neither would need casting into terms of the other in order to be made meaningful.[51]

The pastoral counselor working within this framework would then function as an interpreter of the client's experience in both theological and psychological terms.[52] In the course of this process of interpretation the counselor and the counselee would eventually arrive at constructing a shared language and a set of shared meanings as they learn from each other's language world.[53] As a result of approaching pastoral counseling from this angle Van Deusen Hunsinger arrives at a conclusion that seems to reflect a strong trend in defining pastoral counseling today. For her pastoral counseling is "an interpretive enterprise where the counselor needs to become fluent in two distinctively different languages: the language of faith and the language of depth psychology."[54] It must be noted here that this position is not in itself recent or modern. Here Van Deusen Hunsinger states it in modern terms, but the position of theology and counseling being two different languages that will never create a third language has been around virtually from the beginning of the debate. Among others who have held this position is the Roman Catholic theologian John Cavanagh who

---

[51] Ibid, 6.

[52] This is not a new concept in pastoral counseling. While the main emphasis has usually been on the profession, the counselor as quite a decisive factor in determining the profile of the profession has also been mentioned at times. For instance in the Lutheran tradition, William Hulme had briefly tackled the issue about 14 years prior to Van Deusen Hunsinger. According to Hulme when it comes to integration of theology with psychology, it is not just mixing the two together in various proportions. It involves the counselor as the key "element" in the process: "Such integration takes place initially within the person of the counselors, which in turn leads counselors to express this integration in their counseling. On the other hand, as counselors follow a structure which manifests this integration, they are reinforcing their own internal integration." Wiliam E. Hulme, *Pastoral Care and Counseling*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), 9.

[53] Van Deusen Hunsinger, 6-10. It must be noted that Van Deusen Hunsinger as a professor of pastoral theology does not use the terms "language" and "meaning" in the sense of modern linguistic theories. For her both terms are simply means to drive home the point of kind of a bi-vocationality of the pastoral counselor in the modern context.

[54] Ibid, 8.

more than thirty years prior to Van Deusen Hunsinger has written extensively about the very different specifics of both pastoral and counselor roles of the minister. Similar to Browning, Cavanagh ties the role of a counselor to how much the pastoral counselor distances himself from a strong moral stance with regards to the presented problem.

> When the pastor extends his interest from the purely religious field into the area of general living, he enters the counseling field. If in doing so, he refrains from offering solutions to the problems brought to him, and renounces the imparting of advice in favor of an attempt to get people to understand themselves, he begins to adopt what is essentially a counseling approach. […] The pastor, as pastor, frequently cannot be nondirective, completely permissive, or indiscriminately accepting. The relationship between the pastor and parishioner cannot be client-centered or counselor-centered, but must be theocentric. Only by stepping out of his priestly role can the pastor practice secular counseling. *He may wear two hats, he may be a professional (secular) counselor, and he may be a pastor. He cannot be both simultaneously.* Ordination by the grace of office does not make the pastor a counselor.[55]

Cavanagh also stresses that the pastoral counselor (after he has put his counseling hat on) should not enter areas of counseling beyond his expertise. The pastoral counselor must only handle what is conscious, and work only with people who don't manifest symptoms of mental disorders. If such symptoms are present; the parishioner must be referred to a psychiatrist.[56] The same notion is more or less prevailing also in the current literature, and it seems that marking the boundaries of the pastoral counselor's competencies as clearly as possible is the consensus among contemporary scholars.

If then, it is assumed that psychology and theology are derived through the methods of their own disciplines and are meaningful first and foremost in their own context, then what exactly is the relationship between them like? Van Deusen Hunsinger has proposed a very convenient model for categorizing this relationship. Basically there are four options, which are all represented by a four-partite grid:

1. Psychology functional/Theology adequate.
2. Psychology functional/Theology inadequate.
3. Psychology dysfunctional/Theology adequate.

---

[55] John R. Cavanagh, *Fundamental Pastoral Counseling: Technic and Psychology.* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962), 21.

[56] Since Cavanagh discusses an average pastoral counselor's competency in the sixties, this statement obviously does not refer to counselors who have gone through a specialized clinical training (especially in today's context).

4. Psychology dysfunctional/Theology inadequate.[57]

The element that determines whether counselor represents a discipline as adequate is his or her ability to look at the God representation offered by a client.[58] This rests on the assumption that it is possible to view any given God representation from both positions; that of theology and that of psychology. Hence, what the grid represents the different possibilities that exist for relating the two sets of norms (theological and psychological). The aim in pastoral counseling for the counselor would thus be the position one according to the grid. Those falling into this position would be proficient in both the language of theology and the language of (depth) psychology:

> Particularly with those counselees who seek not just psychotherapeutic help in the context of their Christian faith, pastoral counselors need to be clear about

---

[57] Van Deusen Hunsinger, 131.

[58] In defining the "God representation" Van Deusen Hunsinger adopts the definition of Anna-Maria Rizutto. Rizutto has defined and explained the God representation in her landmark book *The Birth of The Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of chicago Press, 1979). Rizutto's working hypothesis on the outset of the research presented in the book was that there "would be a close correlation between a person's internalized primary objects and his or her unconscious picture of God" (Van Deusen Hunsinger, 107). In her research Rizutto has found Freud's idea of a person's God representation being constructed from the internalized parent-images and the relationship between them is accurate. However, she argues that contrary to Freud's position, this God image is reworked and re-elaborated throughout a person's lifecycle. Rizutto differentiates between the unconscious God representations (a result of internalizations of one's primary objects) and the conscious conceptual thought about God (religious education, reasoning and other forms of secondary process thought). "The distinction between primary and secondary process thought is responsible for Rizutto's basic connotation that it is the unconscious God image that is the living God, that is, the God who has the emotional transformational power in the person's inner psychic world. The mere concept of God by itself is seen as largely irrelevant psychologically. 'Emotionally … it adds nothing' (Van Deusen Hunsinger, 111).

Some religious scholars have also embraced a similar approach. For instance, professor of Religious studies Joann Wolski Conn describes the dynamics of God representations this way: "As I react to humans who hurt me so I will respond to the Source of life if 'life has hurt me.' If my self-image is so poor and weak that I am preoccupied with defending myself from being hurt by other's rejection, then I will tend to defend myself (often unconsciously) from intimacy with the Holy Other who might also reject me. […] If I am developing a sense of myself as free and self-directed, then I must relate to a God who affirms and empowers my freedom if I am to preserve that self-identity. If my prior religious education or experience does not provide me with such a God-image, then I will either sustain my current sense of self and 'reject God' (i.e. the only God I know) or try somehow to reconcile these conflicting images. The latter results in unresolved developmental issues: development toward religious intimacy with God is retarded because a free adult self cannot be intimate with an authoritarian God; development toward adult self-direction is difficult or impossible when a person believes such a stance is 'wrong' or 'against scriptural teaching' or 'contrary to God's will.'" Joann Wolski Conn, "Spirituality and Personal Maturity," in Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling.* (NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985), 53. Wayne Oates has also made an interesting observation along these lines from a somewhat more theologized perspective. Oates is in agreement with one of the founding "fathers" of the American PCE movement, Anton Boisen, with regards to the true origin of our God representations: "I like the wisdom of Anton Boisen when, on one occasion, he said that Freud insisted that the "God-concept" came from one's relationship to one's parents, when in reality it came from the individual's prior creation in the image of God. Parents for their own reasons diverted the child's worship of God from God to themselves. They actually are Promethean stealers of fire from heaven." (Wayne Oates, *The Presence of God in Pastoral Counseling.* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 47).

the nature of the interpretive task they are undertaking. Cases that require explicitly theological as well as psychotherapeutic interpretation will be regarded as "paradigmatic" for pastoral counseling, for such cases draw directly upon the dual range of competencies that the pastoral counselor has acquired. Just such cases call most clearly for a "bilingual" approach.[59]

Such a bilingual counselor, as indicated above, would be able to adequately interpret his counselees' personal story while keeping totally separate (neither confused nor integrated) the vocabularies from the two language worlds. This conclusion is adequate and satisfactory for the purposes of this thesis as far as the pastoral counselor's professional orientation and capabilities are concerned. Yet, there is one more component that needs to be mentioned and briefly discussed before moving to the next section. That component has to do with the heart-attitude (for a lack of a better word) of the pastoral counselor toward the client.

It seems that a fair number of scholars who write about the discipline of pastoral counseling do not single out that which I have provisionally called the heart-attitude. It is possible that it has been assumed to somehow automatically belong to the very calling of the profession, or to what several scholars have called the "awareness of God in counseling", "awareness of one's ministerial role", or something similar. There could be times and cases, however, when neither awareness nor dialogue of any kind will be sufficient to ensure genuine love and caring for the client on part of the pastoral counselor. Something more will be required.

This "something more" is that, which Patton has called "the identifying mark" of the pastoral counselor.[60] In search of the "identifying mark" Patton has come up with six dialectic dimensions of Christian spirituality, which all shape and enrich each other in an ongoing dialogue.[61] Still, even after describing all six dimensions Patton keeps looking for something seemingly simpler and shorter. In this search for a term, which would capture the pastoral counselor's relational humanity Patton comes to the term first used by Paul Tillich– spiritual personality.[62] This spiritual personality according to Tillich is transparent in that he or she:

-        Radiates the presence of the divine in a special way.

---

[59] Ibid, 9.
[60] Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context,"* 69-75.
[61] The six dimensions are as follows: 1. Mystical/moral, 2. Sacred/secular, 3. Individual/corporate, 4. Belief/faith, 5. Virtue/ability, 6. Perfection/wholeness (p. 70).
[62] Ibid, 71.

- Exhibits both maturity (full consciousness and the actualizing of one's freedom) and blessedness (a state in which the conflicts connected with this freedom are at least temporarily solved).

- Possesses increasing awareness, which is understood as "sensitivity to the ambiguities in oneself and others and the power to affirm life in spite of ambiguity."[63]

- Possesses increasing freedom, which is defined as the ability to evaluate a given situation in light of the Spiritual Presence, as well as power to resist forces that try to destroy freedom.

- The person becomes increasingly related, which is the principle that balances the increasing freedom and guards against isolation.

- Last but not least, he or she evidences the impact of the Spiritual Presence by self-transcendence: "Awareness, freedom, and relatedness each involve self-transcendence, which 'is identical with the attitude of devotion toward that which is ultimate. […] It is like the breathing-in of another air, an elevation above average existence."[64]

Yet, as good and extensive as the above-presented description of the spiritual person is, it still does not pin down one easily recognizable "thing" that would capture the loving and caring attitude that a pastoral counselor would need to have.

I think one of the best terms for this "thing" is coined by Bernard Tyrell. Tyrell has used the term *existential loving* when describing one of the most basic methods of his Christotherapy. He has also offered one of the briefest, yet most profound definitions of existential loving: "To love existentially is to cherish the gift of unique existence which each human being possesses and incarnates."[65] It is important to note, however, that existential loving as described from the perspective of Christotherapy is a purely and genuinely Christian (in the best sense of the word) term. To use the term outside of the framework of Christotherapy (pastoral counseling) would simply mean misusing it.[66]

---

[63] Ibid, 72.

[64] Ibid, 73. Quoted from Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* III. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 235-236.

[65] Bernard J. Tyrrell, "Christotherapy: An Approach to Facilitating Psychospiritual Healing and Growth," in Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling.* (NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985), 65.

[66] The way it is defined and described by Tyrell, 'existential loving' is basically identical with the concept of *agape* love as Merton and Conn develop it (described in the next chapter).

According to Tyrell, existential loving has two sides; one side is the pastoral counselor's love for herself or himself, the other is counselor's love for the client:

> As I already indicated, pastoral counselors are called to love themselves in an authentic fashion, and this means most basically to delight in the gift of existence which they possess. It means also to rejoice in oneself as created in the image and likeness of God and as a redeemed brother or sister in Jesus Christ. Pastoral counselors are likewise called to love existentially those who come to them seeking healing or growth or a solution to a problem in some area. To love existentially is to love with a deep human love transformed by the gift of a Christly love which floods one's heart.[67]

It is quite obvious from both, the definition presented above, as well as from the larger presentation of Christotherapy, that it is impossible to cultivate just one side of existential love without the other. Since Christ is the unifying element in practicing both sides of existential love, they can be practiced simultaneously and also kept in balance.[68]

A person who will be able to practice existential loving in the context of pastoral counseling will be a person of balance as the above-definition indicates. The ability to keep balance, in turn is related to the level of the person's maturity. Therefore, maturity in the context of pastoral counseling must be defined both seriously and carefully.

Joann Wolski Conn has offered a good and balanced definition of what is maturity in the context of pastoral counseling:

> Maturity is, then, the outcome of a process of balancing the lifelong tension between the yearnings for inclusion and distinctness. Maturity is, basically, the deep personal openness which comes from having an independent identity, yet recognizing the personal limitations of independence and autonomy as the goal of development. Valuing, instead, the intimacy of mutual inter-

---

[67] Ibid.

[68] Existential loving is not a static measurement. Rather, it is a dynamic quality that keeps developing and growing as long as the counselor keeps working on it. Tyrell puts a strong emphasis on the connection between existential loving and the counselor's prayer life: "It is very important for pastoral counselors to pray daily for the gift to love themselves and those who come for aid with an ever deepening existential type of love." (p. 65) Tyrell further comments on the balanced nature of existential loving in more practical terms by sketching the boundaries in counseling: "It is important to emphasize that existential loving is not an exercise in sentimentality; it is a love which accepts but does not condone irresponsible types of behavior. It can and does confront when this is necessary. It is a holistic love which is at once affective, spiritual, volitional and contemplative. Existential loving is also the type of love, which liberates rather than enslaves; it aids persons to realize a legitimate sense of autonomy and independence where these qualities are lacking. Finally, the pastoral counselor who loves existentially is aware of the psychological phenomena of transference and counter-transference and deals with them if and when they occur. But the pastoral counselor who works within the framework of Christotherapy does not seek to promote actively transference as do practitioners of some other therapies." (p. 66)

dependence, mature persons are those who can freely surrender themselves, who can risk a genuinely mutual relationship.[69]

Perhaps the greatest contribution of this definition is that it offers a balancing approach to human development theories and frameworks, which by and large are biased towards autonomy. It also serves as a safeguard against a certain approach in psychotherapy and counseling according to which the counselor is seen as "healthy" and the client is viewed as "sick". [70]

There is a close relationship and even reciprocity between human maturity as defined by Conn and Christian spirituality. First, both are genuinely concerned about the inner states (thoughts and feelings are noticed and discussed). Both are in agreement that self-knowledge and self-acceptance are hard work: "Christian spirituality embraces *every* dimension of human thought and feeling but cannot be reduced to human psychology because it is a relationship to God who is beyond all limits."[71]

Second, both can assist the counselor to help clients by helping them see how their Christian experience fosters or inhibits their psychological development. It happens when a counselor commits him or herself "to a parallel, reciprocal and mutually fruitful process of assisting persons to notice and interpret their feelings and thoughts so that they may overcome their defenses for the sake of deeper life."[72]

Concluding the discussion of the role of pastoral counselor in counseling it seems safe to state by way of summary that she or he must be a spiritual personality as defined by Paul Tillich. Besides, she or he must act out of the sense of existential loving while displaying the characteristics of a mature person in the context of

---

[69]Conn, 46. Here it is important to establish the criteria for authentic surrender, as opposed to counterfeit. Here Conn, based on research of psychiatrist Gerald May, offers four guidelines for genuine surrender: 1. Genuine surrender is conscious. 2. It is intentional (as opposed to compelled). 3. It is a responsible act in that it assumes responsibility for an act of surrender, in case it turns out to be a mistake. 4. It assumes responsibility for the act itself, as well as for the consequences of the act. (pp. 46-47)

[70] Ibid, 47. Conn has also described four advantages this kind of maturity would bring to counseling. 1. This view of maturity helps the counselors to view themselves as involved in the same life processes as the clients (getting over the healthy/sick distinction). 2. The two greatest yearnings of human existence – to be included and to be independent, are seriously taken into account. Especially in the religious context they should always be viewed in relation to one another. 3. It recognizes the dignity of each yearning, which basically puts it a odds with the present developmental frameworks which are biased toward autonomy. 4. It encourages constant reevaluation of the relationship between the individual and the social (the self versus the other). It also takes seriously the cultural variable in the process of development.

[71] Ibid, 54.

[72] Ibid.

Christian spirituality. Such a pastoral counselor, then, would be a person who would be able to connect with her client, and to use the context of therapeutic relationship for fostering psychological development and spiritual growth of the client.

The centrality of counselee-counselor relationship in pastoral counseling

When Howard Clinebell several decades ago offered a classification of the five streams of contemporary psychotherapies, he made a note that pastoral counselors would most likely best fit under the "Relational, Systems, and Radical Therapies." Radical therapies according to Clinebell are those psychotherapeutic systems that are oriented towards liberation and empowering. Clinebell felt that: "Since ministers are natural relational and systems counselors, this stream offers abundant resources for pastoral counselors and psychotherapists."[73]

There is a general agreement among the scholars about the importance of relationship in pastoral counseling. In the previous section the person of the pastoral counselor was described and discussed as the key element in pastoral counseling. In the course of that discussion it became evident that orientation towards relationality is quite an indispensable part of the pastoral counselor's professional orientation and personality. Yet, when it comes to interpersonal relationships one person, no matter how relational, is not enough. This is where some of the scholars find useful Martin Buber's thought about real life as meeting in address and response: "Psychology begins with the experience of 'I.' But I am known only in relation to 'Thou.'"[74] Others emphasize the God-in-relation-to-persons consciousness and its importance in the pastoral counseling relationships,[75] which in turn is grounded in a relational understanding of the *imago Dei* as the basis for the pastoral counseling relationship.[76]

This is why along with the qualifications for the pastoral counselor, the pastoral counseling relationship is considered just as important in its own right. As Richard D. Parsons has succinctly put it: "Pastoral counseling is *first and foremost*

---

[73] Clinebell, 378.

[74] Paul E. Johnson, *Person and the Counselor.* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1967), 63. References to Martin Buber and his theory of dialogue tend to appear in older books on pastoral counseling. Another example of that is Frank Lake's landmark book *Clinical Theology:A Theological and Psychiatric Basis to Clinical Pastoral Care,* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 5 ff.

[75] Oates, *Pastoral Counsseling,* 11-12.

[76] Oates, *The Person of God*, 37-50.

exactly that – relationship."[77] Besides, it is a relationship with a fairly strong
teleological orientation:

> In pastoral dialogue, initiated by the pastor's willingness to listen to one of his
> fellow men and concluded when both of them are listening to Jesus Christ, we
> have an epitome of that for which the world exists. Preaching without listening
> may fail to create the communion of saints. The deep mutuality of pastoral
> dialogue costs more, involves the pastor in more suffering, but its endurance in
> the presence and power of Christ is an incredible event in the divine order.[78]

There are various reasons listed by different scholars as to why the counseling
relationship is of such a paramount importance.

First, because the relationship between the pastoral helper and a person is "the
necessary ingredient in all pastoral ministry, and crucial in pastoral therapy."[79]
Second, because healthy human relationships are in general considered to be
"indispensable for wholeness." Third, it is because Christian theology "talks about the
health that is inherent in our relationships with others."[80] Fourth, the relationship is
important also because it is the substance of the legal side of things - therapeutic
contract or covenant. According to Wise both the pastoral therapists as well as the
clients have both, the right and the obligation to enter the covenant for the duration of
therapy: "A clear and firm covenant or contract is the only basis on which therapy can
proceed."[81] And finally, it is important because "therapy is *realized* in the counseling
relationship and would not systematically occur outside of that context."[82] Hence, the
emphasis placed on the counselor's person is just as important as the emphasis placed
on the quality of the counseling relationship: "The quality of the counseling
relationship is, therefore, the keystone to the helping process and thus needs to be of
primary concern to all pastoral counselors."[83]

---

[77] Richard D. Parsons, "The Counseling relationship," in Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and
Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling*. (NY and Mahwah: Integration Books,
1985), 97.

[78] Lake, 15.

[79] Wise, 197. Wise is careful, however, to point out that the pastoral relationship in itself may or may
not be therapeutic: "It is only as the pastor is trained in the essential processes of therapy that the
general pastoral relationship can become basis for a therapy relationship." (Ibid.)

[80] L. Rebecca Propst, *Psychotherapy in a Religious Framework. Spirituality in the Healing Process*.
(New York: Human Sciences Press Inc. 1988), 31. When talking about the health that is inherent in our
relationships, Propst draws from the example of Jesus. The relational health of Jesus is to be
understood as Jesus being empathetic in his relationship with people to the point of not just being with
them, but being *for them*. Propst even goes as far as to say that the meaning of Jesus' existence and his
identity "is to be found in his relationship with others." (Ibid.)

[81] Wise, 153.

[82] Parsons, 97.

[83] Ibid.

Because the counseling relationship is largely dependent on the unique personalities of both the counselor and the counselee, no two counseling relationships will be exactly alike. The counseling process by its nature "defies definitive characterization or cookbook formula presentation."[84] One of the definitions of counseling relationships that takes into account the uniqueness stressed by Parsons has been offered by Richard Dayringer:

> Relationship […] refers to the conscious, voluntary, realistic, appropriate, rational, legitimate, and earned responses of both counselor and client to one another in their current interaction. It is the emotional force that comes into operation between two or more people because of their communicative behavior. Relationship, then, is the spontaneous and earned reciprocity of affective attitudes which persons hold toward each other. [85]

Based on research, Dayringer mentions four goals that are common in both pastoral and secular counseling relationship: 1) personal integration, 2)self-acceptance, 3) restoration of wholesome interpersonal relationships, and 4) discovery of new meaning in life.[86] Along with goals that the pastoral counseling (again, the same functions also pertain to secular counseling) has, Dayringer mentions three major functions of the pastoral relationship. First, the counseling relationship gratifies basic needs. Second, it serves as an occasion for social learning. Third, it acts as a corrective experience and model for interpersonal relationships.[87] As far as the relationship itself is concerned, there seems to be agreement among authors that the counseling relationship and the therapeutic process are first and foremost interpersonal dynamic processes, which can be divided into three dynamic stages.[88]

---

[84] Ibid, 98.

[85] Richard Dayringer, *The Heart of Pastoral Counseling: Healing Through Relationship.* (London: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998), 24. This definition applies to the counseling relationship which does not include transference and countertransference. In making a distinction between transference and relationship, Dayringer refers to such authorities as Otto Rank, Karl Gustav Jung, and Carl Rogers. At the same time he admits that such distinction is possible conceptually, while, when it comes to actual practice of counseling, it is at times virtually impossible to make. There are scholars, however, who take a completely opposite view. For example, Wise defines transference in pastoral therapy as the residual feelings, attitudes and responses from previous relationships and experiences, which the client displaces on to the pastor (Wise, 202.). According to Wise's definition, transference is virtually inseparable from the therapeutic relationship. In short, there are different positions on the place of transference in the therapeutic relationship, which result from various sets of presuppositions adopted by the theoreticians before making an argument.

[86] Ibid, 26. Here Dayringer refers to 1958 PhD dissertation by Arthur H. Becker at Boston University. There are of course, other scholars who have offered the sets of goals for pastoral counseling relationship. However, since there is little variation in the lists, for the sake of brevity I will limit myself to just this research.

[87] Ibid. According to the research by Becker, in the pastoral counseling situation all three functions have had specific religious overtones.

[88] Parsons, 98-99.

The first stage is coming together, or forming the therapeutic alliance. The first step towards forming the alliance is acceptance, which the client needs to feel, and which helps the client get over the anxieties and worries about counseling. The second step is forming the actual alliance, which happens when the client feels accurately understood. This leads to the third step, the acceptance. The acceptance must be mutual and genuine. Genuineness in this context is understood as being free of roles and rigid formulas, and it "involves responding authentically to the client in both a negative and positive manner."[89]

The second stage entails exploring together (reconnaissance). Once the counselor has demonstrated genuine acceptance and unconditional positive regard for the client, he or she needs to provide the client with the opportunity to "define their current concern as well as the resources the resources available to them for problem resolution."[90]

Finally, the third stage marks the working together or (intervention). "Acting together requires that the relationship move through the *planning, implementing,* and *evaluating* of an intervention. Further, it must be emphasized that throughout each of these stages, the focus needs to be on mutual involvement."[91]

Conclusion

Even though I have chosen to call this chapter "The view of man in pastoral counseling," in reality it deals with much more than just anthropological insights. In fact, it deals with the very topic of this dissertation that can be reduced to three questions: The question of the theological mandate and theological basis for pastoral counseling, the question of purpose for pastoral counseling (provided there is a mandate and the theological basis), and the question of theological and interpersonal dynamics of pastoral counseling.

Various theoreticians as well as practitioners of pastoral counseling have dealt with the above-mentioned questions in various ways. The present-day consensus is that pastoral counseling is a dialogical relationship, which works best in the context of existential loving (*agape* love) exhibited by the pastoral counselor who must be 'a spiritual person' (using Paul Tillich's term). Such relationship would stimulate the

---

[89] Ibid, 104.
[90] Ibid, 105.
[91] Ibid,110.

counselee to work towards the developmental goals related to one's quality of life, and toward increased self-transcendence.

Unfortunately, the pastoral counseling literature to date doesn't adequately address and/or explore the fundamental issues of biblical anthropology, which are indispensable in laying the theological foundations for the discipline.[92] Likewise, self-transcendence (relational self-transcendence in particular) is not looked at as perhaps the single most important driving force for the pastoral counseling relationship. It is certainly assumed and implied, and sometimes even mentioned in passing (as in the case of Patton who is using the term as it is defined by Paul Tillich). However, serious attempts to develop the concept of self-transcendence as the major factor in pastoral counseling and link it to the foundational themes of biblical anthropology until recently have not been made.[93]

In the following chapters, therefore, I will try to set forth a tentative model of pastoral counseling, which links the most profound biblical truth about human beings (creatures who *image* their Creator) with their ability to self-transcend. One of the major recent works addressing the issue of self-transcendence as the basis for pastoral counseling is written by Walter Conn. Therefore, Conn's work will be examined and debated in the next chapter as the relationship between a self-transcendence based model of pastoral counseling and the doctrine of *imago Dei* will be explored.

---

[92] It is interesting to note that one of the major recent reference works on pastoral counseling at the time of writing this dissertation, *Competent Christian Counseling* vol. 1, mentions the doctrine of the image of God very briefly only in several places throughout its 813 pages. When this crucial doctrine is mentioned, it is characterized in only one sentence, and as something mysterious: "This God-image, in part, remains a mystery to us, but is reflected in our ability to know God, to study and understand God's creation, to create, and to make moral choices." (p. 182)

[93] It is quite possible that by the time this dissertation is finished there will be more works available, however, for now virtually the only book on the subject is Walter Conn's *The Desiring Self*, which will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter seven

SELF-TRANSCENDENCE IN PASTORAL COUNSELING AND ITS RELATION TO THE THEOLOGY OF *IMAGO DEI*

As stated in the introduction and repeated throughout the thesis, this is the final chapter in which the relation between the theological understanding of imago Dei and self-transcendence will be explored, and conclusions will be drawn as to how this connection can help in developing a model for pastoral counseling that provides a sufficiently broad and flexible framework for integrating a solid theological foundation and an adequate "upper" structure. Up to the previous chapter, the case has been slowly built for self-transcendence as an integral part of the makeup of human beings made in the image of God. Though the discussion of the relation of self-transcendence to the theological understanding of imago Dei is far from being finished, I believe that this thesis provides sufficient material in the form of a survey, which sets this notion forth as theologically legitimate and tenable.

Among theologians who have dealt with the relation between self-transcendence and imago Dei, Reinhold Niebuhr stands out as one who has established, described and explored this relation in great depth (chapter 5). Unfortunately, Niebuhr never set a goal for himself to develop a theology of pastoral counseling based on self-transcendence as one of the key attributes of humans made as *imago Dei*. The same is true for several other leading theologians (e.g. Pannenberg, Rahner) who have written about self-transcendence in the context of theological anthropology, yet have never taken a step further in linking self-transcendence to pastoral counseling in any formal way. Also, to date there are very few authors who have at least attempted to explore the relation of self-transcendence to pastoral counseling. Based on the information gathered in several academic data bases, the leading current author who has written about self-transcendence in pastoral counseling is the professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University, Walter E. Conn. Moreover, Conn has not only written about it; he has advanced a position that pastoral counseling must be anchored, or in Conn's terminology – rooted, in self-transcendence.

Conn has developed this position in a time period extending over two decades. First, he has described the concept of self-transcendence and its relation to the development of conscience in the book entitled *Conscience: Development and Self-*

Transcendence (Birmingham, AB: Religious education Press, 1981). Then, building onto ideas and concepts advanced in the earlier book, Conn has proposed a conceptual framework of pastoral counseling based on self-transcendence in his *The Desiring Self; Rooting Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction in Self-Transcendence* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998). This is the position I will interact with in the present chapter.

The definition of self-transcendence proposed by Conn and its relation to conscience

In the earlier book, which Conn defines as a study in theological ethics, he interprets "conscience as the drive of the personal subject toward the authenticity of self-transcendence that is realized in every instance of creative understanding, critical judgment, responsible decision, and genuine love."[1] Further, Conn postulates that the thesis of his book is that "authentic self-realization is found only in genuine self-transcendence."[2] This is done to counter the popular notion that in the Christian tradition there is an alleged conflict between self-realization and one's obligation to love others. According to Conn there is no conflict. In fact, just the opposite is true – "*true* self-realization (in contrast to the various forms of narcissistic self-aggrandizement which masquerade as self-realization) is not only opposed to responsible love of others, but, far from conflicting with such a love, *requires* it as a fundamental condition for its own possibility."[3]

It is quite obvious from the statements outlined above that the definition of self-transcendence becomes quite important in this discussion. I have already provided some definitions of self-transcendence in the introduction. I have also explained why I believe it is satisfactory for me to use the same working definition that has been used by Niebuhr and Conn. Conn limits himself to the definition that is quite similar to the one offered by Reinhold Niebuhr half a century earlier. Self-transcendence simply put is moving beyond one's own self:

> The term "self-transcendence" has many meanings, some of them quite vague and mysterious. As we have just seen, however, in this study the meaning of "self-transcendence," though not univocal, is quite direct and concrete: it refers primarily to the threefold achievement of "moving beyond one's own

---

[1] Walter E. Conn *Conscience: Development and Self-Transcendence* (Birmingham, AB: Religious Education Press, 1981), ix.

[2] Ibid. x.

[3] Ibid.

self" that is effected in every instance of correct understanding (cognitive), responsible decision (moral), and genuine love (affective). Each of these aspects will be examined in detail when we consider the development theories of Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg, and then the transcendental analysis of Lonergan.[4]

The thesis for Conn's first book thus is that self-transcendence is the criterion of human authenticity:

> …the criterion of human authenticity, of the responsible person, is the self-transcendence that is effected through sensitive and creative understanding, critical judgment, responsible decision, loyal commitment, and genuine love. Put most simply my thesis is that authentic self-realization is to be found in nothing else than such self-transcendence.[5]

Also, self-transcendence has a profound relation to a person's conscience. Conn suggests that conscience is to be viewed as "the most profound expression of the concrete personal subject in his or her drive for self-transcendence."[6] In this process Conn relies heavily on "the transcendental method" developed by Bernard Lonergan. While it would be well beyond the scope of my task for this chapter to interact with Lonergan's method, I will mention a couple of the main points that are central for both Lonergan and Conn, and thus have a direct bearing on the issue at stake.

Lonergan first defines two different and opposing aspects of consciousness – *conscientia-experientia* (consciousness) and *conscientia-perceptio* (reflexive knowing of the self). The key difference here is that in *conscientia-experientia* there is a psychological subject, while in *conscientia-perceptio* where consciousness is perceived as the perception of an object, there is no psychological subject.[7] However, all this comes into focus for what Lonergan calls "the rock" of the transcendental method – "the subject in his conscious, unobjectified attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility."[8]

---

[4] Ibid. 6.s
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid. 8.
[7] Ibid. 118-121. By making this distinction a cornerstone of his argument Lonergan avoids the traditional assertion of the phenomenologists, who claim that consciousness is always consciousness of an object. This is a valid assertion as far as the intentional aspect of the consciousness is concerned, but "it seems to miss the distinctive quality of consciousness by which the subject is also aware of, present to, herself.
[8] Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), 20.

Both Lonnergan and Conn firmly stand in the position of the developmental psychology, which in turn is anchored in a very developmental approach to the human subject. Hence, the claim that the human subject's existing lies in developing. In the words of Lonergan: "The being of the subject is becoming. One becomes oneself."[9] However, as the becoming oneself takes place, the subject's world changes.[10] This world is not necessarily tied to reality, and yet in terms of development this is where the development of the subject takes place. This world, according to Lonergan is the outer circle that denotes the boundary of the correlative world to the subject's development. This is the line where the earth and the sky "meet"; this is how far the subject at any given moment is able to see. The line of this horizon is the boundary of the unknown-known where the known part is on the inside, while the things that person cannot even raise questions about is outside the circle. The circle, or the horizon itself is where the unknown begins, yet it is the kind of the unknown about which the person still can raise questions. Michael Novak, a Lonergan commentator has defined Lonergan's concept of the horizon as follows:

> Horizon indicates a dynamic orientation, for the human subject is not stationary. He moves through many and varied experiences, gains new insights, sometimes is lead by experience to shift those criteria of relevance and evidence that guide his judgment, and regularly 'tries to do' projects that carry his view into the future. […] The horizon of a subject is influenced by all the experiences, emotions, memories, tendencies, interests, desires, insights, and judgments of the subject. There is no pure isolated ego, no atom of consciousness confronting pure objects "objectively out there now." Nor is the dualism of the emotive and the cognitive tenable.[11]

The concept of a horizon as very briefly outlined here is really one of the cornerstones for Lonergan's model, and also for Conn's argument for the instrumental role of self-transcendence.

In Lonergan's elaborate system of thought, meaning constitutes the subject's world. Thus, for both Lonergan and Conn, subject is self-constituting in his or her world. However, this process is further divided into several stages and levels, which

---

[9] Quoted in Conn, *Conscience*, 127.

[10] Ibid. Conn makes a distinction between the world, which cannot be changed by the subject's knowing or not knowing it, and the subject's world that is correlative to the subject. This is the world where the subject lives and develops, even though in itself it may be an imaginary world.

[11] Quoted in *Conscience*, 129. Here Novak, and presumably Lonergan himself use conceptually very similar language to the one employed by Wolfhart Pannenberg several decades earlier. It will suffice to mention only two terms used by Panennberg: "human openness to the world" and "the infinite obligation", which constantly push the human person beyond this world and out into the open (see the chapter on the teleological aspect of *Imago*).

all lead up to the notion that man's authentic realization as a self-transcending realization.

According to Lonergan there are four dimensions, which emerge in the development of the subject world in a concentric fashion: the world of immediacy, the world of language and meaning, the world of transforming and constructing our immediate environment, and the world of the individual transformation. The last of the four is a "world of the subject that is not only mediated or directed but also *constituted* by meaning."[12] The only guarantee that this process needs in order that it may take place according to Lonergan is the human community as "a common field of experience, a common mode of understanding, a common measure of judgement, and a common consent."[13] Hence, the relational and the community emphasis is presented as the key element in Lonergan's model:

> I have spoken of the self-constituting subject and his world. The two are correlative, not only by definition inasmuch as I have distinguished *the* world and *his* world, but also because the free and responsible self-constituting subject can only exist in a freely constituted word. The world of immediacy is not freely constituted; the world mediated by meaning is not freely constituted; but the world constituted by meaning, the properly human world, the world of community is the product of freely self-constituting subjects. For it is in the field where meaning is constitutive that man's freedom reaches its high point. There too his responsibility is the greatest. There occurs the emergence of the existential subject, finding out for himself that he has to decide for himself what he is to make of himself.[14]

Obviously, this model is heavily indebted to the theories of developmental psychology and the cognitive orientation characteristic to most of those theories. Therefore, such terms as "intelligence" and "insight" become important. Precisely the questions for intelligence and the insights that answer them is a driving force of self-transcendence, which in turn moves the human subject out of her or his world, and moves them toward new horizons. However, Lonergan asserts that meaning or intelligibility alone is not enough. To fully understand the process of self-

---

[12] Ibid. 130-131. Lonergan explains it in his *Method in Theology* as follows: "As it is only within communities that men are conceived and born and reared, so too it is only with respect to the available common meanings that the individual grows in experience, understanding, judgment, and so comes to find out for himself that he has to decide for himself what to make of himself. This process for the schoolmaster is education, for the sociologist is socialization, for the cultural anthropologist is acculturation. But for the individual in the process it is his coming to be a man, his existing as a man in the fuller sense of the name." (p. 79)
[13] Quoted in *Conscience*, 132.
[14] Quoted in *Conscience*, 132.

transcendence one must take into consideration what Lonergan calls the four levels or dimensions of self-transcendence.[15]

The subject first enters the level of experiencing that provides data and information to be questioned (level 1). Then comes the level where the subject asks the questions for intelligence (level 2). At this point the answers to the previously articulated questions are sought, and in this process the subject is being moved out of "his or her own small world of immediate experience into, as Lonergan says, a universe of meaning beyond him or herself."[16] This level is followed by the questions for reflection (level 3), which is where the concepts of truth and falsity come into the picture.[17] Still, the process of self-transcendence continues even beyond the inquiry for reflection, because up to this point the self-transcendence at stake is only cognitive. If the subject moves on, she or he comes to the final level of conscious questions; the questions pertaining to the realm of moral decision-making process, which is action-oriented (level 4).[18] This in the words of Conn is the "radical dynamism that thrusts the personal subject toward self-transcendence," and "reveals itself on this level of moral consciousness as an exigence for self-consistency, for conformity between deciding and judging."[19] In other words, choosing and deciding is the key process on the highest level of self-transcendence. At this stage of self-transcendence, values become crucial. Value in this case is defined as an "objective value", which is oriented toward seeking the "truly good," as opposed to something being done to avoid pain, increase pleasure, conform to a set of values approved by a group etc. Thus, the moral concerns about value on this level follow the insights and reflection of the previous levels.[20]

The most important, however, from the standpoint of Conn's research is Lonnergan's assertion that the objectivity of the judgments of value is measured by how much (or how little) these judgments proceed from the self-transcending subject.

---

[15] Lonergan, 104-105.

[16] Conn, *Conscience*, 134.

[17] Ibid. 134-135.

[18] The final, highest level of self-transcendence, according to Lonergan, is moral self-transcendence by which a human being becomes a person: "That moral self-transcendence is the possibility of benevolence and beneficence, of honest collaboration and of true love, of swinging completely out of the habitat of an animal and of becoming a person in a human society. The transcendental notion, that is, our questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation, constitute our capacity for self-transcendence. That capacity becomes actuality when one falls in love. Then one's being becomes being-in-love." (*Method*, p. 104-105.)

[19] Conn, *Conscience*, 137.

[20] Ibid. 139.

In other words, criterion of the value judgments is found in the authenticity of the subject, while their meaning remains objective. Or, it could also be said that according to Lonnergan "self-transcendence of the subject is 'heading toward moral self-transcendence in judgments of value.'"[21] It is so because:

> The judgments of value go beyond merely intentional self-transcendence without reaching the fullness of moral self-transcendence. That fullness is not merely knowing but also doing, and man can know what is right without doing it. […] The judgment of value, then, is itself a reality in the moral order. By it the subject moves beyond pure and simple knowing. By it the subject is constituting himself as proximately capable of moral self-transcendence, of benevolence and beneficence, of true loving.[22]

Hence, it can be concluded that according to Lonnergan's (and also Conn's) transcendental notion, our capacity for self-transcendence is constituted by our questions for intelligence, for reflection, for deliberation, and for decision. Lonergan, in his *Method in Theology,* expresses it this way: "In general, response to value both carries us toward self-transcendence and selects an object for the sake of whom or of which we transcend ourselves."[23] Just a few pages later he elaborates this notion: "For we are so endowed that we not only ask questions leading to self-transcendence, not only can recognize correct answers constitutive of intentional self-transcendence, but also respond with the stirring of our very being when we glimpse the possibility or the actuality of moral self-transcendence."[24]

At this point Conn, based on Lonergan's transcendental method, ties the subject's drive for self-transcendence to conscience by postulating that: "Conscience *is* the dynamic thrust toward self-transcendence at the core of a person's very subjectivity revealing itself on the fourth level of consciousness as a demand for a responsible decision in accord with reasonable judgment."[25] This claim is being substantiated by the notion that on the highest level of self-transcendence the subject is driven toward self-transcendence by pursuing consistency between his or her knowing and doing, and for conformity between his or her decisions to their own reasonable, objective judgments. In other words, conscience being the drive for self-transcendence of the subject demands as it were authentic decisions and choices.

---

[21] Lonergan, 37.
[22] Ibid. See also footnote 18 of this section.
[23] Ibid. 31.
[24] Ibid. 38.
[25] Conn, *Conscience*, 205.

Besides, since moral consciousness is an "enlargement and transformation" of the rational conscience, the decision will be authentic only if it will be self-critical or consistent with the reasonable judgment.

All the above-outlined reasoning eventually leads up to Conn adopting a developmental definition of the conscience. Conscience, according to Conn, is not a constant entity; it is something that is formed throughout one's lifecycle. And since conscience can take many different, more or less authentic forms, from the theological point of view there is a need for "a *normative* interpretation of conscience."[26] Theologically speaking, with regards to conscience the question of whether or not one has lived in accordance to one's conscience is of secondary significance. A much more important and fundamental question is how one has worked on authentically forming one's conscience.

At this point Conn ends the long and arduous process of building a multi-dimensional model of self-transcendence driven by a person's conscience. The questions of normative interpretation and authentic forming of a person's conscience belong to the field of practical theology, which certainly includes pastoral counseling. This relatively long, yet extremely brief, abrupt, and incomplete summary on Conn's view of conscience and self-transcendence is absolutely necessary in order to understand his approach to self-transcendence in pastoral counseling, because in essence Conn's view remains unchanged also in his book on pastoral counseling.[27]

The desire for self-transcendence as self-realization

In his more recent book *The Desiring Self*, Conn continues to deal with issues of self-realization and self-transcendence. While the basic definition of self-transcendence in this book has remained the same as before, there are some changes in terms of its interpretation for the context of pastoral counseling.

One of the starting points in setting the boundaries for the context of pastoral care for Conn is desire: "To a great extent, pastoral counseling and spiritual direction focus on desire."[28] According to Conn, only by attending to our deepest desires, taking our desires seriously, and eventually owning them as our own are we able to

---

[26] Ibid. 206.
[27] For instance, in chapter 5 of *The Desiring Self* where the desire for self-transcendence is described, Conn reiterates his own position developed previously almost word for word.
[28] Conn, *The Desiring*, 1.

encounter "our deepest self – the image of God within us."[29] Hence, Conn summarizes that "our radical desires are God within us." They disclose to us both who we are and who we ought to be.[30] Moreover, our deepest desires can ultimately be reduced to one fundamental desire – "an Eros of the self for the infinite, an eschatological desire that is never filled but ever deepened by the Desired."[31]

Thus, based on this premise the central task of the pastoral counseling becomes the discernment of our deepest desires, and distinguishing them from "the superficial, the unhealthy, as well as from the instincts and needs, both conscious and unconscious."[32] In other words, the foundational premise on which the entire argument rests for Conn is that "the fundamental desire of the self is to transcend itself in relationship: to the world, to others, to God."[33] This fundamental desire has two sides or two "focal points" as Conn calls them. The first focal point is the human drive to be a self, a center of strength. The second human drive is to move beyond the self in relationship. Conn strongly emphasizes that both of these focal points are inextricably bound together, and only if we treat them as two sides of the same coin we can construct the self-transcendence based approach to and understanding the desiring human self:

> My interpretation of the desiring self will not only include both elements, it will insist on their inextricable connection; the desires to be a self and to reach out beyond the self must always be understood together: separation *and* attachment, independence *and* belonging, autonomy *and* relationship. The self exists only in relationship to the other. This dual desire of the human heart is expressed in the two words of my basic theoretical term, "self – transcendence," and it is the core of what I mean by the "desiring self." Charles Taylor has argued persuasively that the self must always be connected to the good. My interpretation of the desiring self insists that this connection is

---

[29] Ibid. This is one of the two places in the entire book where Conn attempts to tie *imago Dei* to the thesis of his book.. Unfortunately it is not even clear in this instance whether this connection carries any meaning at all in the larger context of the book.. First, Conn quotes this sentence from Philip Sheldrake's book *Befriending our Desires* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria, 1994). Immediately after that Conn moves on to describe the mechanics of the human desires before he mentions the image of God briefly in passing again 39 pages later. Unfortunately, the style and language employed by Conn reminds one more of analytical psychology rather than systematic theology. The usage of the term "the image of God" also looks more like a brief illustration in the flow of an argument, rather than a significant point to which the author would return later.

[30] Ibid. 2.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid. 1.

[33] Ibid. 5. One of the key words in this statement is "in relationship". The relational context as a prerequisite for self-transcendence is so important that Conn even seems to adopt the relationalist view of *imago Dei* (p. 40). However, here again, it is only done in passing in the context of discussing something else.

intrinsic: by its nature the self desires to transcend itself, to move beyond itself to the good.[34]

Compared to the earlier definition of self-transcendence, the one offered above says not only what self-transcendence "does", but also how it does what it does. What Conn calls the intrinsic connection of the desiring self to the good is also at the same time his answer to the theoretical problem of relating psychology and theology within the pastoral counseling movement from its beginning to the present day. The theoretical problem according to Conn is the attempt to integrate or harmonize the basic thrust of psychology toward self-realization with the basic thrust of the Christian tradition toward self-surrender: "I am convinced that a theory of self-transcendence can not only integrate the goals of self-realization and self-surrender in a single vision, but also explicate the intrinsic unity of authentic psychological and theological interpretations of the self's structured dynamism to reach beyond itself."[35] Self-transcendence in this case is formulated as the principle that embodies "the radical dynamism of the Christian life," by incorporating authentic self-realization, as well as genuine self-denial. The self in this process is not sacrificed. It is realized in its own authentic being, because authentic self-transcendence doesn't result from egotistic fulfillment of one's wishes, but rather it is to be viewed as a movement beyond one's own self in bringing about the good for others. In other words: "Self-transcendence occurs in our effective response to the radical desire of the human spirit for meaning, truth, value, and love."[36] According to Conn's model the reverse also is true. If the person lives by the Gospel command to love other people with agape love, then "Every achievement of creative understanding, realistic judgment, responsible decision and generous love is an instance of self-transcendence. Such cognitive, moral and affective self-transcendence to which the gospel calls us in service of the neighbor – and nothing less – is the criterion of authentic self-realization."[37] Thus, self-transcendence, in Conn's model, becomes the powerhouse for the process of the pastoral counseling, which directs people toward growth, development, and authentic self-realization. Moreover, authentic self-realization is understood as an instance of self-transcendence:

---

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid. 4-5.
[36] Ibid. 35.
[37] Ibid.36.

In the concept of self-transcendence, pastoral counselors and spiritual directors can integrate psychology and theology by seeing them as two complementary interpretations of the single radical desire of the human spirit. By reaching beyond ourselves through creative understanding, realistic judgement, responsible decision, and generous love, we both realize our authentic being (true self) and respond to the gospel's call to loving service of the neighbor. A psychology that understands self-realization as self-transcendence require no reconciliation, only the discovery of their intrinsic unity as interpretations of the same fundamental human dynamism for self-transcendence.[38]

The linking of self-realization to self-transcendence is of immense importance from the standpoint of pastoral counseling process. For, if this connection can be established and maintained, then the job of the pastoral counselor is made in some sense relatively easier since the focus shifts from the "pastoral" to "counseling." This issue will be discussed more thoroughly later. Before moving on, however, it would be of utmost importance to understand what is meant by *self* in Conn's thought.

The self in self-transcendence

The term "self" has a very broad semantic range in anthropology and psychology, which is why the entire argument in the present discussion to a large extent will rest on how the "self" is defined.[39] Conn provides this definition with great care, because the definition of the 'self' contains the driving force behind Conn's thesis, as well as the entire enterprise of human self-transcendence:

---

[38] Ibid. 37.

[39] The anthropological thought of Conn presupposes a *cogito*, a Cartesian self. This version of self has been frequently questioned and criticized in 20th century philosophical discourse. To sketch the general thrust of this criticism, it will suffice to mention two scholars who have engaged themselves into questioning (even deconstructing to a certain extent) the idea of the Cartesian *cogito*: Jean-Luc Marion and Jacques Derrida. One of the most prominent contemporary Descartes scholars, French philosopher Marion, while summarizing the philosophical positions of Husserl and Heiddeger with regards to the Descartes' famous formula *cogito, ergo sum*, in his *Cartesian Questions: Method and Metaphysics,* writes the following: "… if the *cogito, ergo sum* heightens representation, then it too, like all representations, must be vanquished by the blow of doubt. For why should it be certain that I think, that I am, if I also represent these things to myself?" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 101. Similar doubts though in a different context (a discussion of apophatic theology) are expressed by Jacques Derrida in his *On the Name* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995). While I am aware of the skepticism about the Cartesian *cogito* in the community of contemporary philosophers, due to the scope and goal of this dissertation I will restrain myself from delving into discussion of it. Since I wish to keep in focus the practical applicability of the position developed in this dissertation for the context of pastoral counseling (which by definition is a very practical activity), my position will be very similar to that of Conn, which he describes in *The Desiring Self* as he addresses some of the contemporary critiques of the self: "The present study seeks to locate the foundations of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction not in alien statements or propositions, but in the self, in its radical desire for relational self-transcendence, and in its dynamic personal operations – all empirical realities that can be attended to, understood, and verified by the counselor or director in her or his own experience." (p. 160)

I want to stress that the very possibility of transcendence requires a self that is capable of reaching beyond itself, and that central to such a self is not an inert, opaque metaphysical substance or a solipsistic self-as-object, but a dynamic 'I', a conscious unity crowning a drive rooted in our genes and permeating our entire beings.[40]

Right from the start Conn draws clear boundaries postulating that "'self' in this study will refer to a conscious, immediately experienced reality." Whenever Conn uses the term "ego", he defines it as Freud's inner agency, "the unconscious organizer of experience", or in short – "the unconscious side of the self's 'I'."[41] Moreover, Conn sees two dimensions in the self – the subjective 'I', and the objective 'me'. Or, in other words, according to Conn, the human self is a dipolar entity that has a subject-pole (the 'I') and the object-pole (the 'me').[42]

The subject-pole, or the 'I' in this case, is defined as an awareness of the subject of herself. Yet, it's not only that in the sense that William James has put it: "Whatever I may be thinking of, I am always at the same time more or less aware of myself, my personal existence."[43] Using Lonnergan's framework, Conn endows consciousness with constitutive power: "Consciousness […] not only reveals the self-as-subject, but also constitutes it as such."[44] So, in other words the 'I' is interpreted in the light of consciousness understood as the self's constitutive presence to itself. Within this framework, then, 'I' is neither a metaphysical 'Self', nor a transcendental 'Ego' inside the person. Rather, the 'I' is the empirical subject pole of the self:

> […] It is the radical desire of the human being for meaning, integration, and self-transcendence come to the luminosity of consciousness (sometimes called "soul," sometimes "spirit"). Persons are present to themselves because that is the way the human organism naturally works; affirmation of the "I" does not add an internal super-person named the "I", it simply confirms the person as conscious (TV sets – here we go again- turn "on" because of the way they are "wired," not because there is a super-set inside).[45]

Conn goes even as far as to assert that without the affirmation of this dynamic "I," a person is not capable of responding to "the gospel call to the self-transcendence

---

[40] Ibid. 50.

[41] Conn stresses very clearly that his 'self' in contrast to Carl Jung's 'Self' as a transcendental postulate (for Jung "Self" with the capital "S" refers to the totality of psyche, both conscious and unconscious aspects of it), is referring to a "conscious, immediately experienced reality." (p. 44)

[42] Ibid. 52.

[43] Quoted in *The Desiring Self* from James' *Psychology: The Brief Course*. p. 46.

[44] Ibid.49.

[45] Ibid. 51.

of truth and love."[46] If the dynamic "I" is not affirmed in a person's life then the person's self, according to Conn, is distorted, and capable of nothing more than individualistic pursuits in a highly manipulative consumer society. If one side of the dipolar self, the driving force and the dynamic principle of self-transcendence is the "I", what role then is left for the object pole, the "me"?

In formulating the definition of the "me," Conn relies heavily on William James' three dimensions of "me" as "the self as known." James distinguishes between material "me," social "me," and spiritual "me." The material "me" denotes one's body. The social "me," consists of our social "selves," which are determined by the persons and groups who recognize us and have an opinion about us that matters. So, in other words, the social "me" equals the recognition we receive from those who matter to us. The spiritual "me," according to James, is the collection of all the passing states of consciousness that can become an object of thought and awaken our emotions. In James' own words our spiritual "me" includes all the "psychic faculties and dispositions taken concretely."[47]

The important thing here is that the "me," as known, is always to be understood as a psychic reality in all its dimensions. In this sense it includes both, the external reality as well as our perception and interpretation of it. As a psychic reality the "me" is constituted by our personal and interpersonal experience, and their respective meaning and value. In this process:

> As the self discovers and constructs a world of meaning, it also constitutes itself in some specific concrete shape, gives itself a certain character. In other words, the "me," the self-as-object, is gradually created as this particular self through personal experience – discoveries, decisions, and deeds. This ongoing, historical constitution of the self-as-object through meaning and value occurs because its dialectical counter-pole, the "I," the center of conscious subjectivity, is a radical, self-creating drive for integrated meaning and value in self-transcendence.[48]

This in essence is the working definition of the self in Conn's model. The interesting thing with regards to the topic of this research is that during the lengthy process of defining the self, Conn mentions *imago Dei* only once and very briefly. As mentioned previously, he does it while attempting to specify the boundaries and context of the issue at stake – self-transcendence.

---

[46] Ibid. 52.
[47] Ibid. 52-54.
[48] Ibid. 56.

The understanding of *imago Dei*

Conn suggests that the Christian tradition has always understood God as a personal God in a sense that God is a mysterious unity of seemingly mutually exclusive things like transcendence and immanence, or individuality and universality:

> Divine life is understood as the immanent perfection of God's being realized in a multiple personal act of knowing and loving. It is this personal God to whom Christians are related in faith. And it is in this sense of personal as relational that the tradition has understood women and men to be created in God's image and likeness. Indeed it was the traditions attempt to understand the human and divine dialectically in terms of each other that led to a meaning of person not only as independent and intellectual but also as relational and free in self-creative love. [49]

Here Conn announces something he is going to return to when discussing Thomas Merton's anthropological position later in the book. While no discussion on the role of *imago Dei* follows, Conn does admit that being created in the image of God means we function relationally according to the Divine design. This relational dimension of the image of God in us to a large degree is what ensures our capability to self-transcend.[50] Unfortunately, even though Conn indicates that there is a connection between *imago Dei* and self-transcendence, he does not go any further in exploring it.

There is an attempt to explore this connection a little later in the context of Thomas' Merton's anthropology, perhaps because from the systems of thought used in Conn's work, Merton's analysis of the human inner processes is more theological than others.[51] Merton's concept of the "true self" is given quite a central place in the further development of the argument. In a way, it gives a finishing touch to the dipolar desiring self that Conn is so meticulously portraying. It also provides the necessary bridge to the understanding of self-love, which is quite an important dimension in the entire discussion of the self-transcendence in the context of responsible love.

---

[49] Ibid. 40.

[50] As stated earlier, to experience genuine self-transcendence we must embrace and practice responsible, agape-kind of love. This, perhaps, is where Conn comes closest in the entire book to bringing the *imago Dei* concept and his theory of the role of self-transcendence together.

[51] Ibid. 75-78. According to Conn, Merton's argument is the most theologically saturated, and can be characterized as 'heavily moral –religious.' Therefore, it can be used as the theological interpretive key or supplement of sorts to Lonergan's concept of the self, which while also being moral-religious is at the same time heavily structural.

Working within the tradition of Catholic mysticism, Merton[52] has postulated in his 1949 book *Seeds of Contemplation* that being a saint means to be oneself, to discover one's own "inner", or "true self." The inner self is where communion with God takes place. The opposite of this true self is the false self, which Merton describes as follows in the 1961 revised edition of the *Seeds*:

> Every one of us is shadowed by an illusory person: a false self. […] My false and private self is the one who wants to exist outside of the reach of God's will and God's love – outside of reality and outside of life. And such a self cannot help but be an illusion. […] All sin starts from the assumption that my false self, the self that exists only in my own egocentric desires, is the fundamental reality of life to which everything else in the universe is ordered.[53]

These two selves are at odds with one another. The false self as "the superficial consciousness of the external self" is opposed to the deep transcendent self that awakens only in contemplation:

> The object of salvation is that which is unique, irreplaceable, incommunicable-that which is myself alone. […] The person must be rescued from the individual. […] The creative and mysterious inner self must be delivered from the wasteful, hedonistic and destructive ego that seeks only to cover itself from disguises. […] To be "saved" is to return to one's inviolate and eternal reality and to live in God. [54]

This transcendent, inner self in Merton's system is basically identical with the *imago Dei*. Strongly tying his understanding to the theological meanings of sin and grace, Merton's image of God, like Conn's, has a very strong relational dimension. According to Merton, we are alienated from our true, inner self as a result of the Fall. And this inner self is precisely the image of God in which we are created.[55] Hence

---

[52] Ibid. 115. Thomas Merton was converted to Roman Catholicism as a young adult, later became a Trappist monk, and "died in Bangkok pursuing contemplative dialogue with Buddhist monks."

[53] Thomas Merton, *The New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961), 34-35.

[54] Ibid., 38.

[55] Conn, *The Desiring*, 76. This concept is further elucidated by James Finley who as a young monk spent six years at the Trappist monastery of Our Lady of Gethsemani under the guidance of Thomas Merton. He writes the following about Merton's understanding of the effects of the Fall: "Genesis also tells us of a serpent who lies about a promise of divinity to God's children. The serpent's promise is a venom that flows into the vibrant, delicate faith bond between ourselves and God. The serpent, midwife of the false self, injects its poisonous promises into Adam's desire to be like God. This fact alone reveals something of the paradox and mystery of evil, for the serpent's lie is a dark and twisted echo of God's creative act in which he made us sharers of his own divine life. Indeed, for us to want to be like God is simply for us to want to be who God created us to be in his own image and likeness. In short, Adam's desire to be like God springs from the very core of his God-given, God-created identity. The crux of the matter is, however, that *we cannot be like God without God.* […] We cannot take our deepest self, which is a gift from God, and wrench it from God's hands to claim it as a coveted possession." (James Finley *Merton's Palace of Nowhere. A Search for God through Awareness of the True Self,* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1978), 30-31).

also the soteriological connotation of our true self – only through God's grace we can be set free from the false self that all humans have as a result of being born "in sin." This true, inner self, according to Merton, is not a part of our personalities; rather it encompasses our entire being. It is "our entire substantial reality itself, on its highest and most personal and most existential self."[56] According to one of the very few passages in Merton's writings where he provides a definition-like description of *imago Dei*, this substantial reality is inextricably bound to loving or being-in-love (Lonergan's term): "To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name."[57]

This definition of the true self offered by Merton allows Conn to correlate it with Lonergan's self-as-subject and the radical desire for self-transcendence. Moreover, it provides a theoretical basis for Conn to link self-as-subject and the desire for self-transcendence with Merton's discovery of God, which in turn is rooted in his concept of the true self. Thus, Merton's true self, Lonnergan's subject-pole of the self, and *imago Dei* are virtually identical: [58]

> This linking of the true self with both the desire for self-transcendence and the self-as-subject reflects our earlier identification of the radical desire for self-transcendence with the self as subject. Further, Merton's linking of the true self with the discovery of God reflects our earlier suggestion connecting the desire for self-transcendence with God's presence within us. Now, at the subject-pole, or, as Merton would say, the self's deepest center, we can integrate: the true self, the self-as-subject, the radical desire for self-transcendence, and God within us. This interior complex can be *experienced*, but only hinted at, never fully captured, in observation, conceptualization, or verbalization.[59]

Besides, this, as Conn calls it, 'dynamic interior complex' is by definition a dynamic and developing entity, which is one explanation for Merton calling it sometimes 'existing though hidden,' and other times as 'needing to be created.'[60] Essentially the true self exists in the desire for self-transcendence, yet its developing

---

[56] Ibid. 77. Quoted from a 1959 study of contemplation *The Inner Experience* (unpublished manuscript).
[57] Merton, 60.
[58] There is, however, a certain amount of ambiguity involved in this multi-level exposition of the self. Even Conn himself recognizes that Merton's concept of the true self, which he uses to elaborate on Lonergan's ideas, is somewhat vague: "Sometimes […] Merton speaks of the true self as existing, but hidden, in need of discovery. At other times he says we must, together with God, create our true self." (Conn, *The Desiring*, 76.)
[59] Ibid. 77-78.
[60] Ibid.

nature determines that it is "still to be created in the sense of an actually self-transcending person."[61] The false self, on the other hand is the person's failure and/or resistance to respond to the self's most radical desire to self-transcend. According to Merton, the momentum necessary to trigger the person's becoming fully alive on the highest level of existential consciousness is religious conversion to which I will return shortly.

The above-quotation perhaps suggests why Conn never embarks upon exploring the connection between the Biblical concept and doctrine of *imago Dei*, and his own concept of "desiring Self." Such linking would inevitably lead to a theological "capturing" of some sort, which according to Conn is *a priori* impossible. Conn even distances himself from such common terms of theological anthropology as 'soul' and 'spirit,' saying that even though these words could possibly be used to denote the above-described inner complex, they have been "degraded in various ways," and hence, it would be better not to use them.[62] This does not seem to be entirely consistent with the previous usage of the term 'image of God' several times in the text. As has been demonstrated above, the terminology used, as well as the flow of the argument seems to allow equating the 'dynamic inner complex' described by Conn with the *imago Dei*.

At this point, I believe it would be appropriate to turn to the fist part of this thesis, and to conclude that it is reasonable to affirm it based on the exploration of the understanding and doctrine of *imago Dei* offered in the previous chapters up till now. As it was discussed and demonstrated previously, *imago Dei* has a substantival dimension, which was thoroughly discussed in the chapter about Karl Rahner's theological anthropology. Even though Conn does not spend much time discussing the substantival dimension, writing from a Roman Catholic perspective the substantival dimension seems to be simply assumed. As previously mentioned, while asserting that our selves are not "opaque metaphysical substances," Conn still talks about humans being wired in a certain way, or about the drive for self-transcendence and our selves being rooted in our genes.[63]

---

[61] Ibid. Conn further explains: "In explanatory terms, then Merton's true self as actualized is the self fully alive on the highest level of responsible existential consciousness, reaching out beyond itself. Of course, self-transcendence in its fullest sense, and thus the true self in its fullest sense, is the result of conversion, in its cognitive, affective, and moral and religious dimensions […].

[62] Ibid. 78.

[63] Ibid. 50.

This genetically determined capacity or drive is given to humans so that they can enter into and pursue relationships with their Creator. One of the results and goals of this process at the same time is, using Merton's terminology, getting rid of our false selves and discovering our true selves. As it was previously established, even though Conn avoids explicitly stating that *imago Dei* is virtually identical with his true self, it unavoidably follows from the way he develops the argument. At this point the functional and teleological dimensions merge to a certain extent at least as far as this thesis is concerned. The teleological and functional dimensions of *Imago Dei* were also discussed in the previous chapters.

Finally, Conn is heavily relational in his approach as was already demonstrated in the flow of the discussion. Even though Conn does not make specific references to theologians like Barth and Brunner who have explicitly tied relationality and our being created in the image of God, he is very clear that the ability of self-transcendence is both bound to and resulting from humans being relational creatures.

Hence, it is legitimate at this point to conclude that despite Conn's reluctance to explicitly relate our ability of self-transcendence to *imago Dei*, there is more than legitimate theological grounds to conclude exactly that. We self-transcend precisely because we are images of God and as such we image our creator by and through relational self-transcendence. This can, and theologically speaking, even must be established firmly as the basis for theological anthropology in general, and for the purpose of establishing theological basis for pastoral counseling in particular. If for some reason one avoids theologically establishing the connection between *imago Dei* and self-transcendence, then it might be difficult to establish a firm theological basis for the enterprise of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. Then pastoral counseling may perhaps be strong on the counseling side, but week and unclear on the pastoral side of it. While Conn has avoided explicating the connection between *imago Dei* and self -transcendence, he has clearly affirmed the necessity for uniqueness of pastoral counseling:

> While all counseling and therapy should have self-transcending autonomy as their goal, pastoral counseling proceeds explicitly in the context of religious self-transcendence, and spiritual direction at the fullness of cognitive, affective, moral and religious self-transcendence in Christian conversion, at the radical transformation of the self.[64]

---

[64] Ibid. 132-133.

Since these questions have already been thoroughly discussed in the chapter on the various paradigms of pastoral counseling, further discussion related to these questions is no longer necessary.

In the last part of this chapter I will turn to the process of pastoral counseling as it is described by Conn. I will also attempt to provisionally establish a connection between the process of pastoral counseling rooted in self-transcendence and progressive growth or teleological development of *imago Dei*.

Self-transcendence in pastoral counseling

When it comes to the actual counseling process Conn is faithful to the developmental (or constructive-developmental) approach, which is consistent with the thrust of theological anthropology discussed previously: "Much of the self's change is what we call personal development."[65] The desiring self develops through the developmental stages along different axes – affective, cognitive, moral, faith and so on. The meaning of these developmental patterns is self-transcendence: "… each transition in the course of development is an instance of self-transcendence, a new self moving beyond the former self."[66] According to Conn, the "normative course" of this development is a constant movement away from the childhood egocentrism toward an ever greater self-transcendence in adult life. In this process, as the assimilation and accommodation take place, a person moves "dialectically toward and equilibrium."[67]

This dialectical process in the previously established terms is described by Conn as follows: "The developmental process is a continual differentiation from the subject-pole, transference to the object-pole, and integration of subject and object poles."[68] The process of differentiation is both cognitive and affective; hence whenever the old self is being de-centered a person experiences anxiety. Yet, such de-centering is necessary for the movement toward a new self, a greater degree of self-transcendence:

> Since decentration from embeddedness to greater relatedness is always experienced as a loss of self (center), it is accompanied by anxiety and depression. As the balance shifts to the new self, there is anger and repudiation of the former self, now at the object –pole. Only when the new balance is fully

---

[65] Ibid. 81.
[66] Ibid. Based on Eric Erikson's developmental theory Conn basically equates self-transcendence with giving. Thus, a more giving person is a person who has developed a greater ability to self-transcend. (pp. 86-87)
[67] Ibid. 84.
[68] Ibid. 88.

established can the old self be positively reappropriated. Guidance through the adult negotiation of this process is a central task of counselors and directors.[69]

As a general framework, this can very successfully describe moral development (Kohlberg), faith development (Fowler), and so on. Having established that, however, we have still said nothing about the specifics of pastoral counseling. Virtually all competent counseling and psychotherapy would agree that such is their central task. So, what makes this process specifically pastoral or Christian? According to Conn, self-transcendence as the goal of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction is that specific ingredient, because "self-transcendence, properly understood, is the criterion of both authentic self-realization and the gospel's call to loving service of the neighbor."[70] Here, I believe, Conn is doing the greatest disservice to an otherwise splendid conceptual framework of pastoral counseling by not explicitly tying the self-transcendence to *imago Dei*, which in turn is inextricably bound to Christ as the perfect *imago*, and all the soteriological implications of pastoral counseling that such linking contains. Instead, Conn chooses to take another approach in identifying the uniqueness of pastoral counseling. He chooses the concept of conversion in general, and Christian conversion in particular, as that radical transformation of the self, which provides for the uniquely Christian dimension of pastoral counseling.

Conn defines pastoral counseling as the activity, which promotes self-transcendence by facilitating personal development, while spiritual direction is the activity, which "aims at realizing the self-transcending possibilities of a client's life by encouraging radical transformation of the self within its ongoing development, in a word, conversion."[71] Here as in other instances throughout his work, Conn maintains a distinction between pastoral counseling and spiritual direction, in that pastoral counseling deals with general developmental issues and problems, while spiritual direction is more concerned with the meaning of deeper existential issues, namely conversion. Based on the discussion presented in the chapter dealing with various pastoral counseling paradigms, I believe such division is neither necessary nor warranted. Still, it can be helpful if by spiritual direction more advanced "pastoral" elements of the counseling process are meant.

---

[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid. 113.
[71] Ibid.

Conversion in the Christian tradition originally has meant "return to God from sinful ways," a complete change of "heart," a radical spiritual renewal.[72] In the process of pastoral counseling/spiritual direction, however, Conn suggests that there are four different conversions – cognitive, moral, affective, and religious. Moreover, being consistent with the construction-developmental framework Conn postulates that all these conversions are not just events; rather they are ongoing developmental processes, which transform the person at her core:

> In speaking of Christian conversion, of course, I am not referring only or primarily to the initial process of becoming a Christian, of joining a Christian church, which is certainly a conversion when it marks a significant interior turning in one's life. For conversion also and especially means the interior transformation that may be experienced by a person who is already a Christian, either from birth or through early conversion. […] Conversion is not just a change of content, a switching over from one faith story to another. But, much more importantly, Christian conversion is the introduction of a new *kind* of story into one's life, a story with its own intrinsic requirements for moral, affective, cognitive, and religious transformation. […] Radical Christian conversion, then is not simply a change of content, but a structural transformation of the self.[73]

The process of conversion thus described never ends just as spiritual renewal never ends. As the person grows older, each season of life becomes "an opportunity for a conversion with a particular shape and meaning of its own."[74] Converted in such a way the Christian person attains a "deeper, fuller identity than that of his limited ego – self," and through this the person eventually becomes open to every form of religious experience as long as it is authentic. In other words, the person is able "to become all things to all men."[75]

This, however, may not sound very convincing or very "Christian" for that matter. As Conn himself concludes just a few pages earlier, the very term "conversion" may mean just about anything people want it to mean.[76] Virtually the same could be said for being open to other persons and/or traditions. At this the question already asked previously could be repeated: What is it that makes this process explicitly Christian, or specifically pastoral? The answer Conn provides to this question is one word – love.

---

[72] Ibid. 114.
[73] Ibid. 117-118.
[74] Ibid. 117.
[75] Ibid. 116-117.
[76] Ibid. 114.

Love as it is defined in the Christian *agape* sense re-orients the person from selfishness to other-centeredness. Here again Conn returns to Lonergan's thought outlined in *Method in Theology*:

> According to Lonergan, a person's capacity and desire for self-transcendence meets joyful fulfillment when 'religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love.' Beyond all other human loving, 'religious loving is without conditions, qualifications, reservations; it is with all one's heart and all one's soul, and all one's mind, and all one's strength.' As such it is the ultimate realization of a multidimensional process of self-transcendence, of moving beyond the self, or reaching out to others.[77]

This is a process where being converted to a particular Christian tradition is no longer enough. This is a conversion where person is converted to God himself, and God moves to the center of one's life, and takes over control.[78] In this experience, using Merton's terminology, God dwells in the person, and the person dwells in God. This is a metaphysical or mystical self-transcending in which, according to Merton, "we enter into ourselves, find our true self, and then pass beyond the inner 'I,' we sail forth into the immense darkness in which we confront the 'I AM' of the Almighty."[79] This in essence is a kenotic process, which results in a kenotic transformation of the person. The human ego-consciousness is emptied and becomes void, and in it "the light of God or the Glory of God, the full radiation of the infinite reality of His Being and Love are manifested."[80] This is where Merton and Conn see affinity between what they describe, and what apostle Paul has described as participation in the mind of Christ, for this "dynamic of emptying and of transcendence accurately defines the transformation of the Christian consciousness in Christ."[81]

---

[77] Ibid. 127.

[78] Ibid. 128.

[79] Ibid. 129. Coming from the Roman Catholic perspective Conn does not employ terms like 'deification,' 'theosis,' or the like. Yet, the process he describes has striking affinity with the process of deification discussed in the chapter on teleological dimension of the *Imago*. Conn admits the tension between God's immanence and transcendence, when it comes to the experience of God in the concrete Christian's (mystic's) life. Hence, he summarizes it this way: "For Christians there is an infinite gulf between being of God and the 'I' of the inner self, and our awareness of each must be distinguished. Yet, despite this metaphysical distinction, says Merton, in spiritual experience, 'paradoxically, our inmost 'I' exists in God and God dwells in it,' and in this identity of love and freedom there 'appears to be but one Self.' The true self is indeed conscious, but it is aware of itself 'as a self-to-be-dissolved in self-giving, in love, in 'letting-go,' in ecstasy, in God…'" In other words, this union of a person with the Almighty remains a mystery, which cannot be adequately broken down into chunks of precise information. It can only be experienced, and then attempted to be described to a certain extent.

[80] Ibid. 130.

[81] Ibid.

This is where finally one can see a strong Christian (theological, Christological) distinctive in the development of the argument. The Christian conversion, according to Conn, equals the Pauline participation in 'the mind of Christ,' for this is where one's "orientation toward transcendent mystery that climaxes in one's radical desire for self-transcendence" takes place. Merton describes this participation in the mind of Christ in the context of the search for true self in his *Disputed Questions* as follows:

> But the deep "I" of the spirit, of solitude, and of love cannot be "had," possessed, developed, perfected. It can only *be*, and *act* according to the inner laws which are not of man's contriving, but which come from God. […] This inner "I" who is always alone, is always universal: for in this inmost "I" my own solitude meets the solitude of every other man and the solitude of God. […] It is only this inmost and solitary "I" that truly loves with the love and the spirit of Christ. This "I" is Christ Himself, living in us: and we, in Him, living in the Father.[82]

For this to take place, however, the contemplative subject has to withdraw, in the words of Lonergan, "from objectification to a prayerful cloud of unknowing." [83] This experience, however, is not accompanied by withdrawing from social life and isolation. To the contrary, the relational self-transcendence looked at from the standpoint of *agape* love takes very seriously the conditions of this world. In fact, according to Merton, *agape* love is both the context and the prerequisite for the radical self-transcendence. In the *New Seeds of Contemplation* Merton calls it "one of the paradoxes of the mystical life," which he describes as follows: "A man cannot enter into the deepest center of himself and pass through that center into God, unless he is able to pass entirely out of himself and empty himself and give himself to other people in the purity of a selfless love."[84] The person who has experienced such radical Christian conversion in all four dimensions at once will be sensitive to the loving life of Jesus, which will at the same time become the person's measure for Christian living. Thus, the fundamental gospel truth, which is indispensable to foundations of Christian life is this: "The radical religious conversion of Christian conscience finds its fullest realization in loving compassion – the self-transcending perfection of human care and justice."[85]

---

[82] Quoted in Finley, 120.

[83] Conn, *The Desiring*, 130. The phrase originally belongs to William Johnston. Lonnergan "borrows" the phrase from Johnston's book *The Mysticism of the Cloud Unknowing*. (Lonergan, 342)

[84] Merton, 64. Also quoted in Conn, *The Desiring*, 130.

[85] Conn, *The Desiring*, 132.

In terms of pastoral counseling, this means that its goal is not merely self-transcending autonomy (which should be one of the main goals of every counseling and therapy), rather pastoral counseling includes a specifically religious component. The Christian distinctive of pastoral counseling thus becomes the "fullness of cognitive, affective, moral, and religious self-transcendence in Christian conversion, at the radical transformation of the self."[86]

A thorough examination from the perspectives of philosophy, theological anthropology, and psychology of the model set forth by Conn is well beyond the scope of this thesis. In terms of the position set forth in this thesis, however, Walter Conn's contribution is hard to overestimate. He has built a convincing case for the built-in human capacity for relational self-transcendence being the basis and the driving force for the process of pastoral counseling. Conn's model is the logically appropriate finishing touch of the case built for self-transcendence as one of the main qualities of *imago Dei* being the theological basis for pastoral counseling.

In chapters 1-6 I have explored the connection between the concept and doctrine of *imago Dei* and its relation to the phenomenon of self-transcendence. I believe that there is sufficient material provided in those chapters to lay a solid groundwork for connection between *imago Dei* and self-transcendence, and to propose that this could be a key component in the theological foundation for the practice of pastoral counseling. In this chapter, it has been shown that by employing relatively little from the field of theological anthropology, and integrating it into the framework of constructive-developmental psychology a convincing case can be built for self-transcendence being the engine, the fuel, and at least one of the goals for pastoral counseling.

The weakest point in Conn's model is the theological 'grounding' of the self-transcendence itself. .

The self-transcending *Imago*

As discussed previously, for Conn self-transcendence is two things – a criterion of authenticity, and the goal of the entire enterprise of pastoral counseling. Summarizing his *Desiring Self* in one paragraph Conn writes the following:

> A central thesis of this study of the desiring self is that self-transcendence, properly understood, is the criterion of both authentic self-realization and the

---

[86] Ibid. 133.

gospel's call to loving service of the neighbor. As such self-transcendence is the goal of both pastoral counseling and spiritual direction.[87]

While self-transcendence is the goal for both pastoral counseling and spiritual direction, for Conn, spiritual direction is a more focused activity than counseling in terms of "the gospel's call." Pastoral counseling is concerned with personal development in general, while spiritual direction is more "theological" in that it aims at radically transforming a person's self.[88] While transformation is possible and desirable even in counseling, spiritual direction is the activity, which in a way consolidates lasting change. For such lasting change, Conn claims, no less than conversion is necessary. While one may or may not agree with the assertion itself, it is worthwhile to briefly look at how Conn defines conversion.

The biblical meaning of the word conversion, according to Conn, is "a call to the fullness of life," which includes such biblical concepts as 'redirection,' 'change of heart,' 'renewal.' [89] Biblically speaking, this fullness of life results from turning away from sin, and turning to God. Such understanding of conversion is based on the long line of Old Testament prophets who called people to leave their sinful ways and return to God, and it ends with John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus himself who also called

---

[87] Ibid. 113. Though for Conn there is little difference between counseling and spiritual direction, he still differentiates between the two. The process of counseling is seeking to "promote self – transcendence by facilitating personal development," while spiritual direction "aims at realizing the self-transcending possibilities of a client's life by encouraging radical transformation of the self within its ongoing development, by encouraging, in a word, conversion."

[88] While it is well beyond the scope of this chapter and the whole dissertation to discuss the differences between pastoral counseling and spiritual direction it must be noted that unlike Conn who only briefly mentions the difference between the two while still treating both as two sides of the same coin, some theologians have provided detailed accounts of the differences in goals, focus, scope, legal status of the practices and so on for pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. A recent good example of treating pastoral counseling and spiritual direction as autonomous disciplines in their own right is provided by a Canadian theologian Jean Stairs in her book Listening for the Soul: Pastoral care and Spiritual Direction (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). According to Stairs pastoral care (though Stairs is consequently using the term "care," the usage of the term seems to denote the same as Conn's "counseling") and spiritual direction, among other things, differ in agenda and focus. The agenda of pastoral counseling (care) is "overall conditions for growth and fulfillment of life centered in God," while the agenda of spiritual direction is "attending to the presence/action of God in the life of the individual." (p. 189) The focus for pastoral counseling (care) is "greater self-understanding, agency, and formation of healthy ego," while the focus of spiritual growth is "developing a relationship with God and reduction of ego-dependence." (Ibid.)

Even though, according to Stairs, "spiritual direction is much more limited in its opportunities and the range of responses," there is an ever-developing complementarity of both disciplines. (Ibid. 190) The major obstacle to indiscriminate complementarity is the fact that spiritual direction is more "Catholic" while pastoral care is both Catholic and Protestant. It can be implied from Stairs' position that if it wasn't for the differences between two major Western Christian traditions, pastoral care and spiritual direction could be much closer than they are at the moment. Hence, since Conn is dealing with both disciplines from the Roman Catholic perspective it seems to be only logical to treat both pastoral counseling and spiritual direction as though they had minimal difference.

[89] Ibid. 113 – 114.

the people to repentance because the "Kingdom of God is at hand." (Mk 1:15)[90] Essentially, such an understanding of conversion is legitimate and correct both in the area of Biblical theology and the church tradition. The problem, however, is that recent decades have brought about an unwarranted pluralism with regards to interpretation and understanding of the experience of conversion. While certain Christian circles still embrace the classic meaning of conversion in their theology and practice, in society at large "conversion can mean just about anything anyone wants it to mean."[91] Evidently, the theologically correct and therapeutically adequate meaning of conversion must be inclusive of the classic Biblical meaning as well as William James' definition where conversion is defined as a "psychological process of unification of a divided self." Hence, the task of the counselor/spiritual director is to discover and formulate this definition. According to Conn, such definition can be arrived at best by looking at how conversion works in the life of a specific individual, in this case Thomas Merton.

For Thomas Merton, a person who has realized herself authentically in self-transcendence, which is the only way through which full realization of the person's potential is possible, is a fully born person who "apprehends his life fully and wholly from an inner ground that is at once more universal than the empirical ego and yet entirely his own."[92] Such a person is finally fully integrated and as a being-in-love able to identify with everybody through his *agape*-filled life.[93] This, according to Conn is "the goal of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction as they seek to liberate the radical personal desire for self-transcendence."[94]

This profound a conversion and transformation requires the inclusion of four different dimensions – cognitive, moral, affective, and religious, which in Conn's model are correlated with the developmental theories of Piaget (cognitive

---

[90] Ibid. 114.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid. 116. Cited from Merton's *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Image, 1973).
[93] This agape-filled life is only possible to attain through a radical religious conversion. Here again Conn follows closely the theory of conversion expounded by Lonergan in his *Method in Theology* where Lonergan describes the dynamics of religious conversion as follows: "Religious conversion is to a total being-in-love as the efficacious ground for all transcendence, whether in the pursuit of truth, or in the realization of human values, or in the orientation man adopts to the universe, its ground and its goal. […] Similarly, religious conversion goes beyond moral. Questions for intelligence, for reflection, for deliberation reveal the eros of the human spirit, its capacity and its desire for self-transcendence. But that capacity meets fulfillment, that desire turns to joy, when religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love. Then there is a new basis for all valuing and all doing good. (p. 241, 242)
[94] Conn, *The Desiring*, 116.

development), Kohlberg (moral reasoning), Erikson (psychosocial affectivity), and Fowler (faith development) respectively. Ideally as it is demonstrated by Merton's example, "all these conversions are dimensions of a single, ongoing personal story that is fundamentally Christian, though, […] eventually open to every form of authentic religious experience."[95]

What is being advocated here by Conn is conversion as a never-ending process where each season of life is "an opportunity for a conversion with a particular shape and meaning of its own."[96] In this context conversion is defined not as the initial process of becoming a Christian, and/or joining a religious organization (which it also is). In the context of present discussion conversion is primarily:

> […] the interior transformation that may be experienced by a person who is already a Christian, either from birth or through an earlier conversion. So Christian conversion is not just a matter of believing something new, of affirming a new faith, or adopting a new story. Conversion is not just a change of content, a switching over from one faith story to another. But, much more importantly, Christian conversion is the introduction of a new *kind* of story into one's life, a story with its own intrinsic requirements for moral, affective, cognitive, and religious transformation.[97]

In further explaining his theory of a "new *kind* of story" type conversion, Conn comes close to contradicting his own previously formulated theory. For instance, moral conversion does not mean adopting a new set of values; rather, it means to choose to abide by the values. Similarly, cognitive conversion is not learning new things but understanding oneself and the content learned previously in a new way. Finally, the affective conversion is not choosing a new object of love but allowing love to become the central reality, principle and value of one's life. Exactly the same applies for faith conversion: It is not about new religious expressions but about "allowing God to move from the edges to the center of one's life, transforming one's very way of being."[98] This transformation is called by Conn "radical Christian conversion," which "is not simply a change of content, but a structural transformation of the self."[99]

It is not quite clear just how one could differentiate between a "radical conversion" and a gradual process of growth and development, which slowly would

---

[95] Ibid. 117.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid. 117-118.
[98] Ibid. 118.
[99] Ibid.

lead a person perhaps to the same end result. The situation would perhaps be less complicated if Conn would introduce soteriological and/or pneumatological variables into the flow of the argument. Unfortunately, he apparently purposefully avoids doing it. Instead, Conn places the weight of his argument onto the concept of "religious loving." When people experience religious conversion they reach fulfillment of their desire for self-transcendence. This happens because:

> Religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject of love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love. […] Religious loving is without conditions, qualifications, reservations; it is with all one's heart and all one's soul and all one's might and all one's strength.[100]

Here the author is evidently speaking about Christian *agape* love, because just a few pages later he describes this final realization of self-transcendence, moving beyond oneself, and reaching out to others as a strictly Christian enterprise: "The radical religious conversion of Christian conscience finds its fullest realization in loving compassion – the self-transcending perfection of human care and justice."[101] Here is also one of the very few places where Conn addresses the issue of boundaries in a brief sentence, by concluding that such Christian conversion in its total surrender "radically relativizes the moral autonomy of Christian conscience."[102] This remains virtually the only boundary and measuring standard for whether a certain type of counseling can be called "pastoral." The developmental goal of it is relational autonomy achieved by and through self-transcendence:

> While all counseling and therapy should have self-transcending autonomy as their goal, pastoral counseling proceeds explicitly in the context of religious self-transcendence, and spiritual direction aims at the fullness of cognitive, affective, moral, and religious self-transcendence in Christian conversion, at the radical transformation of the self.[103]

The "fruit" of such changes within an individual enable her or him to respond more lovingly to themselves, other people and to God "who is self-transcendence

---

[100] Ibid. 127. Here Conn quotes from Lonnergan's *Method in Theology* where Lonnergan refers to what within Christian tradition is understood as *agape* love. One would assume that agape love in the New Testament sense of the word is virtually impossible without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which in turn is impossible unless a person is soteriologically speaking "in Christ." Still, looking at how Conn structures and develops his argument, one wishes that he was clearer in defining the four dimensions of conversion and setting boundaries for the usage of the term.
[101] Ibid. 132.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid. 132-133.

itself."[104] This is the essence of the model Conn sets forth as a self-transcendence based model for pastoral counseling.

Even though in the above-quoted last sentence of the book Conn comes closest to saying that the ability of self-transcendence "comes out" of us being created in the Image of God, no practical steps are taken to establish that connection. It is left up to the reader to decide whether or not they deem it necessary to anchor Conn's model to the very important doctrine of *imago Dei*.

Conclusion

At first glance Conn's model for pastoral counseling rooted in self-transcendence may sound "too neat, too good to be true."[105] However, as evidenced by comments in the previous section, there are a few critical questions that could be asked about Conn's model. Those questions will be briefly tackled in the next and final section. For now it will suffice to say that in the proposed model of self-transcedence based pastoral counseling, Conn has established a firm and solid connection between the process of human self-transcendence and the development of the self. Moreover, he has also explored the relational and teleological implications of the "desiring Self" within a Christian framework. The criterion for a Self that is well-developed, healthy and powerful is its ability to reach out to others in unconditional, self-sacrificing *agape* love. The boundary and the measurement of this process is crystallized in the self's religious conversion, which leads to radical and permanent transformation of the self. Such a self has experienced God, and has become in many ways like God who is self-transcendence itself.

Along with the critical questions that can be asked of the Connn's model, one can also look critically at the obviously weak and underdeveloped pursuit of establishing (or at least exploring to some extent) the relation between self-transcendence and the doctrine of *Imago Dei* as the theological foundation for pastoral counseling. Conn has not explored this relation beyond very briefly alluding to it three times in the entire book. I will point out in the concluding remarks of this work why it is vital that the above-mentioned relationship is firmly established and maintained at all costs.

---

[104] Ibid. 158.
[105] William J. Sneck "The Desiring Self: Rooting Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction in Self-Transcendence. A Book Review," in *Theological Studies*, vol. 61, no. 1 (March 2000): 184-185.

Epilogue

TOWARD AN INTEGRATED MODEL: CONSIDERATIONS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

The previous section briefly introduces and discusses Walter Conn's model of self-transcendence based counseling. As it is stated by Conn himself, self-transcending relational autonomy is the goal of counseling, yet at the same time self-transcendence is also the vehicle and the source of power for the counseling process as the person moves toward an ever greater integration of the subject and object poles of her self.

If we were to depict Conn's model in a diagram form, it could be presented as a sphere, or in a two-dimensional drawing as a circle.[1] This sphere would represent the integrated desiring self or, according to Merton's terminology, true self, which is virtually synonymous with the *imago Dei*. The sphere then would progressively grow and develop along four axes – cognitive, affective, moral and religious. As Conn has stated, the normal course of such a developmental pattern is away from the childhood egocentrism and towards an ever-greater self-transcendence in adult life.[2] Whether conversion is looked at as a completely separate event, introduced as it were "from the outside," or an integral part of the developmental process, conversion (especially religious) is the criterion for permanent structural changes of the self.

---

[1] Conn in his *Desiring Self* does not provide any diagrams and/or graphic illustrations of his proposed model. However, constructing such a diagram to my mind is acceptable for two reasons. First, it helps to make complex theoretical concepts more manageable and easier to grasp. Second, it simplifies the process of comparing and/or contrasting various counseling and developmental approaches, which have a long-standing tradition of using circles and spheres of various kinds to illustrate the proposed models of human constitution and/or development in counseling. Circles have been and are also used to depict a problem or concern context for an individual who is usually positioned in the center of the circle or concentric circles. Just a few random examples will suffice to illustrate this point. For instance Jay Adams in his *The Christian Counselor' s Manual* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1973) uses concentric circles to illustrate the problem that an individual may face as an inner circle and God's solutions to the problem as an outer circle (p. 207). David Augsburger in his *Pastoral Counseling across Cultures* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986) uses circular shapes profusely to illustrate problem contexts and the position of an individual within those contexts. He also uses circular shapes to conceptualize the model of a person as outlined in analytic psychology (pp. 180, 207, 297). Howard Clinebell in his *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984) uses concentric circles to describe the functions of pastoral care (p. 39 ff.). Larry Crabb in his *Understanding People* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1987) uses concentric circles to show the difference between false feelings of fullness a person can experience and feelings of God-given genuine spiritual fullness that a person can have. Finally Gary Moon and Freda Crews in their 2002 essay *The Essential Helping Relationship* have described a model proposed by Dallas Willard, which uses six concentric circles to illustrate human constitution in biblical anthropology, as well as ways of a person's growth and development.

[2] Conn, *The Desiring*, 61.

Unfortunately, this model is left open-ended in that Conn does not address the issue of possible developmental regression. However, it would seem warranted from the general flow of the argument to assume that once the structural changes have taken place, new conversions can take place, but what has been gained in the person's development in previous conversions is not subject to a reverse of any kind.[3] So, in the circular model each conversion could be represented by a circle further away from the center. And since, according to Conn, each season of life is an "opportunity for a conversion with a particular shape and meaning of its own,"[4] there could be at least as many circles as there are life's seasons.

A very similar developmental/growth model of a person is presented by Gary Moon and Freda Crews in a recent normative text on pastoral counseling – *Competent Christian Counseling*.[5] Actually, the model itself is adapted from a conference presentation by Dallas Willard in which the author has presented the most frequently used anthropological terms in the Bible in the form of concentric circles, or rings (Figure 1).

According to Moon and Crews the model is designed to conceptualize a person from the biblical perspective, and to show how spiritual growth takes palace in a person's life. At the very center of the concentric rings is the area which depicts the person's sprit, or biblically speaking, the heart and the will of a person. Moving from inside out, the next circles are as follows – mind (thoughts and emotions), body (behavior), social (interpersonal relationships), and finally the outer ring of the soul (the aspect of the self that integrates all aspects of the person into a unified whole).

---

[3] The issue of possible regression in a person's spiritual development certainly has everything to do with theology. However, the scope of this dissertation does not allow for a detailed discussion of individual eschatology and/or soteriology of an individual. That could be a relevant and very interesting project in its own right. It will suffice to note here that the vast majority of the authors (including Conn) who write about pastoral counseling (especially the ones espousing the developmental approach) address the issue of possible regression in a person's spiritual development.

[4] Ibid. 117.

[5] Moon Gary W., and Freda Crews "The Essential Helping Relationship," in *Competent Christian Counseling*, Vol. 1. Eds. Timothy Clinton and George Olschlager (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002): 181-202. The choice of Moon and Crews can be attributed to the fact that at the time of writing this thesis the most recent comprehensive volume on pastoral counseling, which claims to set the model of pastoral counseling for the 21st century, is *Competent Christian Counseling.* Even if other books are to be written on the subject with the same trendsetter claim, this volume is most likely going to be regarded highly as the major work in the field for decades to come. Hence, the position of Moon and Crews is not regarded as dogmatically normative in any way. At the same time it is noteworthy that the only schematic model of a person's development in counseling that *Competent Christian Counseling* provides has striking similarities with the model set forth by Conn.

The holistic concept of the person as a "soul" is considered by some to be one of the greatest contributions of Willard's model.
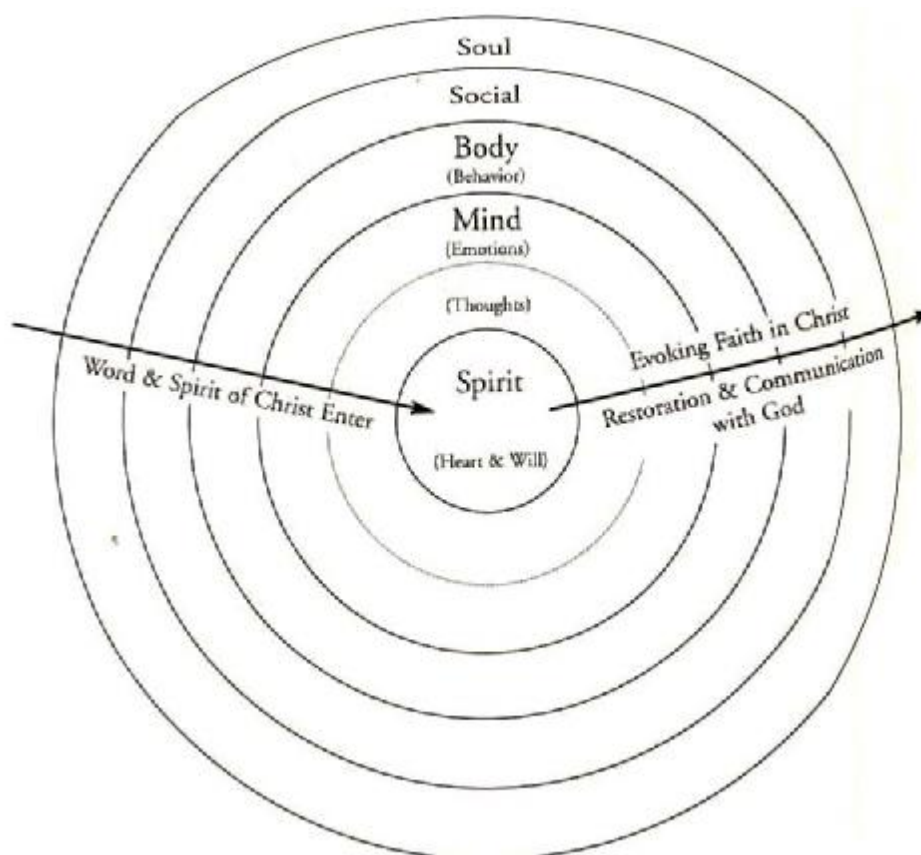
Figure 1

Due to the limitations of this dissertation I will refrain from delving into detailed discussions pertaining to Willard's anthropological thought. I will limit myself to simply introducing his proposed model, which has been recognized by pastoral counseling authorities as functionally good for counseling purposes. In doing so, some references will be made to other works of Willard where he sets forth and explains his anthropological ideas.[6]

What seems to be most appealing to the pastoral counselors in this model is Willard's "rediscovery" of the concept of soul as a biblically holistic anthropological

---

[6] It is most interesting that Moon and Crews in their article do not make any references to Willard's anthropological writings. In order to do justice to the author of the model presented here, I think it would be appropriate and even necessary to provide some brief insights into Willard's anthropological thought.

entity. [7] As the person is "entered" by the Word and the Spirit of Christ, a two-fold process of change is set in motion. As the person is changed from the inner (spirit) circle toward the outer (soul) circle, first faith in Christ is evoked, and second the person is restored to God and communication with God.[8] Most interesting, however, at least from the standpoint of this dissertation, is that using Willard's model as a starting point Moon and Crews talk about transformation of the person's "soul" as the result of the pastoral counseling:

> Transformation of the soul means deep internal change, which is possible only through the mystery of Christ within (Colossians 1:26-27) and the evoking of faith in Christ to live and act through us. A part of this process, all aspects of the person begin to function as a whole and as a more focused reflection of the character of Christ. It is the soul – the whole of the person – that becomes transformed. But it is also accurate to say that the soul is deep within; it is the inmost part that unifies the whole. What was lost is being found.[9]

It is also noteworthy that professional pastoral counselors have evaluated Willard's model extremely positively, and have even suggested that it be accepted as normative for Christian counselors in training. Apparently, the very thrust of the

---

[7] Ibid. 190. Moon and Crews put it this way: "Willard's model seems helpful for Christian counselors at many levels. The concept of the soul was all but lost to modern psychology, a fact that has been well documented […]. In light of Willard's uniting model of the various aspects of the person it seems particularly interesting that psychology has, at times, become fixated on various parts of the whole – unconscious processing (psychodynamic approaches), body (behaviorism), mind (cognitive psychology), and interpersonal (interpersonal and social psychology). Willard provides a refreshing and interactive picture of the soul and an appealing methodology for facilitating transformation (character change) within the lives of clients and counselors. Psychology without consideration for the (whole) soul had been prone to compartmentalization – even fragmentation." (p. 191)

[8] Ibid. 190.

[9] Ibid. 191. The inner transformation of an individual as a result of practicing certain spiritual disciplines has been extensively described by Willard in one of his more popular books *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). In *The Spirit of the Disciplines* Willard sets out to "develop a psychologically sound theology of the spiritual life and of its disciplines." (p. xi) The spiritual disciplines are defined as "activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order." (p. 68) This process, in turn, is necessitated by our being created in the image of God. When it comes to *imago Dei*, Willard adopts a predominantly functional position, according to which God creates humans with the task of ruling over the created world. Consequently, *imago Dei* consists "of all those powers and activities required for fulfilling this job description, this rule to which we are appointed." (p. 49) Furthermore, while Willard opposes to reducing *imago Dei* to the capacity of living in mystic union with our Maker, he emphasizes the relational dimension of *imago* alongside with the functional: "But in light of the immensity of the task, God also gave humankind another very important ability – the ability to live in right relationships to God and to other human beings." (p. 50) At the end of the book Willard seems to move toward a more relational view of the *imago* since the need for spiritual disciplines is tied to the "highest unifying principle" of the human beings, their relation to God. In the sinful condition humans are robbed of this principle, and that means that we "are no longer beings with integrity or coherent wholeness." (p. 66) The spiritual disciplines are the way to restore the highest unifying principle in humans.

proposed model has its appeal in something rather vital that has been neglected by either earlier or similar models:

> In addition to providing a larger and more inclusive focus, Willard's perspective on the soul and on spiritual formation offers Christian counseling a viable theory and methodology for authentic Christian transformation which, in our opinion, should become part of the training provided to Christian counselors as well as part of their practice of soul care among clients. What is offered seems nothing short of a uniquely Christian methodology for positive character development for counselors themselves.[10]

Here the striking similarity between Conn's and Willard's models of change is more than apparent. Both emphasize the permanent (structural) changes of the self (Conn) or the soul (Willard) as the result of something that can be achieved (or at least facilitated) in and through pastoral counseling (spiritual direction). The chief difference between these models from the standpoint of this dissertation, however, is that Willard's model does not include and/or address the factor of self-transcendence in pastoral counseling, which is the most essential building component in Conn's approach, as well as one of the chief components (along with *imago Dei*) in the model that will be suggested in this dissertation. Hence, partially based on work done by Conn, and partially based on the research into *imago* scholarship offered in this dissertation, the proposed model will attempt to move beyond the limits set by Willard's model.

Since the connection between *imago Dei* and self-transcendence as the main operating factor in human development has been firmly established in the previous chapters, it would be best to limit the comparison between Willard's and Conn's models only to the structural layout of the model.

Without going into deep and detailed analysis of the starting points and methods employed by the authors of both models, I think it is permissible to apply the graphic representation of Willard's model to Conn's concept of the desiring developing self. In this case one would refrain from using such biblically warranted yet diversely interpreted terms as "soul" or "mind".[11] Instead, one would operate with

---

[10] Ibid.

[11] Theologically speaking, Willard indeed uses very convenient and seemingly easily understandable anthropological terms that do indeed appear in the Biblical text quite a few times – spirit, mind, body, soul. There are, however, several difficulties that arise from such an approach. First, even though all the above-mentioned terms are frequently used in the Bible, they may be and frequently are interpreted differently depending on the specific scripture passage where the term is used, as well as the interpreter's prior theological and/or psychological background (a sad, yet vivid example of that would

the term "self" (real self), which according to the conclusions drawn in the previous chapter, is virtually synonymous with the theological concept of *imago Dei*. The term "self," or in Merton's /Conn's terminology "real self," could also be used, yet in such a case the same difficulties of defining the term may arise as in case with the previously mentioned three terms. Moreover, the term "self," as it is used in modern humanities as the identifier of personality, does not even appear in the Biblical text. Thus, if in the case of mind/soul/spirit one would deal with Biblical text and one's own interpretation of it, in the case of "self" one would have to take yet another additional step, namely to show that the term "self" can in principle be related to the terminology of the Biblical anthropology. And, if such a relationship would be established, then it would further need to be demonstrated that the anthropological vocabulary used in the Biblical text requires the usage of the term "self" in order to adequately describe the consequences that pastoral counseling may or may not bring about in a person's life.

Based on the discussion offered in the previous chapter, I believe Walter Conn has done an extraordinary job of showing how the concept of self (and several other concepts from the realm of psychology) is indispensable in describing the process of development of a person that is either facilitated by, or brought about by, pastoral counseling. This becomes especially relevant if this description is designed to be compatible with and understood by someone operating in the realm of developmental psychology. From the standpoint of theology, however, much more could be done in terms of establishing the relationship between the term "self" and the terms of biblical anthropology. Moreover, if as Conn claims, a profound transformation that brings about a permanent structural change in a person requires the religious dimension alongside the cognitive, moral, and affective dimensions, the usage of the term "self" becomes almost problematic. Even if the term "self" is occasionally used in theological and/or religious texts, its meaning is vastly different from the way it is defined in psychology.

---

be the seemingly never ending dichotomy/ trichotomy debate). For instance, if in theology the distinction between body and spirit/soul/mind distinction is more or less established, the relationship between the latter three terms is far from being resolved in any way that would lead toward a consensus. The meaning with which each of these terms is endowed will directly be dependent on the subjective preferences of the user of this model. If that is acceptable from the standpoint of functional applicability of the model, it can be confusing from the standpoint of formulating the theoretical (theological) foundations of the model, which is precisely one of the tasks of this dissertation.

This brings one back to the starting point of this dissertation, namely the claim that the concept and the doctrine of *imago Dei* is really the most foundational truth and the most powerful symbol that the Bible gives in regard to human identity and what is contained therein. [12] As the discussion in the previous chapter indicates, *imago Dei* appears to be a far more adequate term for denoting that which is a subject of change in pastoral counseling.[13]

Figure 2 shows the model that provides a balanced alternative to the two models discussed above. In essence it is very similar to the model proposed by Conn. The chief difference in this case is that the terms "self" and/or "true self" may or may not be used depending on the prior orientation of the user of the model. The concept of *imago Dei* is the concept that is both completely adequate as well as theologically correct in speaking about what it means to be human and what it means to change as a human.

Also, as this dissertation demonstrates, the term and concept of *imago Dei* provides the necessary theological basis for addressing and dealing with more dimensions of change than just the four ones identified by Conn. From the standpoint of theology (individual eschatology), as well as possibly from the perspective of counseling process, the teleological dimension is perhaps most significant.[14]

In this model the arrow "going into" the *imago Dei* (the person in counseling) represents the two most important influences exerted on the person – the interpersonal developmental impulses (communication with the counselor/therapist) and the work of the Holy Spirit (to be discussed shortly). The "outgoing" arrow represents the two most significant processes taking place within the individual as a result of pastoral counseling – increased self-transcendence and relational autonomy (growth of *imago Dei*) and conversions, which mark the stages in the person's development.

---

[12] This is simply a summary statement of the approaches to and interpretations of the *imago* scholarship found in the first part of this dissertation.

[13] It must be noted here that even if the term *imago Dei* is chosen as the defining term in pastoral counseling, it would still need to be very carefully defined both theologically and psychologically. However, the process of defining the term in this case would start with a foundationally theological term and would then lead to various anthropological and/or psychological cognates, as opposed to operating with various psychological terms and then trying to bring them all under one unifying theological umbrella.

[14] Certainly it can be argued that the religious dimension identified by Conn includes the teleological dimension automatically. However, that leaves the religious dimension again wide-open to theological subjectivism and/or reductionism. The teleological dimension as discussed in this dissertation, on the other hand, would possibly serve as a safeguard against that, and as a vehicle for addressing the issues of personal eschatology and/or soteriology that may come up in pastoral counseling.
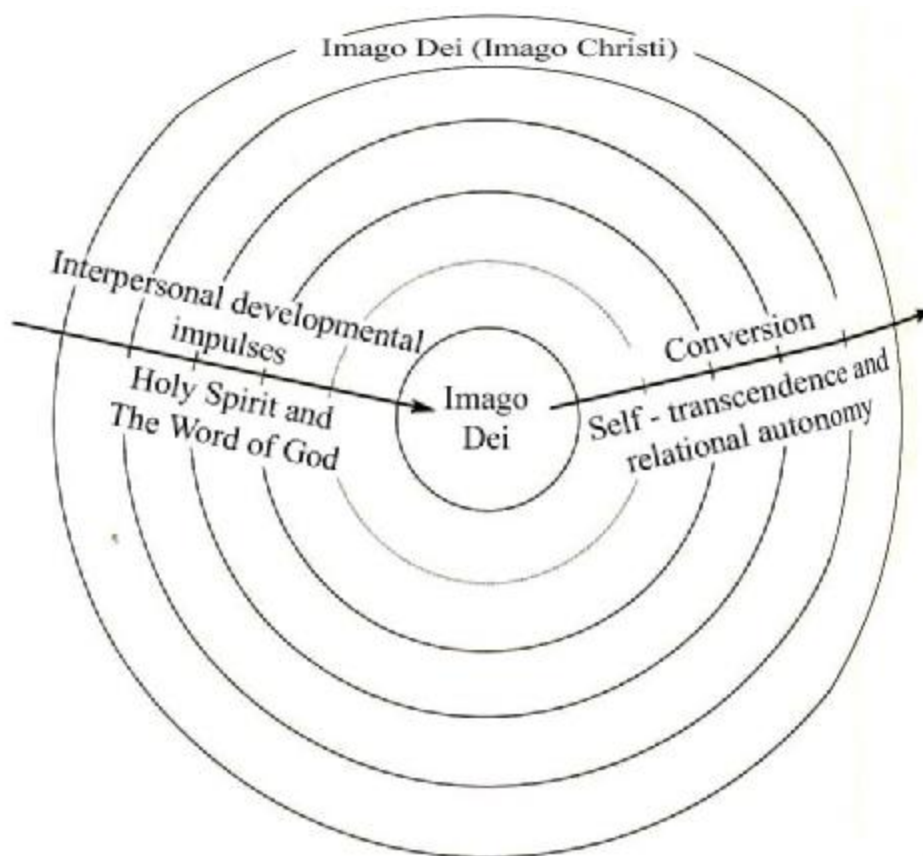
Figure 2

Imago Dei in this model is the operational term which is used to denote the human being who is both the object of pastoral counseling and the subject of personal change.[15] The term *Imago Christi* is also included in the parenthesis in order to do justice to the believing person's transformation into the image and likeness of Christ. Though Conn himself does not discuss the term "image of Christ," he does make several references to a "kenotic participation in the mind of Christ," which is the result and the identifying mark of the genuine Christian conversion.[16]

---

[15] Even though, as it was established in the chapter on paradigms in pastoral counseling, as well as in several other places in this dissertation, the developmental change that takes place in counseling applies to both the client and the counselor, due to the scope and limitations of this dissertation only one version of the model will be discussed (focusing solely on the client). Exploring the implications of this model with regard to the possible change on the part of the counselor would perhaps be a fascinating topic for other research.

[16] Conn, *The Desiring*, 130 ff. The term *imago Christi* is included as well because I believe that the identicalness of the *imago Dei* and *imago Christi*, theologically speaking is not a settled issue. I think it would be possible to argue that the image of God mentioned in Genesis naturally includes the image of Christ since God is triune and immutable. On the other hand, it would also be possible to argue that as the revelation progressively unfolds and reaches its climax in the person of Jesus Christ, *imago Christi* entails and means more than the "bare" fact of Genesis, which states that human beings are Gods

As established in the previous chapter, self-transcendence is the "vehicle" of the pastoral counseling, and at the same time it is also the "product" of the counseling. In the words of Conn: "Counseling that follows this paradigm not only guides a client to develop toward a greater self-transcendence of relational autonomy, but also provides in the counseling process itself a concrete model of that very self-transcendence."[17] Hence, it is not really possible to draw a separate line in figure 2 for self-transcendence. Besides, it is so closely tied to the processes within *imago Dei* that it is probably not necessary to draw a separate trajectory for the development of self-transcendence.

The permanent changes of the person's self according to Conn are brought about and solidified by the four-dimensional conversion (-s), the most significant of which is the religious conversion. As indicated in the previous chapter, it is not quite clear as to how exactly this "introduction of a new kind of story into one's life,"[18] which is the definition of the Christian conversion offered by Conn, would work. From the standpoint of developmental psychology, these conversions seem somewhat similar to the central conflicts of developmental stages formulated by Erik H. Ericson – once the conflict is successfully resolved (conversion experienced) a person is ready to move to the next stage.[19] From the standpoint of Christian theology, however, it would make little sense to tie conversions to some developmental processes alone. Conn himself indicates that Christian conversion results in "allowing God to move from the edges to the center of one's life, transforming one's very way of being."[20] Christian theology has always attributed changes of this nature to the work of the Holy Spirit:

> In the New Testament, the encounter between God's Spirit and the human spirit is a fundamental aspect of the Christian experience (Galatians 5:17; Titus 3:5-6). It is "by the Spirit" that people encounter God and experience this life (Galatians 5:16-26). Living in the Spirit is an area of struggle for believers, but it is also where we meet God personally; it is where God comes

---

image-bearers. This would be especially relevant in the context of soteriological and/or teleological issues.

[17] Ibid. 158.

[18] Ibid. 118. The ambiguity of the term "conversion" as defined by Conn is discussed in the previous chapter.

[19] This similarity, however, does not mean that the Eriksonian stages and Conn's conversions can be viewed as compatible and/or mutually related. One of the reasons for that is the fact that Conn's conversions are not age-specific; they are not hierarchical and so on.

[20] Conn, *The Desiring*, 118.

alive. Encountering the living God always changes and transforms us, as God is big on making us anew. We will never be the same.[21]

Hence, it is of utmost importance to very clearly establish the operative power of the Holy Spirit in a person's life if we are to speak about conversion in a Christian sense.[22] Along with the work of the Holy Spirit the proposed model also lists The Word of God similar, as it appears in Willard's model. This would be the source of the new *kind* of story referred to by Conn, which Christian conversion introduces into a person's life.

Succinctly, this is the proposed model for a self-transcendence based pastoral counseling rooted in the theology of *imago Dei*. As indicated previously, this is a balanced model that takes into consideration both theological truths as well as important insights from developmental psychology. In this thesis more time and energy is spent on establishing the connection between self-transcendence and *imago Dei*, than discussing the developmental aspects of the self-transcending human "self." Such is the case simply because the authors of recent pastoral counseling literature

---

[21] Hindson, Edward, George Ohlschlager, and Tim Clinton "Roots of Spirituality: Spiritual Formation in Scripture, the Church and Counseling," in *Competent Christian Counseling*, Vol. 1. Eds. Timothy Clinton and George Olschlager (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002): 117-139.

    Willard echoes a very similar notion in his *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden life in God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998). In what he calls the "Golden Triangle" of spiritual growth Willard puts the "Action of the Holy Spirit" at the very top of the triangle, which is supposed to depict the "transformation of our inner self into Christlikeness." (p. 347) Willard is very clear in that: "The intervention of the Holy Spirit is placed at the apex of the triangle to indicate its primacy in the entire process." (Ibid.) Unfortunately, the discussion about the role of the Holy Spirit in transformation of an individual that follows is barely two pages long. Perhaps it is enough if the role of the Holy Spirit is assumed throughout the book. However, it is interesting to note that the presence of the Holy Spirit that is included in the graphic representation of the "Golden Triangle," is not replicated in the model adopted by Moon and Crews several years later. As stated previously, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a detailed account of Willard's position on pneumatology. At the same time a conclusion may be in place that there is more to be said about the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of transforming persons in general, and in the process of pastoral counseling in particular. This precisely is what I am trying to do in the proposed model.

[22] It is indeed interesting to note that Walter Conn practically does not address the issues related to the work of the Holy Spirit in pastoral counseling. Perhaps it can be attributed to a desire to write a book about theological realities using almost exclusively a language that is intelligible from the standpoint of psychology. If the term 'the image of God' is mentioned about four times in the *Desiring Self*, the work and/or presence of the Holy Spirit is virtually absent from the discussion. At the same time it certainly seems to be assumed every step of the way throughout the book (especially when Conn speaks about the *agape* love). Yet, if we are to lay a *theological* foundation for the pastoral counseling, the work and presence of the Holy Spirit must be at least mentioned if not thoroughly discussed. Do to the scope, focus, and length limitations of this dissertation I will limit myself to tackling the issue very briefly in this section, and avoiding a more extended discussion. However, it must be noted that a certain avoidance to speak about the presence and/or work of the Holy Spirit in counseling is rather characteristic of the recent Western literature devoted to pastoral counseling issues. On the other hand, there may be change on the horizon in the future as more attention in counseling is paid to spiritual disciplines. A recent example that marks this change is a chapter *Roots of Spirituality* by Hindson, Ohlschlager, and Clinton in *Competent Christian Counseling*.

spend much time discussing the latter while the former often times goes unnoticed or is mentioned only briefly in passing.[23] Hence, the thesis of this dissertation is a valid thesis, which first, can be substantiated, and second, it can contribute much to the sometimes almost non-existent theological foundations of pastoral counseling.

The model proposed here is adequate within the boundaries of this thesis, but it does not address several issues and/or problems, which I will briefly mention in the next few pages. All of these issues can be adequately addressed using the proposed model as the foundation, however, a detailed discussion, due to the limitations of this dissertation, will not be possible here.

The problem of evil

As evidence by the above discussion, the models proposed by Conn, Willard, and finally by myself do not address the issue of evil. In the case of Conn, evil as a concept, category, or even a term is not even mentioned in his *The Desiring Self*. This is seemingly legitimate because the thrust of the book and the whole argument for pastoral counseling rooted in self-transcendence is geared toward growth and development in the positive sense of both terms only. This, however, presents a serious problem if the only thing in which the theoretical foundation of pastoral counseling is to be found is the human ability to self-transcend.

As pointed out in the chapter on Reinhold Niebuhr's anthropological thought, the very ability of man to self-transcend is what causes existential anxiety, which in turn leads to evil done by man. This evil results from the self-transcending human person being inclined to "transmute his partial and finite self and his partial and finite values into the infinite good."[24] This in turn is resulting from the fact that man as a "fragment" of the whole is alienated from God, the center of the whole:

> The fragmentary character of the human life is not regarded as evil in Biblical faith because it is seen from the perspective of a center of life and meaning in which each fragment is related to the plan of the whole, to the will of God.

---

[23] Among several recent authors who have made a similar observation is Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger who has emphasized the need for a pastoral counselor to be a "bilingual" person in terms of her competency both in psychology and theology. This is a notion with which I am in complete agreement, and which perhaps helps to understand the need for the model proposed here. It also fits what Hunsinger has termed the "Calcedonian pattern," namely, an approach according to which psychology and theology are viewed based on two principles – autonomy and reciprocity. (*Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, 217 ff.)

[24] Niebuhr, *The Nature,* vol. 1, 122.

> The evil arises when the fragment seeks by its own wisdom to comprehend the whole or attempts by its own power to realize it.[25]

Hence, if the sole foundation for pastoral counseling intelligible from the standpoint of developmental psychology is self-transcendence, then the developmental goal of relational autonomy and increased self-transcendence could theoretically be achieved by doing evil. The only safeguard, which Conn offers against that, is the concept of self-sacrificing *agape* love. *Agape* love, in turn, is tied to the concept of religious conversion. Religious conversion is necessary, for it "transforms the existential subject into a subject of love."[26] This claim, especially if divorced from Christian theology, may mean little in light of the fact that all throughout history incredible evils have been done by people who at least have seemed to be fully converted to their chosen religions. In such cases evil acts (oppression, murders, human sacrifices, looting etc.) have been performed for religious purposes and/or as a visible sign of one's dedication to one's religion. The situation is further complicated if the self-transcending human beings perform evil acts under the guise of trying to eliminate evil, thus increasing their ability for self-transcendence. As the eminent psychiatrist Scott Peck characterizes this situation:

> Strangely enough, evil people are often destructive because they are attempting to destroy evil. The problem is that they misplace the locus of the evil. Instead of destroying others they should be destroying the sickness within themselves. As life often threatens their self-image of perfection, they are often busily engaged in hating and destroying that life – usually in the name of righteousness.[27]

Even though this is in principle an absurd situation, yet the possibility exists to advance such an argument. Precisely at this point the necessity to establish the relationship between a developed *imago Dei* theology and self-transcendence becomes more than obvious. This is also supported by Niebuhr who claims that to understand the problem of human finiteness and freedom from a truly Biblical

---

[25] Ibid. 168.

[26] Conn, *The Desiring Self*, 127.

[27] M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 74. Besides external projection of evil for the purpose of fighting it in others there is a number of other things about evil that perhaps may be tied to self-transcendence at work. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. for instance has identified several reasons why evil is enticing to people, most noteworthy of which are the dramatic qualities of evil and the fascination that they evoke. (*Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 89-95).

perspective "it is necessary to set the doctrine of man as a creature in juxtaposition to the doctrine of man as *imago Dei.*"[28]

Imago Dei, according to the proposed model, is to be considered only in a "package" with the redemptive theological aspects, which here are denoted by the term *imago Christi*. While Conn allocates religious conversion a rather significant place in the development of his model, a firm and theologically clear connection between self-transcendence and redemptive realities is not established. The only terms that most likely are supposed to imply the redemptive realities are *agape* love and religious conversion. If the issue at stake is the theological foundations for pastoral counseling, such implicitness is not sufficient and/or permissible.

The issue of redemption

Speaking from the standpoint of Christian theology, the issues of human sin and salvation are fundamental because they have to do with human eternal destiny as well as with their well being during life on earth. Thus, they must be at least mentioned within the boundaries of this dissertation, if not thoroughly discussed. For this reason I have decided to use the term *imago Christi* both as a cognate of *imago Dei* and as a separate anthropological term with specifically redemptive overtones.

At this point the singling out of *imago Christi* in the proposed model may become understandable, because, biblically speaking, God is the one who ultimately takes care of evil, and he does it in the person of Christ. Here again Niebuhr provides a very valuable insight:

> However, the eternal and the divine which destroys evil is not some undifferentiated eternity which effaces both the good and evil of history by destroying history itself. God's mercy must make itself known in history, so that man in history may become fully conscious of his guilt and his redemption. The Messiah must give his life "a ransom for many."[29]

It is precisely the person of Christ on whom redemptively and soteriologically speaking this model rests. Niebuhr provides a valuable insight in historical perspective juxtaposing the historically Greek strivings to reduce redemption to a divine disclosure of wisdom with the Christocentric biblical idea of atonement. The Greek mind, as Niebuhr describes it, was historically preoccupied with the

---

[28] Niebuhr, *The Nature,* vol. 1, 166.
[29] Niebuhr, *The Nature*, vol. 2, 46.

appropriation of the "foolishness" of the Gospel; hence "it did accept the Christian affirmation that the eternal had made itself known in history."[30] The problem, however, was that "it regarded that fact, of itself, as the answer to the final problem of life."[31] The chief problem here was the failure to understand "that the particular content of the divine disclosure was the knowledge of the mercy and the justice of God in their paradoxical relationship, in other words, the Atonement."[32]

Translating this Niebuhrian notion into the language of the present discussion, the "Greek mind" would perhaps regard the fact that all humans are made in the image of God as sufficient in terms of redemption. Such a position would eventually lead to a form of universalism. While it is not the goal of this dissertation to explore in depth the relationship between election and redemption, it will suffice to note here that convincing attempts have been made to equate creation of mankind in the image of God with election.

For instance, Rodney Vanderploeg has explored this notion in his 1981 article by first establishing that creation can, and for the purposes of pastoral counseling even *should*, be viewed as general election. Relying heavily on Karl Barth's interpretation of *imago Dei*, Vanderploeg suggests that God has created mankind in his image for a special communal relationship with himself: "Here there is true encounter in which humankind responds out of its created nature of being male and female in relationship to the Creator who calls them into a loving and personal relationship with himself. This by definition is election."[33] The election viewed in this way is a universal "ontological phenomenon intimately connected to the created essence of being human," which applies to all people alike.[34]

This universal election, however, is not to be confused or equated with redemption. Only in Christ the goal (the *telos*) of humans created in the image of God is fully realized, and their relationship with the Creator God is actualized. Only then the redemption is complete and the salvation occurs:

> All human beings are created in the image of God, with the telos of that image being relationship with Yahveh. However, even if the goal is not reached, the

---

[30] Ibid, 59.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Rodney D. Vanderploeg "*Imago Dei*, Creation as Election: Foundations for Psychotherapy," Journal *of Psychology and Theology* 9, no 3 (Fall 1981), 210.

[34] Ibid. 211. Here Vanderploeg is strongly opposed to the widespread notion in reformed theology, which rests on the assertion that if some are elected for a special relationship with God, others must be reprobate or rejected from that special relationship.

call inherent in the *Imago Dei* remains, and that call is election. […] Human ontology and teleology both are captured in the concept and reality of the image of God. Human ontology is the creative Word of God creating beings who are by nature relational beings. Human teleology is being-in-relationship with God and fellow human beings.[35]

This again is where the usage of *imago Christi* as a separate term denoting the redemptive realities of a fully realized human *telos* is helpful and useful. Even though more work in the area of Biblical and Systematic theology should be done in order to establish *imago Christi* as a legitimate concept of theological anthropology in its own right, it is legitimate to use it in the proposed model as a tentative demarcation line between election and redemption as they relate to the doctrine of *imago Dei*.

The issue of religious systems other than Christianity

Finally one of the issues that increasingly grows in significance is the issue of the applicability of the proposed model in the context of religious systems other than Christianity. The debate of the possibility of dialogue between various religious traditions is neither new, nor simple. Recent scholarship has increasingly been leaning towards the view that inter-faith communication and dialogue, or *interspirituality* (a term recently coined by Wayne Teasdale) is possible if we move out of the doctrinal and concentrate on the mystical, which is allegedly sub-conscious and universal across cultures.[36] Even those theologians who have been reserved towards claims about strong ineffability and putative unanimity of the mystical experience across cultures and religious traditions, have conceded to the notion that mystical experience, if carefully and precisely defined, can be a major contributor in building the cross-

---

[35] Ibid. 213 - 215.

[36] Wayne Teasdale "Mysticism as the Crossing of Ultimate Boundaries: A Theological Reflection," in *Concilium*, no. 2. (1999): 90-94. Among other Christian denominations, Roman Catholics have been on the forefront of advancing this particular position. It is not surprising, therefore, that a sizable portion of this thesis, especially in the area of possible universal applicability of *imago Dei* theology and its implications concentrates on Catholic theologians e.g. Rahner, Merton, Lonergan, and Conn. A Roman Catholic theologian, and professor of De Paul University (Chicago), Teasdale has summarized this notion the following way: "If the mystical experience of other traditions is genuine and if it is on the same level as Christian contemplation in its fullness in the transforming union, the spiritual marriage between God and the soul, then one implication is that Christianity does not have a monopoly on wisdom as it relates to the nature of the Divine. Christian theological formulations do not exhaust the infinite reality and subtlety of the divine nature. This means that we can learn from the inner experience of other forms of spirituality. Christianity's understanding of God is not complete in this sense, nor is the experience and understanding of the other traditions complete without the Christian contribution. […] Complementarity is thus the direction toward which the mystical leads us. In this way, humankind can cross the boundaries to reach the further shore of our eternal homeland. (p. 94)

cultural philosophy of religion for the future.[37] It is my belief that a carefully formulated doctrine of *imago Dei*, with all its implications, could and should be a major positive factor in formulating a future cross-cultural philosophy of religion, as well as practical approaches to the issues of interspirituality.

If the doctrine of *imago Dei* is announcing the fact of universal election, then it certainly must have some relevancy and/or applicability even in the context of religious pluralism. On the other hand, from the standpoint of Christianity, it would be important to ask whether the universal applicability of the doctrine of *imago Dei* would not open the doors for possibly compromising some of the unique anthropological truths essential to Christian theology.

Conn in *The Desiring Self* briefly tackles this issue when he introduces some of Thomas Merton's ideas regarding the inter-religious dialogue in the context of self-transcendence driven development of the self. In essence, Merton's life itself was a living proof of the fact that such a dialogue between religious traditions is possible, for Merton "lived his adult life as a Trappist monk and died in Bangkok pursuing contemplative dialogue with the Buddhist monks."[38] In fact, according to Conn, it was during Merton's last "missionary journey" to Ceylon in 1968 that he received the gift of radical religious conversion while gazing at the gigantic statues of Buddhas. Merton himself has later characterized this experience with the words "everything is emptiness, and everything is compassion."[39] Conn sums up the results of this experience in Merton's life in the following paragraph:

> In such transcendent experience according to Merton, there is a "radical and revolutionary change in the subject." This radical change in the subject is a "kenotic transformation, an emptying of all the contents of the ego-consciousness to become a void in which the light of God or the glory of God, the full radiation of the infinite reality of His Being and Love are manifested." Understood in the Pauline sense of a participation in "the mind of Christ," this "dynamic of emptying and of transcendence accurately defines the transformation of the Christian consciousness in Christ."[40]

---

[37] John Y. Fenton "Mystical Experience as a Bridge for Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion: A Critique," in *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 49, no. 1 (March 1981): 51-76. In the context of Merton's experiences with the Buddhist monks as they are described by Conn, it is interesting to note that Fenton analyzes the mystical experience of Zen according to recent experiments with the brain waves (alpha waves) during specific mystic states of consciousness. Fenton's conclusion at the end of this discussion is that even though mystical experience appears to be conditioned, focused, and evaluated by the structure of the particular tradition, that should by no means exclude "the possibility that the experience is also objectively based." (p. 65)

[38] Conn, *The Desiring*, 115.

[39] Ibid. 128-129.

[40] Ibid. 130.

While this experience, according to Merton, has profound similarities with the *satori* experience in Zen, there still remain differences. For a Zen practitioner the experience of *satori* means attaining the true self, which is a no-self, or an experience in which one realizes the "nothingness of the exterior self, and consequently the liberation of the real self, the inner 'I'."[41] Generally speaking the Zen practitioners may not be interested in "moving beyond the pure consciousness of such spiritual experience."[42] Merton, however, prefers to view it as "a stepping stone to an awareness of God."[43] This awareness of God in the Christian sense is the participation in the mind of Christ.

If the possibility for inter-religious dialogue exists at least in principle, what implications would it have for a pastoral counseling practice rooted in *imago Dei* theology? Among others one very significant implication would be that pastoral counseling with people who do not belong to the Christian tradition is possible (provided, of course, that the clients themselves wish to work with the pastoral counselor). It is possible if the creation in the image of God can be established as universal election and invitation to relationship with the Creator God. The pastoral counselors would then embrace, affirm and represent God's universal election by helping their clients to work towards solution of their personal and relational problems thus helping them to grow toward increased self-transcendence, relational autonomy, and "larger" *imago Dei*. Vanderploeg has captured this thought succinctly in the following paragraph:

> A therapist in relationship with a client is all that is necessary to establish the reality of election. The client (believing or not) is participating in God's election, whether or not the name of God or Christ is ever mentioned. The reality of the caring relationship is an affirmation of the *Imago Dei*, of creation, and of election, and all that they stand for.[44]

---

[41] Ibid. 129.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid. Here again it must be noted that a much deeper discussion of the similarities and differences between the Zen *satori* experience and experiences in the Christian mystical tradition would be in place here. However, such discussion would go beyond the scope and goals of this dissertation. Thus, I will limit myself to simply noting that according to Conn there is a place of dialogue between these two traditions. The starting point for this dialogue is the desiring, self-transcending true self, which according to the position developed in this thesis is largely identical with *imago Dei*.

[44] Rodney D. Vanderploeg "*Imago Dei* as Foundational to Psychotherapy: Integration Versus Segregation," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 9, no 4 (Winter 1981), 301.

Here the therapeutic relationship itself is viewed as sufficient evidence of God's covenent, and to a certain sense of God's presence in the pastoral counseling process. Such a position is both theologically tenable and therapeutically acceptable if it is rooted in a biblically correct and psychologically intelligible theology of self-transcendence driven developing *imago Dei* in which each and every representative of the human race is created after God's own likeness.

The issue of religious education in the 21ˢᵗ century

The same general principles outlined in the previous section in the context of interspirituality, or the dialogue amongst various religious traditions, also apply to a significant degree to the religious educational context (Christian education in particular) of the 21ˢᵗ century Western society. As I have recently argued elsewhere, in Christian religious education of the 21ˢᵗ century, the roles of the educator and the pastoral counselor/spiritual director no longer tend to follow a sharply defined demarcation line. More often than not they tend to overlap, and even blend to a certain extent.[45]

According to Ronald H. Cram, there are three major factors that influence the contemporary religious education scene, and these will continue to influence the relationship between education and religion in the future.[46] First, the line between ecumenism and interreligious dialogue has ceased to exist. This is a result of the interplay between globalization and post-modernism; we no longer arrive at "different perspectives on a single god" in the ecumenical dialogue. Instead, there is a context of many gods and goddesses present in today's interreligious dialogue, which is a sign of significant theological shifts:

> If the transcendent becomes located in communities of diversity, where utopian versions of present (based on the creative self in tension between past and future) are created, communal life itself becomes an activity of interreligious dialogue. This interreligious dialogue is not merely an interplay of personal experience, and Christian resources, but also with world religious options as resources too. This blurring of boundaries between the experience of the transcendent is already normative for the majority of persons in Western popular cultures. That formal and institutional settings are loath to accept this anti – authoritarian understanding of "making religion" will result in a greater

---

[45] Gatis Lidums, "Religious Educator as a Pastoral Counselor. Reflections about the Changing Role of the Religious Educator in Today's Society," In *Ceļš*, no. 55 (2003-2004): 26-53.

[46] Ronald H. Cram, "The Future of Christian Religious Education in an Era of Shrinking Transcendence," in *Religious Education*, Vol. 96, no. 2 (2001): 164-174.

and greater isolation of formal religious institutional expressions from the public life of the societies in which they exist.[47]

This sobering observation builds a foundation of sorts for the second factor, which results in the conclusion that today "the traditional religious centers are failing to have public voice when, simultaneously, the promised salvation of modernity is failing as well."[48] This, among other things means that the religious education of the future will have to change because "for better or for worse people are disillusioned with both traditional organized religion and the gurus of modernity alike."[49]

Third, based on the experience of the Religious Education Association in the United States, Cram notes that large, predominantly Christian agencies have recently attempted to engage in reflection "about the role of religion in culture by means of ecumenical and interreligious conversation."[50] The conclusion reached here is that this approach alone will not be sufficient in meeting the needs of "the educators who have concern with multicultural dialogue in an age of shrinking transcendence."[51]

This, among other things, means that the era of large religious organizations and clearly drawn boundaries in interreligious dialogue is coming to an end. Instead, focus is shifting to networks, groups and people with passion. If the Christian religious educator will want to be effective in this situation she or he will have to embody a boundary-blurring presence in the educational process (1), a capacity for listening (2), and an ability to promote conversation across various religious and cultural boundaries (3).[52]

---

[47] Ibid. 170-171.

[48] Ibid. 172.

[49] Lidums, 32.

[50] Cram, 173.

[51] Ibid. Cram is not advancing a particularly well-articulated position in his article. Instead, he is simply recording his own observations of what he calls *the era of shrinking transcendence*, and making some tentative suggestions to the future realm of Christian education in the West. As far as the definition of the era of shrinking transcendence is concerned, Cram is first postulating that "the sense of the surety of the self in the present is essentially an experience of self-transcendence." (p. 165) Self-transcendence as the ground of all life lived in the present is then tied to the formal manifestations of religious identity and behavior, which is paired with the growing sense of the need for surety in today's world. At the same time Cram makes the observation that "the declining social position in the West of the formal religious denominational institutions does not diminish the innate human need and ability to experience self-transcendence; it simply places that experience more and more in the individual human mind rather than focusing upon the communal social context of religious life as the place where the creative self makes sense out of life." (p. 166) Put differently, it means that in today's Western world the locus of "making religion" is increasingly being located in the autonomous self rather than in the context of formal religious institutions.

[52] Lidums, 33.

In this situation the questioning of grand theological narratives of the past will only be meaningful if the Christian educators themselves give shape to those narratives in their own lives, and thus are able to speak about them meaningfully. This will then be the major force in promoting the personal development of the students, which should be at the very center of the Christian educational process in particular, and, on a larger scale, the educational process in general:

> This process of personal development certainly requires an educator who is able to engage in a dialogue, and who at the same time has the bilingual capacity described so eloquently by Van Deusen Hunsinger. Moreover, when it comes to Religious education, in the time when the collective normative answers of the past are but a subject to reinterpretation, the key to religious education more and more becomes the educator herself. Spiritual autobiographies of the educators are what elicit renewed awareness of transcendence.[53]

Here it becomes evident that boundaries, once sharply drawn, between Christian education and pastoral counseling/spiritual direction in the postmodern cultural milieu of the West, have now become somewhat blurry. Hence, it is tenable to apply the same general principle of *imago* theology to the situation in Christian education as it was suggested in the previous section with regards to the possible dialogue between Christianity and other religious systems. Namely, the relationship between the Christian educator as *locus theologicus,* and the student can be viewed as the evidence of God's presence in the educational process.

The blueprint of a detailed account of *imago*-centered theological anthropology for the context of contemporary Christian education is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. At the same time I believe that the theology of self-transcendence driven developing *imago Dei* here again (as in the previous case) can

---

[53] Ibid. 35. Here I am referring to the concept of bilingualism formulated by Van Deusen Hunsinger discussed in more detail in chapter six, in the section entitled "Pastoral counselor as the key to pastoral counseling." Also, I am drawing upon the ideas advanced by Bert Roebben in his article "The Vulnerability of the Postmodern Educator as *Locus Theologicus*: A Study in Practical Theology," in *Religious Education,* vol. 96, no 2 (2001): 175-192. The position developed by Roeben is centered around the post-Vatican II metanoethical model of faith where the individual is expected to re-imagine the Christian narrative from a personal perspective thus reflecting on the Christian tradition in their own way of analyzing and reconstructing moral and religious environment. This, in the Christian education setting, requires a renewed correlation between faith and life, which is only possible if the religious educator as *locus theologicus* reappropriates "the religious story from within, from their own struggle with religion and worldviews." (p. 176)

Through this adult faith formation on the part of the Christian educator (assuming there is genuinely open communication between the teacher and the students), she or he becomes the contributor to the development and "flourishing" of their students, the future adults.

serve as the theological ground upon which the future approaches to Christian education can and even should be constructed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Jay E. *Competent to Counsel. Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling.* Grand
    Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1970.

Adams, Jay E. *The Christian Counselor's Manual. The Practice of Nouthetic
    Counseling.* Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1973.

Anderson, Herbert "Whatever happened to *Seelsorge*?" In *Word and World*, vol. 21,
    no. 1 (Winter 2001): 32-41.

Anderson, Ray S. *On Being Human. Essays in Theological Anthropology.* Grand
    Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 1982.

Arndt, William F. and Gingrich, F. Wilbur. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New
    Testament and other Early Christian Literature.* Chicago: The University of
    Chicago Press, 1957.

Banner, Michael "Christian Anthropology and the Beginning and End of Life," In
    Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. 51, no. 1 (1998): 22-60.

Baxter, C.A. "Brunner, Emil," In *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair D.
    Ferguson and David F. Wright. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Barclay, Oliver "The Nature of Christian Morality" in *Readings in Christian Ethics,
    vol.1*. Eds. David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw (Grand Rapids: Baker
    Books: 1994): 41-49.

Barry, Kevin "Beyond Counseling: Spiritual Direction," in *Journal of Pastoral
    Counseling*, vol. 36 (2001): 35-41.

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, II/1. Trans. T.H.L. Parker et.al, Edinburgh: T&T
    Clark, 1957.

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III/1. Trans. J.W. Edwards et.al, Edinburgh: T&T
    Clark, 1960.

Barth, Karl. *The Humanity of God*. Trans. Thomas Wieser and John Newton Thomas.
    Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1960.

Barth, Hans-Martin. "Anthropologie von gestern – Anthropologie für morgen?"
    Pastoral-Theologie, 75 Jahrgang, no. 9 (1986): 399 – 413.

Baucham, R.J. "Karl Rahner" In *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair D.
    Ferguson and David F. Wright. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Beck, W.D. "Panentheism" In *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair Ferguson
    and David F. Wright. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Beish, Clayton E. "The Doctrines of Sin and Atonement in Reinhold Niebuhr's Theology: An Analysis and a Proposed Corrective," *Consensus* Vol. 23, no 2 (1997): 27-42.

Beisner, Calvin E. "Imago Dei and the Population Debate," in *Trinity Journal*, vol 18, no. 2 (1997): 173-187.

Berkoff, Louis. *Systematic Theology.* Edinburgh, GB: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958. (orig pub. 1939).

Betz, Hans D. "The Human Being in the Antagonisms of Life according to the Apostle Paul," In *The Journal of Religion,* Vol. 80, no 4 (2000): 557-575.

Betz, Hans D. "The Concept of the 'Inner Human Being' in the Anthropology of Paul," In *New Testament Studies,* Vol. 46, no. 3 (2000): 315-341.

Bird, Phyllis A. "Bone of my Bone and Flesh of my Flesh," in *Theology Today*, vol.50, no. 4 (1994): 521-534.

Boer, Harry R. *An Ember Still Glowing. Humankind as the Image of God.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990.

Bohnhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics.* Trans. Neville H. Smith. New York: Collier Books 1986.

Bohnhoeffer, Dietrich. *Spiritual Care.* Trans. Jay C. Rochelle. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

Bray, Gerald. "The Significance of God's Image in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 42, no 2 (1991): 195-225.

Bray, G.L. "Eastern Orthodox Theology" In *New Dictionary of Theology,* Eds Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Browning, Don S. *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Browning, Donald S. "Introduction to Pastoral Care," In Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling.* NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985): 5-13.

Brunner, Emil. *Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption.*Trans. Olive Wyon. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952. (orig. pub. 1950).

Brunner, Emil. *Man in Revolt.* Trans. Olive Wyon. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947. (orig. pub. 1937).

Brunner, Emil "Some Remarks on Reinhold Niebuhr's Work as a Christian Thinker" In Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.

Brunner, Emil. *The Divine-Human Encounter.* Trans. Armandus W. Loos. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943 (orig. pub. 1938).

Bryant, David J. "*Imago Dei*, Imagination, and Ecological Responsibility" In *Theology Today*, Vol 57, No. 1, (2000): 35-50.

Buckley, James J. "A Review Essay on *Systematic Theology,* Volume Two by Wolfhart Pannenberg," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 4, No. 3 (Summer 1995): 364-369.

Bush, Randall K. "Theological Table Talk: Reinhold Niebuhr and the Evening News," in *Theology Today*, vol. 50, no. 4 (January 1994): 586 – 592.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of Christian Religion.* Ed. John T. McNeill. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.

Campbell, Alastair V. "The Nature of Pastoral Care" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care.* Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987): 188-190.

Carrington, W.L. *Psychology, Religion, and Human Need.   A Guide for Ministers, Doctors, Teachers, and Social Workers.* Great Neck, NY: Channel Press, 1957.

Cavanagh, John R. *Fundamental Pastoral Counseling: Technic and Psychology.* Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962.

Chopp, Rebecca. "Eve's Knowing: Feminist Theology's Resistance to Malestream Epistemological Frameworks." In *Concilium* 1996/1 (1996): 116-123.

Chryssavagis, John. "The Prayer of Liturgy in the Orthodox Church," In *Theology Today*, vol. 58, no 3 (October 2001): 412-426.

Christian Theology. An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks, 2nd ed. Eds Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

Clinebell, H.J.Jr. *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling*. Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1966.

Clinebell, Howard. *Basic types of Pastoral Care & Counseling.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.

Clinebell, Howard "Pastoral Counselling" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care.* Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987): 198-199.

Clines, D.J.A. "The Image of God in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53-103.

Clinton, Tim and George Olschlager "Competent Christian Counseling," in *Competent Christian Counseling*, Vol. 1. Eds. Timothy Clinton and George Olschlager, Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002.

Clinton, Tim and George Olschlager "Christian Counseling and Compassionate Soul Care," in *Competent Christian Counseling*, Vol. 1. Eds. Timothy Clinton and George Olschlager, Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002.

Clinton, Tim and George Ohlschlager " The Empowered Helping Relationship," in *Competent Christian Counseling*, Vol. 1. Eds. Timothy Clinton and George Olschlager. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002.

Collins, Garry R. *Christian Counseling*. Milton Keynes, England: Word Publishing, 1980.

Competent Christian Counseling, vol. 1. Eds. Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager, Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbook, 2002.

Conn, Joann Wolski, "Spirituality and Personal Maturity," in Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling.* (NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985): 37-57.

Conn, Walter E. *Conscience: Development and Self-Transcendence*. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1981.

Conn, Walter E. *The Desiring Self; Rooting Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction in Self-transcendence.* New York: Paulist Press, 1998.

Cook, B.J.A. "Wolfhart Pannenberg," In *New Dictionary of Theology,* Eds Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Crabb, Larry. *Understanding People. Deep Longings for Relationship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987.

Crain, William. *Theories of Development. Concepts and Applications*. 3rd ed. Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992.

Cram, Ronald H., "The Future of Christian Religious Education in an Era of Shrinking Transcendence," in *Religious Education*, Vol. 96, no. 2 (2001): 164-174.

Crichton, J.D. "Pastoral Care: History – The Roman Catholic Tradition" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care.* Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987): 195-196.

Daecke, Sigurd M. "Der Mensch als Mitschöpfer." *Pastoral-Theologie,* 78. Jahrgang, No. 4 (April 1989): 196 – 211.

Day, Larry G. *By Design and In God's Image. Self-Esteem from a Judeo-Christian World View.* Portland, OR: Mt. Tabor Press, 1994.

Dayringer, Richard. *The Heart of Pastoral Counseling. Healing Through Relationship.* London: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998.

Deddo, Gary "The Grammar of Barth's Theology of Personal Relations," In *The Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 47, no. 2 (1994): 183-222.

Del Colle, Rallph "'Person' and 'Being' in John Zizoulas' Trinitarian Theology: Conversations With Thomas Torrance and Thomas Aquinas," In *Scottish Journal of Theology,* vol. 54, no. 1 (2001): 70-86.

Early, Brian C. "Paul's Understanding of the *Imago Dei* and its Relation to Progressive Sanctification." Unpublished thesis Western Conservative Baptist Seminary Portland, Oregon, 1993.

Edgerton, Dow W. "Asking about Who We Are," in *Theology Today*, vol. 50, no. 4 (1994): 557-566.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke "How Far Have We Fallen?" *Currents in Theology and Mission*, vol. 26, no. 5 (October 1999): 342-355.

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983, 1984,1985.

Eriksson, Anne-Louise. *The Meaning of Gender in Theology: Problems and Possibilities. A Doctoral Dissertation at Uppsala University.* Uppsala, 1995.

Evans, C. Stephen "Healing Old Wounds and Recovering Old Insights: Toward A Christian View of the Person for Today." In *Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World,* Eds. Mark A. Noll and David F. Wells. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988.

Fagerberg, David W. "Rahner on the Importance of Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 5, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 349-361.

Faller, George. "Positive psychology: A Paradigm shift," in *Journal of Pastoral Counseling,* vol. 36 (2001): 7-14.

Farrow, Douglass. "St Irenaeus of Lyons. The Church and the World," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 4, No. 3 (Summer 1995): 333-355.

Fenton, John Y. "Mystical Experience as a Bridge for Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion: A Critique," in *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 49, no. 1 (March 1981): 51-76.

Ferris, Theodore Parker. *Image of God.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Finley, James. *Merton's Palace of Nowhere. A Search for God through Awareness of the True Self.* Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1978.

Flescher, Andrew. "Love and Justice in Reinhold Niebuhr's Prophetic Christian Realism and Emanuel Levina's Ethics of Responsibility: Treading between Pacifism and Just-War Theory." In *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (January 2000): 61-82.

Florovskij, G.F. *Vostochnye Otci IV-go Veka*. (2 izd.) Moskva: Palomnik, 1992.

Florovskij, G.F. *Vostochnye Otci V-VIII Vekov*. (2 izd.) Moskva: Palomnik, 1992.

Foerst, Anne. "Cog, a Humanoid Reobot, and the Question of the Image of God," in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 33, no. 1 (June 2002): 303-316.

Frame, Randy "Greening of the Gospel?" In *Christianity Today*, November 11th (1996): 82-84.

Franklin, Stephen T. "Panentheism" In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.

Frend, W.H.C. "Pastoral Care: History – The Early Church" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care*. Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987): 190-192.

Geense, Adriaan "The Freedom of God and the Identity of the Human Person." In *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1987): 148-153.

Gilkey, Langdon, "Nature as the Image of God: Signs of the Sacred," in *Theology Today,* vol. 51, no. 1 (1994): 127-141.

Gladwin, J.W. "Niebuhr, Reinhold" In *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Greene-McCreight, Kathryn "Gender, Sin, and Grace: Feminist Theologies Meet Karl Barth's Hamartiology." In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 50, no. 4 (1997): 415-432.

Graham, Elaine L. "Pastoral Theology: Therapy, Mission or Liberation?" In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 52, no. 4 (1999): 430-454.

Graham, Elaine L. "Gender, Personhood and Theology" In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 48, no. 3 (1995): 341-358.

Grigorij Nisskij. *Ob Ustoyenii Cheloveka.* Trans. V.M. Lurye. Sankt-Piterburg: Axioma, 1995.

Guroian, Vigen. "An Orthodoxy View of Orthodoxy and Heresy. An Appreciation of Fr. Alexander Schmemann," In *Pro Ecclesia,* vol. 4, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 79-91.

Hampson, Daphne. *Theology and Feminism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

Harris, Harriet A. "Should We Say That The Personhood Is Relational?" In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 51, no. 2 (1998): 214-234.

Harrison, Nonna V. "Theosis As Salvation: An Orthodox Perspective," In In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 6, No. 4 (Fall 1997): 429-443.

Harison, Verna E.F. "The Relationship Between Apophatic and Katphatic Theology," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 318-332.

Hartstone Charles. "Transcendence and Immanence," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion.* Vol. 15. Ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 16-21.

Hefner, Philip J "The Human Being." in *Christian Dogmatics,* vol 1, Eds Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

Herders, Johans Gotfrids. *Darbu Izlase.* Trans. V. Gammeršmidts. Riga: Zvaigzne ABC, 1995. (orig pub. 1805).

Herzfield, Noreen. "Creating in our own Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Image of God," in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 37, no. 2 (June 2002): 303-316.

Hielema, J.S. *Pastoral or Christian Counseling. A Confrontation with American Pastoral Theology in particular Seward Hiltner and Jay E. Adams.* Leeuwarden: De Tille, 1975.

Hiltner, Seward. *Pastoral Counseling.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1949.

Hindson, Edward, George Ohlschlager, and Tim Clinton "Roots of Spirituality: Spiritual Formation in Scripture, the Church and Counseling," in *Competent Christian Counseling*, Vol. 1. Eds. Timothy Clinton and George Olschlager. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002.

Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God's Image.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.

Hofmann, Hans. *The Theologyof Reinhold Niebuhr.* Trans. Louise Pettibone Smith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956.

Hoffman, Bengt R. *Luther and the Mystics. A Re-examining of Luther's Spiritual Experience and His Relationship to the Mystics.* Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976.

Holifield, E.B. "Pastoral Care Movement" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling.* Gen. Ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990): 845-849.

Holmes, A.F. "Creation" in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, Eds. David J. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1995): 268-270.

Hood, Ralph W., Bernard Spilka, Bruce Kunsberger, and Richard Gorsuch. *The Psychology of Religion; An Empirical Approach*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1996.

Hulme, Wiliam E. *Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981.

Humphrey, J. Edward. *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind. Emil Brunner.* Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976.

Hunter, R.J. "Pastoral Care and Counseling" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Gen. Ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990): 845.

Hunter, Rodney J. "Spiritual Counsel," in *Christian Century*, vol. 118, no. 28 (2001): 20-25.

Hurd, Jean L. "Women and Vocation: Co-Creating with God," In *Word & World,* Vol. XV, no. 3 (1995): 272-278.

Hurding, R.F. "Pastoral Care, Counseling and Psychotherapy" in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*. Eds. David J. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1995): 78-87.

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1950): 315-567.

Jeckelen, Antje. "The Image of God as *Techno Sapiens*," in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 37, no. 2 (June 2002): 289-302.

Jetter, Werner "Cura animarum," In *Pastoral-Theologie,* 75. Jahrgang, no. 9 (1986): 413-420.

Johnson, Paul E. *Person and the Counselor.* Nashville: Abington Press, 1967.

Jung, Carl Gustav. *Psychology and Alchemy*. Trans. R.F.C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968. (orig pub. 1944)

Jung, Carl Gustav. *Psychology and Western Religion*. Trans. R.F.C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Kahl, Brigitte "Human Culture and the Integrity of Creation." In *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1987): 128-137.

Karl Rahner, Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning, Ed. Geffrey B. Kelly. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992.

Katz, Robert L. "Pastoral Care in Judaism" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care.* Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987): 196-197.

Kelley, Geffrery B. "Karl Rahner: An Outline of His Life," In Geffrey B. Kelly ed. *Karl Rahner, Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning,* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992): 1-31.

Kelley, Geffrery B. "The Graced Search for Meaning: Rahner's Way of Doing Theology," In Geffrey B. Kelly ed. *Karl Rahner, Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning,* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992): 32-62.

Kelsey, David H. "Human Being." In Hodgson Peter C. and King Robert H. eds. *Christian Theology. An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks,* 2nd ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985): 167-193.

Kilby, Karen "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism in the Thought of Karl Rahner," In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (2002): 127-140.

King, Ursula, ed. *Feminist Theology from the Third World. A Reader.* New York: Orbis Press, 1994.

Kiprian (Kern), Arhimandrit. *Antropologia Sv. Grigorija Palami.* Moskva: Palomnik, 1996.

Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling and Sickness unto Death.* Trans. Walter Lawrie. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954.

Kirwan, William T. *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counseling: A Case for Integrating Psychology and Theology.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.

Krause, Helmut. *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik von Karl Barth. Registerband.* Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1970.

Kroner, Richard "The Historical Roots of Niebuhr's Thought," in Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.

Kuebler, Jean N. "In the Image of a Hidden God: Calvin and Levinas on Imago Dei," in *Seminary Ridge Review*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1999): 39-53.

Kung, Hans. *Justification. The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection.* Trans. Thomas Collins, Edmund E. Tolk and David Granskou. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964.

Kyung, Chung Hyun "To Be Human Is to be Created in God's Image," in King, Ursula. ed. *Feminist Theology from the Third World.* New York: Orbis Books, 1994.

Ladenhauf, Karl Heinz "Integrative Therapie und Seelsorge – Lernen" in Isidor Baumgartner (Hrsg.), *Handbuch der Pastoralpsychologie.* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1990): 181-194.

Lake, Frank. *Clinical Theology: A Theological and Psychiatric Basis to Clinical Pastoral Care.* London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965.

Leavy, Stanley. A. *In the Image of God. A Psychonalyst's View.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

Lebacqz, Karen "Diversity, Disability, and Designer Genes: On What it Means to be Human," In *Studia Theologica,* Vol. 50, no. 1 (1996): 3-14.

Lehmann, Paul "The Christology of Reinhold Niebuhr," in Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.

Lewis, Gordon R. and Bruce, A. Demarest. *Integrative Theology. Three Volumes in One.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Lidums, Gatis "Religious Educator as a Pastoral Counselor. Reflections about the Changing Role of the Religious Educator in Today's Society," In *Ceļš*, no. 55 (2003-2004): 26-53.

Linder, R.D. "Brunner, Heinrich Emil," In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.

Link, Christian "Der Mensch als Bild Gottes," In *Pastoral-Theologie,* 72. Jahrgang, no. 7 (1983): 285-297.

Linnane, Brian F. "Dying with Christ: Rahner's Ethics of Discipleship," In *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 81, no. 2 (April 2001): 228-248.

Livingstone, David N., Calvin B. DeWitt, Loren Wilkinson, and Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Eco-Myths." In *Christianity Today*, April 4th (1994): 22-33.

Lonergan, Bernard J.F. *Method in Theology.* London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971.

Lossky, Vladimir N. *Ocherk Mysticheskogo Bogosloviya Vostochnoy Cerkvi. Dogmaticheskoye Bogosloviye.* Moscow: Centr SEI, 1991. (orig. pub. 1944).

Lossky, Vladimir N. *Po Obrazu I Podobyu.* Trans. V.A. Reschikova. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Svyato-Vladimirskogo Bratstva, 1995. (orig.pub. - ?)

Maitland, Sara. *A Big Enough God.* New York: Riverhead Books, 1995.

Mannermaa, Tuomo. "Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research," In *Pro Ecclesia,* vol. 4, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 37-48.

Malcolm, Lois. "The Gospel and Feminism: A Proposal for Lutheran Dogmatics." In *Word and World*, vol. Xv, No. 3 (Summer 1995): 290-298.

Marion, Jean-Luc. *Cartesian Questions: Method and Metaphysics*. Trans. John Cottingham and Stephen Voss. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. (orig. pub. 1991).

McCloughry, R.K. "Community Ethics" *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, Eds. David Jw. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1995): 108-115.

McFague, Sallie. "The world as God's body." In *Concilium,* no. 2 (2002): 50-56.

McGrath, A.E. "Humanity" in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, Eds. David J. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1995): 21-27.

McFarland, Ian. "Personhood and the Problem of the Other." In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2001): 204-220.

Merton, Thomas. *New Seeds of Contemplation*. New York: A New Directions Book, 1961.

Miller, J. Maxwell. "In The "Image" and "Likeness" of God," In *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91, no. 3 (September 1972): 289-304.

Moltmann, Jurgen *Man. Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present.* Trans. John Sturdy. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974. (orig. pub. 1971).

Moon Gary W., and Freda Crews "The Essential Helping Relationship," in *Competent Christian Counseling*, Vol. 1. Eds. Timothy Clinton and George Olschlager. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002.

Morrison, John D. "The Pauline Concept of the Restoration of the Image of God in Man." Unpublished thesis Western Conservative Baptist Seminary Portland, Oregon, 1983.

Mosser, Carl "The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification." In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 55, no1 (2002): 36-57.

Mueller, David L. *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind. Karl Barth.* Ed. Bob E. Patterson. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972.

Mueller, John Theodore. *Christian Dogmatics. A Handbook for Pastors, Teachers and Laymen*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1934.

Nelson, J. Robert. *On the New Frontiers of Genetics and Religion*. Grand rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1935.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Barthianism and the Kingdom." In Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Essays in Applied Christianity*. New York: Meridian Books, 1959.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Intellectual Autobiography." In Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Man's Nature and His Communities*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism." In Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. *The Nature and Destiny of Man.* Vols. 1 and 2. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964.

Noll, Mark A. "Niebuhr, Reinhold" In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.

Norris, Frederick W. "Deification: Consensual and Cogent," In *Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 49, no. 4 (1996): 411-428.

Oates, Wayne E. *The Presence of God in Pastoral Counseling*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986.

Oates, Wayne E. *Pastoral Counseling*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974.

O'Grady, John F. *Christian Anthropology. A Meaning for Human Life*. New York: Paulist Press, 1976.

Olive, Don H. *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind. Wolfhart Pannenberg.* Ed Bob E. Patterson. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1973.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *What is Man?* Trans. Duane A. Priebe. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970. (orig. pub. 1962).

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Anthropology in Theological Perspective.* Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Basic Questions in Theology. Vol. 1.* Trans. George H. Kehm. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Basic Questions in Theology. Vol. 2.* Trans. George H. Kehm. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971.

Patterson, Bob E. *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind. Reinhold Niebuhr.* Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977.

Patton, J. "Pastoral Counseling" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling.* Gen. Ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990): 849-854.

Patton, John. *Pastoral Care in Context. An Introduction to Pastoral Care.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.

Patton, John. *Pastoral Counseling, a Ministry of the Church.* Nashville: Abington Press, 1983.

Parsons, Richard D. "The Counseling relationship," in Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling.* (NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985): 97-117.

Peck, M. Scott. *People of the Lie. The Hope for Healing Human Evil.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.

Plantinga, Cornelius Jr. "Images of God," In *Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World,* Eds. Mark A. Noll and David F. Wells. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988.

Plantinga, Cornelius Jr. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be. A Breviary of Sin.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.

Preston, Ronald "Humanity, Nature and the Integrity of Creation." In *The Ecumenical Review,* Vol.41, No. 4 (1989): 552-563.

Propst, L. Rebecca. *Psychotherapy in a Religious Framework. Spirituality in the Healing Process.* New York: Human Sciences Press Inc. 1988.

Rahner, Karl. *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity,* trans. William V. Dych. New York: The Seabury Press, 1978.

Rahner, Karl. *An Introductory Selection from the Writings of one of Today's Leading Roman Catholic Theologians,* London: Sheed and Ward, 1972.

Rahner, Karl, *Do You Believe in God?* trans. Richard Strachan. New York: Paulist Press, 1969.

Rahner, Karl, *The Practice of Faith. A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*. Eds. Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt. New York: Crossroad, 1984.

Rahner, Karl and Häussling, Angelus, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*. trans. W.J. O'Hara. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968. (orig. pub. 1966).

Readings in Christian Theology, Eds Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

Reinhold Niebuhr-Theologian of Public Life, Ed. Larry Rasmussen. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Ribbins, Peter "Pastoral Care inn Schools" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care.* Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987): 197-198.

Rigby, Cynthia L. "Free to be Human. Limits, Possibilities, and the Sovereignity of God." In *Theology Today*, Vol 53, No. 1 (1996): 47-62.

Ro, Bong R. "Pain of God Theology" In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.

Roberts, David E. *Psychotherapy and A Christian View of Man.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.

Roberts, Robert C. "Psychotherapy and Christian Ministry," in *Word & World*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 42-50.

Saarinen, Risto. "Salvation in the Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue. A Comparative Perspective," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 202-213.

Schaeffer, Francis A. *Trilogy. The Three Essential Books in One Volume.* Wheaton, Il: Crossway Books, 1990.

Schiller, Karl E. "Seelsorge" in Gastager, H., u.a. (Hrsg.), *Praktisches Wörterbuch Der Pastoranthropologie. Sorge Um Den Menschen*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht, 1975): 954-956.

Schiller, Karl E. "Seelsorger" in Gastager, H., u.a. (Hrsg.), *Praktisches Wörterbuch Der Pastoranthropologie. Sorge Um Den Menschen*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht, 1975): 957-958.

Schmidt, William S. "Theological Anthropology: An Emerging Discipline." In *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (1995): 423-427.

Schnucker, R.V. "Barth, Karl," In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.

Scott, Peter "Christ, Nature, Sociality: Dietrich Bohnhoeffer for an Ecological Age," In *Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 53, no. 4 (2000): 413-430.

Shevchuk, Sviatoslav "The Identity of Eastern Theology and Denominational Issues." In *Theologia Bogoslovie*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2001): 43- 53.

Sider, Alexander J. "Image, Likeness, and the Ethics of Memory." In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 54, no. 4 (2001): 528-547.

Sneck, William J. "The Desiring Self: Rooting Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction in Self-Transcendence. A Book Review," in *Theological Studies*, vol. 61, no. 1 (March 2000): 184-185.

Sophrony, Archimandrit, *Starets Siluan*. Moskva: Sretinsky Monastyr, 2001.

Spearrit, D. P. "Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite," In *A Dictioanry of Christian Theology*, Ed. Allan Richardson. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969.

St. Augustine, "The Confessions," In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, Philip Schaff, ed. (Peaboy, MA: Hendrikson, 1994): 45-207.

Stairs, Jean, *Listening for the Soul*: *Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

Steckel, Clyde J. "Directions in Pastoral Counseling," in Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling*. (NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985): 26-36.

Stone, Howard W. and William M. Clements eds. *Handbook for Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling*. Nashville: Abington Press, 1991.

Sutherland, Dixon D. "The Space of Creation: Theology's Search for an Ecological Ethic." In *Communio Viatorum*, vol. 36, no. 1 (1994): 46-60.

Tanner, Kathryn, "The Difference Theological Anthropology Makes," in *Theology Today*, vol. 50, no. 4. (1994): 567-597.

Taylor, Mark K. "Anthropology," In *A New Handbook of Christian Theology,* Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992): 28-34.

Teasdale, Wayne "Mysticism as the Crossing of Ultimate Boundaries: A Theological Reflection," in *Concilium*, no. 2. (1999): 90-94.

Theological Anthropology, Ed. J. Patout Burns, Trans. J. Patout Burns, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.

Thompson, William M. "Women and 'Conformity to Christ's Image': The Challenge of Avoiding Docetism and Affirming Inclusivism." In *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 48, no. 1 (1995): 23-35.

Thurneysen, Eduard. *A Theology of Pastoral Care.* Trans. Jack A. Worthington and Thomas Wieser, Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962.

Thompson, William M. "The Saints, Justification and Sanctification: An Ecumenical Thought Experiment." In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. IV, no. 1. (1995): 16-36.

Thornton, Martin "Pastoral Care: History – The Anglican Tradition" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care.* Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987): 192-193.

Tinker, George E. "The Integrity of Creation. Restoring Trinitarian Balance." In *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (1989): 527-536.

Tournier, Paul. *The Healing of Persons.* Trans. Edwin Hudson. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965.

Tyrrell, Bernard J. "Christotherapy: An Approach to Facilitating Psychospiritual Healing and Growth," in Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling.* (NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985): 58-75.

Valliere, Paul, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

Vanderploeg, Rodney D. "*Imago Dei*, Creation as Election: Foundations for Psychotherapy," Journal *of Psychology and Theology* 9, no 3 (Fall 1981): 209-215.

Vanderploeg, Rodney D. "*Imago Dei*, As Foundational to Psychotherapy: Integration Versus Segregation," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 9, no 4 (Winter 1981): 299-304.

Van Deusen Hunsinger, Deborah. *Theology and Pastoral Counseling. A New Interdisciplinary Approach.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.

Vlachos, Hierotheos Archimandrite. *Orthodox Psychotherapy. The Science of the Fathers.* Trans. Esther Williams. Levadia, Greece: The Birth of Theotokos Monostery, 1994.

Ward W.E. "Hypostasis," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988

Webster, J.B. "Karl Barth" In *New Dictionary of Theology,* Eds Sinclair D. Ferguson and David F. Wright. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Weger, Karl-Heinz. *Karl Rahner. Eine Einführung in sein theologisches Denken.* Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1978.

Weigel, Gustave S.J. "Authority in Theology" In Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.

Wells, Samuel "Stanley Hauerwas' Theological Ethics in Eschatological Perspective," In *Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 53, no. 4 (2000): 431-448.

Wesche, Kenneth P. "Eastern Orthodox Spirituality. Union with God in *Theosis*." In *Theology Today*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (1999): 29-43.

Westermann, Claus. *Creation*. Trans. John J. Scullion, S.J. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974. (orig. pub. 1971).

What, Then, Is Man? A Symposium of Theology, Psychology, and Psychiatry. Graduate Study Number III. Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1958.

Whyte, James A. "Pastoral Care: History – The Reformed Tradition" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care.* Ed. Alastair V. Campbell (Oxford: SPCK, 1987): 193-195.

Wicks, Robert J., Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps eds. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling*. NY and Mahwah: Integration Books, 1985.

Wilfong, Marsha M. "Expository Articles. Genesis 2:18-24." In *Interpretation*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (1988): 58-63.
Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988.

Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

Williams, A.N. "Light from Byzantium: The Significance of Palamas' Doctrine of Theosis," In *Pro Ecclesia*, Vol. 3, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 483-496.

Williams, Daniel D. "Niebuhr and Liberalism" in Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.

Williamson, Rick L. "Images of God Among Persons with Aids." In *Journal of Pastoral Care*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (1998): 56-61.

Wlach Joachim. *Sociology of Religion*. Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1958.

Wingenbach, Gregory C. "Theanthropos in History and Cosmos," In *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 6, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 309-318.

Wise, Caroll A. *Pastoral Psychotherapy. Theory and Practice*. New York: Jason Aronson, 1983.

Wolf, William J. "Reinhold Niebuhr's Doctrine of Man" In Keagley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. eds. *Reinhold Niebuhr. His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.

Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church.* Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985.