

*The*

# *Mediator*



*A Journal of Holiness Theology for Asia-Pacific Contexts*

**ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

*Bridging Cultures for Christ*

*1 Timothy 2:5*

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***Volume IX, Number 1***

***April 2013***

*The Mediator provides a forum for dialogue about theological issues related to ministry in Asian and Pacific contexts. The views expressed in the Journal reflect those of the authors and not necessarily the views of the seminary, its administration, or the editorial committee.*

*The Mediator is the official journal of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary and has been in publication since 1996. Please send all correspondence, comments, or questions to the editor at the address below.*

*The Mediator*

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*ISSN 1655-4175*

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## Preface

This volume of the *Mediator* reproduces papers presented at the Wesley Theological Conference held at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, November 8-10, 2012. The conference was organized by a committee led by Dr. Dick Eugenio, professor of theology at APNTS. The majority of scholars presenting at this conference were Asians, and this represents a significant step in the contextualization of Wesleyan theology for Asia. Other attempts in this area have been made, and these must continue. The time has long past for theology to be produced by Asians for Asia. Theological seminaries in Asia are poised to contribute to this ongoing effort.

The papers from the conference are reproduced here largely as they were presented at the conference. Each main paper is followed by one or two responses. The conference was an exciting and intellectually stimulating time. It is the seminary's hope that the fruitful discussions generated will continue in the future, and ultimately contribute to the raising up of a vibrant group of Wesleyan theologians for Asia.

The final paper in this volume is from Linda Bondy, instructor of English at APNTS. This paper was presented at the Christians in English Language Teaching Conference, held in Dallas, Texas, USA, March 20, 2013. It describes a way to improve scores English proficiency scores for Asian students. English is a difficult language to many people, and theological English is harder still. It is hoped that the points raised in this paper will contribute to increasing the English proficiency of students in a minimum amount of time.

Mitchel Modine, Ph.D.

Editor

## **Ethical Holiness:**

### **An Intersubjective Movement of Presence in Creative Fidelity**

Larnie Sam A. Tabuena

Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

In our present age, seismic shifts generate significant waves of transformation by a discerning exercise of practical prudence in response to the perennial yearning to experience the truth of being. The transitional movement from the predominant yet becoming dysfunctional monological structure of Cartesian *cogito*<sup>1</sup> to the dialogical quality of *I-thou* relations in the course of time, reaffirms the indispensability of mutual engagement in a growing and dynamic interpersonal relationship marked by honest communication. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, studies on public sphere conclusively disclose the widespread hunger for profound communal life with spiritual significance.<sup>2</sup> Intersubjective communion ushers us to the domains of ontological truth in the light of moral interaction. "No creativity is possible without the social and cultural context that provides the raw materials one uses- the conventions, ideas and institutions against which one must struggle to fashion one's authentic self."<sup>3</sup>

Web-related business economy has recently fabricated a hybrid parlance, "connexity" to obtain the magnificent symmetry of the two ideas: making "connection" and building "community." Leonard Sweet emphasizes that the "heart of postmodernity is a theological dyslexia: me/we, or the experience of individual-in-community. Postmoderns want to enjoy a self-identity within a connectional framework of neighborliness, civic virtue, and spiritual values."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> René Descartes prominently proposed "methodic doubt" into philosophy providing a subsequent developmental climate solipsism which seemingly appear as a irrefutable rule of reflective thinking. The cogito that unveils the ego is a solitary consciousness, a *res cogitans* that is not spatially extended, is not necessarily located in any body, and can be assured of its own existence exclusively as a conscious mind. Solipsism is sometimes expressed as the view that "I am the only mind which exists," or "My mental states are the only mental states." The solipsist can attach no meaning to the supposition that there could be thoughts, experiences, and emotions other than his own. For an extensive study of Descartes' epistemology see *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Yankelovich, *The magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict into Cooperation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 217. Sociologist Daniel Yankelovich has done extensive tracking specifically the American culture in the United States for forty years and thereafter concluded his studies of the public revealing an immense pool of goodwill all over the country for enhanced quality of life anchored in meaningful communal life. A Web site is a readily accessible point of social convergence to pursue research, learn specific skills of one's interest, connect with people, and enter relationships.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Golomb, *In search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus* (London: Routledge, 1995), 201.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century World* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 115-117.

*Imago Dei* in Judeo-Christian affirmation fundamentally conceives a ‘human agent’ as active participant, communal-historical being and co-creator of the moral orders in the universe. Its concomitant “rationally informed will” constitutes a potent force of molding circumstances which expresses the complementary proportion of “inherent autonomy” and “moral responsibility.” Thus, renewal in God’s image includes an intentional counterpart of a person to his/her growth process. It is a dynamic journey not in the context of solitude but through intersubjective communion with other selves. Paul exclaimed in Philippians 2:12 to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling.” The verb “work out” is in present imperative tense which implies a strong command to continue in making all possible efforts individually and collectively to eagerly preserve the faith and grow spiritually according to such divinely endowed eternal telos. Traditional evangelical emphasis on the conversion event as crisis experience has led at times to the neglect of understanding Christian life as a lifelong journey in its course of “becoming process.” “Discipleship entails a path to be walked and a goal to be reached.”<sup>5</sup> We are usually tempted to succumb to the aesthetic notions of holiness apart from ethical responsibility involved in it by intersubjective engagements. Ideas about holiness, truth, value, and goodness are basically relational not abstract. The subjective thinker who by his activity commits himself to an understanding of the truth which, by the manner his existence, he is; he seeks to comprehend himself, not as an abstraction, but as an ethically engaged, existing subject.

According to the biblical account, the principle of true living always signifies being in the presence of others within the context of creative communion and meaningful fellowship. Death implies absolute solitude due to undesirable severance from all vital links. Beings gifted with a spiritual nature have the ability to participate in edifying a social organism because reciprocity presupposes a certain con-naturality. Totally distinct and unique individuals with virtually nothing in common would be devoid of unifying any bonds of communion. Community emerges out of this intimate relationship by virtue of mutual acceptance of differences, valuing the individuality of everyone, willingness to sacrifice oneself for a greater purpose, doing away with formalities.<sup>6</sup>

Is it in the faculties that reflect the Trinitarian relationships, and in what way, or does it lie principally in the acts of knowing and loving God? *Imago Dei* reflects the social nature of Trinitarian relationships and the human potentials ingrained in their faculties in order to render us *capax Dei*, capable of knowing and loving God, and to achieve ontological growth and spiritual maturity as we journey together in life. It also presupposes harmony between our spiritual faculties and actions that allows us to represent, however, imperfectly, the Trinitarian relationships, and to collaborate through knowledge and love in the perfection of the image.<sup>7</sup> Such proper understanding of *Imago Dei* is crucial for human

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<sup>5</sup> Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 231.

<sup>6</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, Translated from the Portuguese by Paul Burns, (Great Britain, Burns & Oates, 1992), 128-30.

<sup>7</sup> Servais Pinckaers, *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, edited by John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus, Translated by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington, DC: The Catholic Press, 2005), 140-142. Humans dynamically resemble God in the measure which resides directly in the capacity as well as acts of contemplative knowing, active charity, and resolute imitation of God as they progress in these levels of essential virtues. “*Imago Dei* is established not only in relation to the divine nature but also in relation to the Trinity in persons. It is only by way of consequence that the image of God resides in our faculties, insofar as they are the principles of knowledge and love of God.” 135.



relationships. All human beings are to live in a partnership entailing commitment to mutual respect, fairness, and cooperation.<sup>8</sup> The presence of an “I” and “thou” relationship as a constitutive principle of dynamic communion in *Elohim*, a community of disposition and act in the divine essence, finds its creaturely *analogia relationis* in the relationship between man and woman.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, St. Thomas Aquinas describes freedom beginning with the definition supplied by Peter Lombard in the second book of the *Sentences*: “True free will is the faculty of reason and will, through which good is chosen with grace assisting, or evil with grace desisting.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, human faculties serve as enabling grace to achieve moral acts of excellence in conformity to what originally God desires us to be and do, as well as the built-in *a priori* discerning mechanism in determining something hostile to God’s intention.

The work of free choice is to place acts which possess the quality of truth and goodness, and which thus lead the human person toward his perfection and beatitude. Free will is therefore a power, progressively formed in us, to produce moral acts of excellence. Our freedom is without doubt an imperfect participation, but it is real participation, in the freedom of God, in such a way that the more it conforms to God through knowledge and love and grace, the more it grows as a power to perform works of excellence. A spiritual nature that manifests itself by the aspiration to truth, goodness, and beatitude, and by a sense of the other, expressed in a natural inclination to live in a society ordered by justice and friendship.<sup>11</sup>

Being bearers of *Imago Dei*, each human person is called in his or her concrete sphere of earthly existence to ethically represent and portray this embedded quality to all creation with resolute determination. After the fall, we are restored from our depraved nature and redeemed by God’s sacrificial love to conform in the image of Christ. References to such representations and therein to the reality of the creaturely analogue somehow provide conceptual illumination despite all historical difficulties surrounding the *analogia entis*.<sup>12</sup> Dr. John A. T. Robinson published in the London Observer, “Go deeper and deeper into your own life, into the relationships you have with other people, into the mysteries of life

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<sup>8</sup> Leroy T. Howe, *The Image of God: A theology for pastoral care and counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 38.

<sup>9</sup> Gerrit Corvelis Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God, Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 72.

<sup>10</sup> The original text from Lombard’s second book of the *Sentences* states, “*Liberum verum arbitrium est facultas et voluntatis, qua bonum eligitur gratia assistente, vel malum eadem desistente.*” Peter Lombard, In Sent. II 24.3 (Grottaferrata-Rome: Ed. Collegi S. Bonaventure, 1971), 452. The notion of “free will” confers on human being mastery over his actions and enables him to collaborate in the work of providence, for himself and for others. Following St. John Damascene, St. Thomas believes that the image of God in human beings lies precisely in their free will. Pinckaers, *Reader*, 132; cf. ST I-II, prologue: “Since, as Damascene states (De Fide Orthod. II, 12), man is said to be made to God’s image, insofar as the image implies an intelligent being endowed with free will and self-movement: now that we have treated the exemplar, i.e., God, and those things which came forth from the power of God in accordance with His will; it remains for us to treat of His image, i.e., man, inasmuch as he too is the principle of his actions, as having free will and control of his actions.” A human being is made in the image of God insofar as he is an intelligent being endowed with free will and self-movement.

<sup>11</sup> Pinckaers, *The Pinckaers Reader*, 138-139.

<sup>12</sup> Berkouwer, *Man*, 114.

and death, and as you go into those depths you will meet him who transcends everything that you can ever think or do or be.”

### ***Kenosis as Sine Qua Non of Ontological Growth***

According to the ancient truth, the health of the self comes, not by concentrating on the self alone, but, by such dedication to something outside the self, the self is thereby forgotten. The more I concentrate on my own existence exclusively, “the less do I exist” and the more I free myself from such “egocentrism the more do I exist”<sup>13</sup> The growth of being basically requires the deliberate act of self-emptying. Holiness is a form of ontological growth achieved through a humble spirit of consecration. *Sine qua non* is a late Latin expression which means “without which not.” *Sine* is a preposition meaning “without.” *Qua* is an adverb meaning “in so far as; in the capacity or character of; as.” *Non* is a prefix in common use in the sense of “not.” The *sine qua non* of anything is the ingredient which is necessary to make it what it is. Without it, the thing does not exist. At this juncture, kenosis is a prerequisite movement of infinite resignation inasmuch as the goal of Christlike quality of life demands an initial act of self-renunciation prior to the leap of faith. We have to be willing to discard our preoccupation with worldly antiques before we can make ourselves open to embrace the holiness mindset. “Repudiation precedes recreation” motif unveils before us the most crucial ethical principle involved in cultivating a sanctified lifestyle. In the final analysis, the initial step to living a Spirit-filled life is death to self which also applies to particular development of I-thou relationship. Paulo Coelho<sup>14</sup> illustrates this truth by drawing a proximate conceptual parallelism with emptying the cup. In his serious attempt to search for knowledge, a certain university professor visited a famous Zen master in Kyoto. While the monk was serving tea, the professor displayed his erudition by analyzing some writings, interpreting traditional narratives, deliberating on the ancient processes of meditation, and commenting on mystical and physical exercises. He exhausted all means possible to impress his host in the pretext of making his way to be accepted as a disciple. As the professor performed intellectual deliberations verbally, the monk unceasingly filled his cup until it overflowed, and the tea began to spill out across the whole table. What are you doing? Can’t you see the cup is full, and that nothing more will fit in it? Your soul is like this cup - replied the master. How can I teach you the true art of Zen Buddhism, if it is already filled with theories?

Kierkegaard calls the Infinite movement of resignation *Religiousness A* as a new pathos that brings one beyond ethical reliance and the willingness to sacrifice the relative for the sake of one’s relation to the absolute. By emptying oneself in the infinite, the individual receives his/her eternal consciousness. The negation of the individual’s reliance upon himself in relation to the absolute telos determines the degree of spiritual readiness for a decisive leap into the religious sphere of existence. Humility, resignation, consecration are essential prerequisites to faith. Pride and self-sufficiency are effective barriers to a relationship with God.<sup>15</sup> The act of total self-renunciation radically dissociates a

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<sup>13</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, vol.2, *Faith and Reality*, Translated by René Hague (London: The Harvill Press. 1951), 34.

<sup>14</sup> Paulo Coelho, *The Warrior of the Light*, volume 3 (www.Feedbookscom), 42.

<sup>15</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and Sickness Unto Death*, Trans. With Introduction and Notes by Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press, 1973), 34, 48; cf. also Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, eds. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1992), 396.

subject person from his or her finite immediacy as the first genuine expression for the relationship to the absolute telos. Albeit the individual endures temporality but he has indeed acquired eternal validity. The finite thou ought to abandon all aesthetic and ethical immediacies to divest the self from any mundane encumbrances toward the establishment of intimate personal relationship and meaningful fellowship. In the kenotic principle (Philippians 2:5-8), the second Person of the Trinity has modeled humility in the form of infinite resignation; “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross.” Only by giving up something of value do we find the highest value in subject-subject communion.

For example, there is more than a single way of “knowing” a flower. One way (more Western, more modern) of “knowing a flower is to be full of oneself, one’s wits and wisdom, and to subject that flower to withering critique. First way of knowing a flower is to experiment with it as something separate, to stand at a distance from it and pick it apart.

The other way (more Biblical, more Eastern) of knowing is really a way of “unknowing”: to be “empty” of oneself and to let the flower reveal itself as it is. This second way of knowing a flower is to experience it, to enter in rather than stand back; to stand under (there is no ultimate understanding without standing under) and participate in its beauty.

In one you are rich-full of yourself. In one you are poor-empty of yourself. In one you are a distant observer or critic. In one you are an intimate lover. In the experimental you keep something at arm’s length distance; it is called critical detachment. In the experiential you put your arms around something; it is called loving embrace.<sup>16</sup>

A conscious experience of *imago Dei* seeks to fulfill inner exigency as a declaration of commitment to dedicate oneself for a higher end. The motivating factor of self-dedication is not something external but it emanates from the depths of one’s own life in a form of inner demand. My ideal being resides within the deep domains of myself, empowering my noble senses to experience the call or vocation, even the obligation, to consecrate my life for an ultimate value.<sup>17</sup> Offering one’s life does not mean losing the self in oblivion because the essence of self-sacrifice is essentially creative not destructive. Imposing certain common sense grid to understand the act itself rationally in terms of making a fair trade off or an exchange of goods where I give something in order to get something in return, forfeits the gist of such existential irony present in the dynamic character of kenosis. In this case giving up everything for nothing is utter madness. Therefore, if we sympathetically participate in the experience of the person who offers his life, we will recognize, that he has, without any doubt at all, the feeling that through self-sacrifice he is reaching self-fulfillment.<sup>18</sup> Being so, martyr’s profound assurance does not completely transcend the biological categories since whether or not those extraordinary heroes explicitly give credence to eschatological significance of the “beyond,” they lived and acted as though

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<sup>16</sup> Sweet, *Postmodern*, 145-146.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas C. Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel’s The Mystery of Being* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2006), 76.

<sup>18</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, vol.1, *Reflection and Mystery*, Translated by R. Hague, (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press. 2001), 165-166.

death might be really, and in a supreme sense, life.<sup>19</sup> Laying down one's life is the consequence of experiencing the acceptance of a call as the most meaningful and fulfilling way of participation in preserving something of utmost importance. Nobody would be willing to die for an abstraction that ends in total annihilation. Just as sacrifice is the highest form of availability, laying down one's life for the sake of other, thus essentially creative and integrative; suicide is essentially a refusal, an act out of despair.

Kenotic ethical framework embodying the "self-emptying-self-giving" dialectic at the higher level of personal communion toward the achievement of ontological growth finds its culmination in the tenet of creative fidelity. Practicing God's presence, the absolute Thou, in such a way that our being gradually conforms to the desirable divine attributes through a meaningful finite I-thou encounter reveals how human agents as bearers of imago Dei interactively influence each other within the sphere of faithfulness. Our fidelity is a mode of participation in the mystery of being.

The idea of fidelity is proximately associated with loyalty. In fact, Marcel who first coined the concept of creative fidelity, "finds a close similarity between his teaching and that of the American Philosopher Josiah Royce, who saw in "loyalty to loyalty" the foundation of morality and of human community."<sup>20</sup>

Fidelity always implies an unconditional vow to another person, a commitment to the other. Fidelity is an abdication to the preservation of one's title to self-esteem; its axis is not self at all but another. It is spontaneous and unimposed presence of an I to a Thou. The creation of the self actually is accomplished via an emergence to a Thou level of reality: I create myself in response to an invocation which can only come from a Thou. It is a call to which I answer 'present.' In saying 'here' I create my own self in the presence of a Thou. Marcel succinctly declares that fidelity is "the active perpetuation of presence."<sup>21</sup>

In other words, it is inevitably the person who is most consecrated and faithful who is most available. Availability and fidelity go hand in hand. The creative power of person-oriented response to invocation definitely enhances the growth of being. Fidelity equips the self with resolute passion to achieve identity, unity, triumph over the corrosive acids of time. Making promises entails taking responsibility to be something for another person; it is a call into creative relationship in the light of a vow or pledge despite the vicissitudes of time. Fidelity is neither an unreasonably obstinate adherence to one's duty nor mere constancy to preserve the status quo but a creative cooperation with the other in advancing participated freedom. "Hence it involves continuous vigilance against the inertia of conformism and the sclerosis of habit."<sup>22</sup> As authentic existence always presupposes a subject person as homo viator or pilgrim in the temporal world, fidelity becomes a betrayal to static conservatism which provides ready-made close system encouraging lethargic conformism.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>20</sup> Varghese J. Manimala, *Being, Person, And Community: A Study of intersubjectivity in Existentialism With Special Reference to Marcel, Sartre and the Concept of Sangha in in Buddhism*, Forword by Paimundo Panikkar (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1991), 161.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Gallangher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962), 70.

<sup>22</sup> Sam Keen, *Gabriel Marcel* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd., 1966), 35.

Fidelity also implies committing an unknown bundle. It does not calculate and objectify. It is, in fact, a leap into the dark. "In swearing fidelity to a person, I do not know what future awaits us or even, in a sense, what person will he be tomorrow; the very fact of my not knowing is what gives worth and weight to my promise."<sup>23</sup> Keeping promises in marital life is a moment by moment realization. The marriage which is a promise and pledge grows to its fullness in the course of time. Fidelity as perpetuation of personal presence and response to a call implies a commitment directed to the other person not to oneself. "The attempt to understand the meaning of the promises leads us to the notion of an intersubjective presence in which the persons involved are mutually necessary to one another. I can pledge myself only to the extent that I do not retain complete autonomy."<sup>24</sup>

Faith, understood as commitment, is far more enriching and productive because it carries with it the richness of a binding obligation. Faith is a gathering together of all the forces of our being and putting these forces at the disposal of others- Absolute Thou and the finite thou. Through faith as genuine commitment, I engage in a mystical encounter with the other. Such encounter which implies a binding obligation, since it carries with it a complete bundling together of all the forces of being, adds a new dimension both to me and the other or the thou. By becoming spiritually available to my neighbors, I immediately transcend the narrow limits of my own being. I overcome the restrictions of my egocentricity and discover at this moment the Absolute Thou. I find that God is the very ground of my faith and fidelity; I invoke Him and enter into loving communion with Him.<sup>25</sup>

Fidelity is an act of the total person taking responsibility for another. As such it is the response to an appeal which recognizes in the other person something of lasting value. We treat the other not as a means but as an end and thereby upholds human dignity. The family is the best example of fidelity and commitment where the concepts of promise, presence and availability spontaneously function. The members of the family become responsible for one another and there is a mutual growth assured through this exercise of responsibility. Indeed, it is a universally observable maxim that to maintain the mystery of the family would restore the balance of our society<sup>26</sup> even in the postmodern turn.

What would be the repercussion if the path of fidelity assumes monological direction absolutely devoid of response? Karol Wojtyła discusses the experience of the ego conditioned by the reflexive function of consciousness. The "reflexiveness of consciousness denotes that consciousness, so to speak, turns back naturally upon the subject, if thereby the subjectiveness of the subject is brought into prominence in experience."<sup>27</sup> In other words, the subject himself experiences his own act toward the other person apart from reciprocal movement. If the person sows unconditional love even without favorable responses whatsoever from the recipient, the acting subject still reaps the benefits of such subjectiveness. Ethical engagements according to the cardinal virtues primarily edify the acting person who experiences his own attitudes, motivations, and behaviors; thereby he/she pursues in some ways the growth of being.

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<sup>23</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. K. Farrer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 47. Originally published as *Etre et Avoir* (Paris: Aubier, 1935).

<sup>24</sup> Gallagher, *Marcel*, 56-57.

<sup>25</sup> Marcel, *Being*, 78-79.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>27</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person. Translated from the Polish by Andrzej Potocki. "This definitive text of the work established in collaboration with the author by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka." Analecta Husserliana*, Vol. X. Dordrecht-Holland, Boston-USA, London-UK: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 24.

However, without a response to the call there is no mutual establishment of relation because the “I” cannot be an “I” without a thou and vice versa.

In this case, the mode of reflection or the activity of reflective thinking dwelling at the level of abstraction is of itself inadequate when it comes to constituting an experience. It is merely confined in the process of turning toward a previously performed act in order to grasp and comprehend more fully its objective content, character, course, or structure. Thus reflective "thought" becomes an essential tool in the development of understanding the ego and its objects however; its viability is bound by epistemological boundaries.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, the reflexive turn of consciousness occurs in the ontological domain involving a subject-object correlation.

While having the experience of his own ego also has the experience of himself as the subject. It is thus that the ego is the real subject having the experience of its subjectiveness or, in other words, constituting itself in consciousness. Hence not only am I conscious of my ego (on the ground of self-knowledge) but owing to my consciousness in its reflexive function I also experience my ego, I have the experience of myself as the concrete subject of the ego's very subjectiveness. Consciousness is not just an aspect but also an essential dimension or an actual moment of the reality of the being that I am, since it constitutes its subjectiveness in the experiential sense.<sup>29</sup>

Reflection provides a possible rational understanding in our attempt to articulate our theological distinctives and make them relevant to the present generation. Such kind of thinking consists of objectively analyzing the aggregate of abstract data in terms of how they fit into a larger scheme of things. Thus, reflective thought basically assists us in the area of comprehending experiences epistemologically and scientifically. On the other hand, reflexive mode of consciousness shapes the being while engaging itself in ethical interaction with the ‘other’ in creative fidelity, unconditional love, and I-thou movement of presence. Therefore, it functions beyond the parameters of conceptual elucidation toward the formative-transformative experience when it comes to constituting ontologically the self in consciousness.

### ***Aletheia* Realized in Self-Transcendence and Openness**

One of the most favorite nomenclatures in Greek philosophy is *aletheia*, a verb form of its English counterpart for ‘truth’ which means the unfolding continuum of the ever increasing splendor of interrelationship among entities. Truth in the lifeworld is not cognizable but encountered. As the existing subject projects itself in being, in turn, the revelation of such being grows richer in the course of communion. Revelation is not intended to impart some propositions but the acceptance of indwelling presence. Christ succinctly declares “I am the Truth. Thus, the truth is not knowledge about something but the person himself. When you put more premium on the mechanics of exposition in order to handle proficiently the propositional truth then you prefer to be a theologian than a saint. We do not skillfully master the text but we allow the incarnate living Word to master us. The Old Testament God referring to Himself “I am that I am” reveals a person and the omnipresence of a person to us. *Aletheia* is the discovery of the truth regarding our being. The discovery about oneself is the highest form of wisdom. In fact, Socrates said “the unexamined life is not worth living.”

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

Nobody genuinely grows in isolation because the governing principle of living is always *esse est coesse*, 'to be is to be with.' It is by our willingness to open ourselves up for interpenetration that enables us to realize the unfolding truth of being. "Without openness there can be no acceptance or bestowing, nothing new resulting from the meeting of two presences communicating with each other. Being-in-openness is being in freedom, being capable of that love that transfigures the whole universe."<sup>30</sup> Thus, you cannot recognize the gift of the other by not primarily being a gift. Being as gift implies utter responsibility for what the gift will turn out to be. If such be the case, giving to and responding with the gift is an act of faith, an absolute trust. The gift of presence also involves some risks. "Being-in-transcendence means that a being effectively goes out of itself, enters into communion with another, creating a history together, establishing bonds of interdependence."<sup>31</sup> Self-transcendence signifies an ontological mode of human spirit having outward oriented direction to make the self vulnerable for co-penetration as well as to seek rest in an Absolute. At this juncture, the notion of presence refers to one's openness to ontological convergences whose foundation of interconnectedness is the Eternal Thou as an encompassing presence.

A deep rooted inner urge or demand for transcendence reflects what true exigence for being is, that naturally springs from the social-moral nature of the imago Dei. Such ontological exigence involves a certain kind of metaphysical anxiety and dissatisfaction with the present self, enduring a radical deviation from its primordial design. Today's functionalized existence reduces an individual to a certain state of systemic depersonalization through the social roles they perform in some larger organization. Technocracy and highly institutionalized structures circumscribe people's freedom and creativity to transcend their situations. Think, for example, of a person on an assembly line repeating the same minimal activity hour after hour, a clerk in a highly technological department who enters data into a computer all day,<sup>32</sup> or the hypermarket sales people who mechanically utter a scripted expression, "happy to serve," devoid of personal touch. Undermining the freedom "to be" renders a milieu of emptiness, self-deception, and psychological dissonance that brings the inner demand for being.

"The true exigence for transcendence, is a person who yearns for an inner transformation, for example, to be more creative or more holy."<sup>33</sup> The radical change in the very mode of experience is described as *metanoia*, the complete turning of mind, heart and spirit. It is a response to one's vocation that is, creating oneself beyond what he/she is at present. For instance, The inner transformation of a husband who radically changes his attitude toward his wife from considering her only as someone who serves him to seeing her as someone who exists in her own right with intrinsic value.<sup>34</sup> The exigency for transcendence is an aspiration for an increasingly purer mode of experience that is open, receptive, and free from prejudices, and at

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<sup>30</sup> Boff, *Trinity*, 130.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>32</sup> Anderson, *Commentary*, 120; Marcel, *Mystery I*, 42; Marcel, *Mystery II*, 37.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

the same time linked with the plenitude of intelligible essences or the understanding of eternal truth and relations.<sup>35</sup>

The introspective questions, “What I am?” “What I am worth?” becomes a “supra empirical appeal” “beyond the limits of experience” towards our last supreme resource, one who can be described as an absolute Thou, a transcendent reality of “infinite plenitude”<sup>36</sup> and yet a person intimately related to me. “An absolute Thou would know and love me profoundly because it would never be external to me but deep within me.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, the appropriate consummation of that relationship with such a being takes place in participation to the reality which is not in a way external to what I am. Thus only an absolute Thou who knows me and evaluates me from deep within myself could reveal to me what I am truly worth.<sup>38</sup> Supra empirical phenomenon as used in this context acknowledges the absolute Thou beyond the measure of sensible verification for such a being would not be an objective datum. Albeit an absolute being cannot be confined within the experimental methods of scientific investigation through the senses unaided or expanded by instruments to prove hypothetical details, such reality can be encountered in some other kind of experiences.

Another factor hampering the effluence of ontological exigence is the predisposition of indisponibilité.<sup>39</sup> We herein usually prefer the viable equivalent term ‘unavailability’ to designate concepts like self-centeredness, indifference, insensitivity, and so forth. It can be conceived as a chain that holds us back as well as ties us up to ourselves. It coincides to the ideas of solipsism and nihilism which connote the attitude of closure with regard to the exclusive creation of meanings. Self-centered individuals do not sympathetically and imaginatively share in the experiences of others and so deprive themselves of participating in all that is alive in them. Such people are unavailable, unable to respond to the many calls made upon them, calls, apparently, to open themselves and participate in the richness of realities beyond themselves. “The self-centered person remains incapable of responding to calls made upon him by life. He remains shut up in himself, in the petty circle of his private experience, which forms a kind of hard shell round him that he is incapable of breaking through.”<sup>40</sup>

Unavailability is to look upon another with attitudes of alieantion. One is not at the disposal of others, or unavailable to experience presence, the individual so detached is both enclosed within himself and unable to free himself from the consequence of his

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56.

<sup>36</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. R. Rostal (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 37. Originally published as *Du refus a l'invocation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940). It is now published in French as *Essai de philosophie concrete* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

<sup>37</sup> Marcel, *Being*, 124-25.

<sup>38</sup> Marcel, *Creative*, 144-145.

<sup>39</sup> Marcel mentions the difficulties in translating into English the French terms *disponiilite* and *indisponibilite*. It has been suggested that the closely associated terms are availability and unavailability. They are the key concepts found in Marcel's philosophy of participation.

<sup>40</sup> Manimala, *Being*, 155.



withdrawal. To be unavailable is to be in some way not only occupied but encumbered with one self. He remains shut up in the small circle of his private experience and judges others only by way they fit into his preconceived desires and plans. He seems incapable of laying himself open to a quality or virtue which belongs completely to another person and in the formation of which he himself has played no part. In turning towards myself and refusing to make myself accessible to others and to being, I, an indisponible, tend to make myself unavailable insofar as I treat my life or my being as a possession which is in some way a measurable quantity, liable, by that very fact, to dilapidation, exhaustion or even evaporation. The result of such unavailability is despair.<sup>41</sup>

Indisponible person in the ordinary language is a “selfish one” living in estrangement and the disponible person is a ‘liberated one’ whose character manifests purity of motivation. From a perspective of withdrawn attitude the ‘other’ is treated as menacing threat instead of a loving presence, co-present Thou. The ‘I’ is never viewed in total preoccupation with its immediacies and concerns but enters into a meaningful dialogue of gracious exchanges with the thou. There is now a mutual awareness of persons who are not merely bound by institutional manuals and accessed according to their credentials for utilitarian purposes but by their being centers of conscious, responsible, and responsive participation.<sup>42</sup>

A more positive virtue to achieve mutual enrichment is found in the qualities of disponibilitate or availability, the opening up of self toward reaching endless possibility, moral harmony, and ontological maturity in different levels. Specifically, it refers to a human attitude of laying oneself open to the impact of Being and allowing the other presence to permeate himself or herself. Whereas, the unavailable person’s existence is inauthentic, meaningless, and incapable of spiritually progressing.<sup>43</sup> The disponible person liberates himself from all a priori categories and culturally conditioned biases into which other persons must fit. The agent has developed capacity to internalize and respond to the appeal made by others. Such openness does warrant desirable assurance but confronting the consequence accompanying the risk must never be allowed somehow to prevent that commitment. Disponibility perpetually resists the internal impulses as well as the influential pressure posed by the “collective” to embrace the status of a self-sufficient monad.<sup>44</sup> Through availability the agent’s free selfless act of self-donation may transform the other to become a personal thou in the response of acceptance. “The act of disponibility, of making myself available, by which I open myself to the personal reality of

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<sup>41</sup> Manimala, *Being*, 158-159; The principle that is operative here is: “He who tries to save his life will lose it; he who loses his life will save it.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

another is a free act; it cannot be demanded.”<sup>45</sup> Disponibility should be experienced by everyone as a necessity in life; it should become a life-blood of human existence.

The inner urge for transcendence accommodates disponibilitate as controlling disposition to necessarily achieve Being as fullness or plenitude. Our quest for authentic existence entails the establishment of and conscious participation in an intersubjective community of lovers who experience their common bond in pursuing noble virtues that convey meaning to human life.<sup>46</sup>

Beauty was not fullness of artistry or perfection of lines. It was fullness of being and perfection of presence. In many Mediterranean cultures, beauty is more than an intellectual aesthetic. It is an aesthetic of experience, participation, images, and communal celebration. The French scholar Pierre Babin<sup>47</sup> tells of seeing a number of Corsican elders sitting motionless under a tree, staring at the picturesque mountain range. He spoke to the villagers “of the beauty of the landscape.” They responded: “we feel good here.” Babin, unsure whether they understood him properly, tried again: “Your village is beautiful!” Once more they replied: “Do you feel good in our village?”

“An intersubjective union is not static but a living community of persons united in a vital, creative, fructifying milieu. Nor is it an empty universal genus but a type of unity which holds together a number of persons within a life which they share.”<sup>48</sup> Plenitude of being indicates an intersubjective movement of presences, animated by love, truth, and other human values, which essentially constitute an organism.<sup>49</sup> Holiness as renewal in the imago Dei means ‘authentic being,’<sup>50</sup> experiencing the fullness of being. Holy living, then, is truth unfolding in the milieu of intersubjective participation of disponible persons who by performing self-transcendence are willing to experience the impact of being and respond to the appeal of the other within a community of loving presences.

## **Logotheandric Witness as Incarnate Christlike Presence**

Christianity is by no means identical with some ideological restatements of particular religious tenets in the form of legitimized metanarratives and metaphysical propositions but

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<sup>45</sup> Clyde Pax, *Existential approach to God: A Study of Gabriel Marcel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), 111-112.

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, *Commentary*, 121.

<sup>47</sup> Pierre Babin and Mercedes Iannone, *The New Era in Religious Communication* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 111.

<sup>48</sup> Marcel, *Creative*, 35; see also Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator*, trans. E. Cruaford (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 155.

<sup>49</sup> Marcel, *Mystery II*, 183.

<sup>50</sup> That plenitude Marcel calls “being par excellence” at the end of the chapter (Marcel, *Mystery II*, 51) and in *Tragic Wisdom*...says it “is most genuinely being.” Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*. Translated by Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick, Publication of the Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 53.

essentially a life-changing discipleship process. “Confession of faith” *per se* constitutes performative statements rather than descriptive ones tantamount to the words “I do” uttered respectively by the bride and groom in a wedding ceremony. Marriage vows are not research conclusions reached on the subject through series of austere observation and deliberate discourse but an actual personal engagement in the act itself. Thus, the message is not merely encoded in the expressed statement but it is indeed the person himself/herself. Jesus Christ declares “I am the Truth.”<sup>51</sup> The gospel to be existentially authentic ought to be a “mode of being” effectively engaged in interpersonal communion with other selves; in this manner, each redeemed personality as a bearer of divine grace and unconditional love dynamically represent such divine likeness to fulfill the Christlike *telos*. God as the supreme influential agent calls us to share in the holy life and its ethical dimensions of acting and being acted upon by virtue of Christ’s exemplary life. Being so, “we can and may share in and emulate the perfect immanent power of becoming and perfect transitive power of influence.”<sup>52</sup> Sanctified life encompasses the incarnate state of a transformed being, the synergy of gracious influence within the scope of interrelationship, and the ethically responsible reflection of *imago Dei* to the present age.

At this juncture, from the socio-ethical perspective, living a holy life means practicing mutually Christ’s incarnate presence as *logotheandric* witness. “*Logotheandric*,” bearing a unique symmetry to form an operational nomenclature which etymologically derived from *logos* (word), *theos* (God), and *andros* (man), presupposes a certain conceptual compatibility to the oriental holistic mode of thinking. Analytic rationality manifests utter inability when dealing with a profound understanding of spiritual experience, state of being, and the motive undergirding an act. Why so, because truth in Christianity does not dwell on the epistemological domain but it is in its essence an ontological encounter. The word *theandric* obtained a historic reputation in Western thought which has been always referred to as the union of the human and the divine without confusion. It is analogous to the incarnation of Jesus Christ who has both divine and human natures. In Christian theology it can be called “the incarnational model.”

On the other hand, *logos* is a Greek word that comes from the verb meaning “to say” or “to speak.” No single English equivalent quite captures its richness so it is best in many cases to leave the term untranslated. In the classical period, Heraclitus’ philosophy revolving around the concept of the *logos* seems to have provided explanations that the paradoxical world and its phenomenal flux exemplify a rational order. The frequently common concepts associated with this rational order are “word,” “reason,” “wisdom.” Thus, its basic meanings entail the world-life-view of hypostatizing divine qualities in terms of the creating-recreating agent of all that there is, the integrating principle of existence, and the sustaining force of life. Now we are illumined a little bit on the relevance why St. John’s gospel conveyed the most comprehensive

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<sup>51</sup> John 14:6.

<sup>52</sup>William L. Power, “*Imago Dei- Imittio Dei*,” *International Journal For Philosophy of Religion* 42 (1997): 140.

Christological account on the logos. “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”<sup>53</sup> Christ is the personification of God’s wisdom and without Him humanity will never experience ontological significance, life’s meaning, authentic intersubjective relations, transformed self, and eternal validity. Christ has restored the meaningless and corrupted image during the Adamic fall, and reunited us to him after we had been made partakers of the benefits of His atoning sacrifices, by participating in His grace and imitating His life.<sup>54</sup> Human faculties, then, specifically free will, ostensibly embodied the divine prevenient grace that enables us to make moral decisions toward the harmony of our profound exigence for being and the revealed living incarnate Word, the perfect Image of the Father in the context of community life.

Albeit the expression “logotheandric” seems to aesthetically fashion a euphonic language, it bears the essence of what it means to live and grow in Christlikeness. By embracing the “Personal Truth” and taking the resolute responsibility of representing all the redemptive and sanctifying attributes revealed in Christ, who is the perfect image of the Father, we become *logos Christos/theos*, incarnate presence of the “Living Word” to both the world and the community of faith. If such be the case, holiness means “Word conformed.” We are living according to the written word, the Bible, as well as to the Incarnate Personal Word, Jesus Christ. In other words, logotheandric witness is another nomenclature for Christlikeness in interpersonal dimension or the incarnational principle of Christlike lifestyle. Logotheandric witness as incarnate Christlike presence is tantamount to a concrete representation of Christ to others fulfilling both the redemptive value of the gospel and the edifying potential of *theos corpus*. Thus, it implies a “sacramental presence” actualizing agape through intersubjective communion. “This work of sanctification finds its principal source in the grace of Christ, who is both Son of God, perfect Image of the Father, and Son of Mary, truly human like us. But this grace requires human collaboration, above all through faith, hope and love.”<sup>55</sup> The communion of the saints could be possibly realized within the nexus of hypostatic union, *Deus homo factus est* (God has become man). God-Man participates in our nature so we can participate in the divine nature. Hence, we

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<sup>53</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>54</sup> Leo The Great, *Sermons*, introduction by Jacques Leclercq, Trans. Rene Dolle, Sources Chretiennes, vol 22 (Paris: Cerf, 1949), 44. Here the classical theological anthropology distinguishes four stages in the evolution of the image: formation through creation, deformation by Adam’s sin, reformation by Christ, and conformation through imitation of Christ and the Father. Paul says in Colossians 3: 10: “ You have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its creator... Christ is all, and in all.”

The famous prologue of the *prima secundae* is not simply a threshold. It shows God laying a foundation, free will, which will support all that follows: morality viewed as man’s return to God. Nor we forget that finally, in the *tertia pars*, St. Thomas will study Christ who, in his humanity, is the necessary way to God, while in His divine personality Christ is the Word of God, the perfect Image of the father. For a lengthy discussion see Pinckaers, *Reader*, 132-133.

<sup>55</sup> Pinckaers *Reader*, 135.

participate in one another's life in a common way. Sharing the totally redeemed nature in the same life of the God-Man resonates through the common spiritual DNA in each Christian self. "Since 'hypostasis' is identical with personhood and not with substance, it is not in its 'self-existence' but in communion that this being is itself and thus is at all. Thus communion does not threaten personal particularity, it is constitutive of it."<sup>56</sup>

Mutually practicing the Christlike presence in intersubjectivity requires an in-depth understanding of what the nature of the "subject" is in relation to the process of growth in sanctification. Marcel explains, in "The Ego and Its Relations to Others," that by the term "ego" he does not mean an isolated entity with precise boundaries but a part of myself which I focus on and present to others for their recognition and approval.<sup>57</sup> We cannot give something that we do not possess. Something is owned before it can be a gift to others, myself likewise. However, since the ego is exposed and vulnerable, the subject exhibits natural proclivity to safeguard it from all external threats, especially from being ignored or slighted by others. Marcel claims that concentrating on one's ego is idolatry of oneself because it becomes the privileged center of one's microcosm to juxtapose others as rival to be overcome or as mirrors to favorably affirm oneself. He offers the example of a shy young man at the party who is extremely self-conscious because he knows no one and feels himself at the mercy of the gaze of others. Such self-centeredness, which views others as objects which threaten one's ego, is the opposite of an intersubjective (subject-subject, not subject to object) relation with others.<sup>58</sup> Subject is a permanent, non-contingent dimension of a unique self. Marcel refers to it as the self insofar as it remains to be the well spring of inner life and conscious acts (knowing, willing, desiring, wondering, and so forth) and thereby ultimately concerns itself with the questions of being, doing and knowing.<sup>59</sup>

Intersubjective communion, then, is a relation of subjects or selves who to some degree recognize each other as unique, free, self-conscious beings who possess intrinsic value and who are, or should be, in charge of the sense and direction of their lives. Furthermore, intersubjectivity constitutes a mutual enrichment of selves by influencing each other in the subject-I-subject-thou convergence. Objects can be beside but never really with each other, since intersubjective relation signifies a bond between subjects that unite them together at the ontological level, that is qua beings, so that they negate themselves as isolated individuals. Such union is internally making a difference to participating distinct subjects since the other person is "not a threat or obstacle but supportive of me, I am able to relax my egocentric concentration on

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<sup>56</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, contemporary Greek Theologians 4 (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 409.

<sup>57</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator*, trans. E. Cruaford (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 14-20.

<sup>58</sup> Marcel, *Mystery I*, 176-77; Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 19-20.

<sup>59</sup> Marcel, *Mystery II*, 25, 55-57.

myself and become open and available to the calls, explicit, of many others.”<sup>60</sup> Against Descartes’ initial metaphysical assertion of self-existence (*cogito ergo sum*), which is a kind of metaphysical isolation, Marcel would affirm, ‘we are.’ Subjects joined together in intersubjective relations do not fuse into one and the same being, nor on the other hand do they remain totally separate to each other as two nuclei quite distinct from each other. They are truly united in an “suprapersonal unity,” yet the integrity of each person is not obliterated in their unity but enhanced, for their relationship is fructifying and a vital milieu from which each subject draws its strength.<sup>61</sup> “Being itself is experienced as intersubjectivity, it is the “cornerstone of ontology,”<sup>62</sup> thus, *esse est co esse*, to be is to be with. Marcel considers the domain of grace as the domain of intersubjectivity.

Engaging in an open personal dialogue subsequent to an attitude of disponibilit  allows the primordial state of conscious self as relational ego to take its own course without a loss of being. In the self-donation, participation, and commitment of I and Thou there arises a community, the fullness of presence one exercises and the duty and vocation of us all. Intersubjectivity is a willful participation in and engagement of spontaneous familial intimacy which fosters a kind of fertile indistinction of person beyond the human collectivity of the technocratic world.<sup>63</sup> Being-us, the actual community, is the product of the dynamic communing as a mode of being by which we constitute a single unified whole. “The “I” never exists on its own; it is dwelt in by many, since its roots spread out into others, as it is permeated by others. Beings in communion live in a permanent state of excentricity, since their center is called by another center outside them in order jointly to form a community.”<sup>64</sup>

Theologically, God, as absolute openness, supreme presence, total immediacy, eternal transcendence, and infinite communion, establishes a viable conceptual structure for the ethical movement of finite I-thou relations. The different images of ecclesia expressed by the figure of the covenant involve the notions of God’s special people under the internal motivation of grace to form a messianic community that God desires.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the Holy Christian God renders a heuristic paradigm that best represents the Trinitarian formula such as the three persons, a single communion and a single Trinitarian community. No divine Person exists alone for its own sake; they are always and eternally in relationship with one another. God’s communion supersedes mere socio-political expressions because it seeks above all the intimacy and freedom of the human heart.<sup>66</sup> So then, if social holiness practically accommodates such theocentric trajectory, we should no longer consider God as the highest priority but precisely “He is our all.” “For in

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<sup>60</sup> Marcel, *Mystery I*, 177-81.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 182; Marcel, *Fidelity*, 35.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>63</sup> Manimala, *Being*, 173.

<sup>64</sup> Boff, *Trinity*, 131

<sup>65</sup> Ezekiel 31:33; 37:26; Hebrews. 10:16.

<sup>66</sup> Boff, *Trinity*, 132-133.

Him we live and move and have our being.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, holiness simply means “God is my all.” It is our commitment to live out the intersubjective attributes of our God as we stay true to our own nature as created in the *imago Dei*.

Practicing the incarnate presence of God in the world and faith-community behooves our determination to produce creative impact upon life as we all journey together in Christlikeness. Functionalized existence in a technocratic milieu treats everyone else objectively as docile mechanism to achieve whatever desired outcome. However, if the other is a presence, one ceases to be a case, since it includes the notion of depth and the supratemporal or eternal dimension of the self that transcends a particular moment of time. Presence signifies a union of the subjects in mutual participation internally affecting each other significantly to achieve the goal of living up to their ideal self or vocation. Experiencing someone as presence can refresh my inner being as well as strengthen my resolve and “it makes me more fully myself than I would be if I were not exposed to its impact.”<sup>68</sup> The physical proximity of a person to us does not warrant being much more present than a loved one thousands of miles away who is continually in our thoughts and affections since the undergirding qualification here is always grounded in an existing established communion. Experiencing rose as a presence radically differs from subjecting it as an object of scientific investigation or practically using its substance for economic purposes. Poetic descriptions would somehow enhance my openness and receptivity to the essence of the flower itself and thereby appreciate and welcome the impact of its beauty. In that case, the rose ceases to be an object but now a part of my very being. In other words, the rose is a presence in which I participate and because a particular union exists between us, it affects me internally in terms of enjoying its refreshing beauty or a change of my perspective about the intrinsic value of the created order.<sup>69</sup>

Another concrete example of presence that Marcel does discuss in some details is illness. An objective analysis of illness would depict it externally as the breakdown of an apparatus, the malfunctioning of an organism. Considering illness as a presence engenders internal effects to the being of the person who suffers such physical disability who has to choose his/her attitude toward it. In other words, the sick person must decide how to live with it or what course of action that would be most appropriate in dealing with it. Will he give up, use his illness as a reason to rebel against God or fate, use it to gain pity from others, or see it as a battle to be fought or as an ordeal which provides him an opportunity to grow in patience, courage, and faith? Upon recognizing my illness as a presence, it becomes now a part of me and it is something in which I participate thus it is no longer a maladjusted physical tragedy. Likewise, to perceive another’s illness as a presence, I consider the person not primarily a malfunctioning organism but as an ill neighbor who calls me to be compassionate and helpful; in other words,

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<sup>67</sup> Acts 17:28.

<sup>68</sup> Marcel, *Mystery I*, 205.

<sup>69</sup> Anderson, *Commentary*, 93.

who calls me to be an intersubjective union of love with him.<sup>70</sup> Holiness is a “lifestyle of presencing” in order to carry out our mission to be the salt and light of the world and spiritually gifted member constituting an organism. Indeed, Christ’s incarnate presence indicates the noble function of the renewed *imago Dei* which is at work in the world as well as in the body of Christ, that is, logotheandric witness.

## Conclusion

Inasmuch as “being itself” is experienced as intersubjectivity, i.e., *esse est co esse*, to be is to be with; holiness as a state of being is essentially a dynamic growing relationship of transformed selves who are mutually committed to participate in each other’s spiritual journey and life toward Christlikeness. Indeed, the communion of presence, which internally affects each other significantly in the bond of divine love and fidelity, creates their ideal selves in response to an invocation emanating from the I-thou relationship. Fidelity, as an active perpetuation of presence, always signifies an unconditional vow to another person, participating in the highest fulfillment of other’s being in *agape*.

Ontological exigence unveils the depths of one’s own life in a form of inner demand. It culminates in the act of self-dedication, availability, and self-sacrifice to gain the consciousness of our eternal telos toward the leap of faith. Thus, holiness as renewal in the *imago Dei* entails “authentic being,” experiencing the fullness of being. Since the residency of grace in human faculties render us capable of knowing and loving God, achieving spiritual maturity becomes an ethical responsibility apart from isolation. We are called to open up ourselves to the impact of being and allow the other presence to permeate us so that the self can obtain endless possibility of development and harmony in different levels.

Logotheandric witness is a holiness lifestyle of mutually practicing Christlikeness as sacramental presence to edify each other within the faith-community and to reflect the redemptive character of the gospel outside the church. Our ethical interaction ought to effectively represent the life of Christ to the world as well as to the ecclesiastical body. In the final analysis, the Christian message is performative statement reflected by our very being and in so doing, we become the incarnate *logos theo*.

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<sup>70</sup> Marcel, *Mystery I*, 209-11



## Response

Melvin A. Aquino

The Wesleyan Church

Ethical holiness is a very critical aspect of the doctrine of holiness and or sanctification. This doctrine may be so logically and theologically articulated but the practical representation of the sanctified greatly affects the understanding of the spectator that may poorly or dimly portray the image of God.

There are three salient points of the paper, viz. humility as requisite to ontological growth; truth as “realized in self-transcendence,” and “Logotheandric witness” or may be said as real life witness. I consider these as fundamental requisites to growth in holiness and in creating a community of fidelity. Humility makes one open or “disponibilite” to an interpersonal relationship while veracity makes one credible hence fidelity becomes mutual among the participants. A “Logotheandric witness” can enhance the reflection of the imago Dei in man.

The generation or emergence of a community with mutual fidelity or as cited in the paper as “an intersubjective movement of presence” is the ideal of holiness as a doctrine and real life experience. This is what is supposed to be what is happening and what the church is doing in the society. But somehow the church or Christians slanted differently. One extreme option in living a holy life has been asceticism and monasticism. We cannot negate however that within such milieu or context that “an intersubjective movement of presence in creative fidelity,” emerged. Nonetheless the larger society that needs a logotheandric witness is neglected.

There seemed to be two contrasting biblical principles that challenge ethical holiness as an interpersonal movement and “logotheandric witness.” In 2 Cor. 6:14-18, Paul was urging the Corinthian believers “not to be bound together with unbelievers...” (14), and to “come out from their midst and be separate...” (17). While James on the other hand said, “Pure and undefiled religion” is “to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world,” (Jas. 1:27 NASB). Both passages have their own context anyway that can give the reasons for such admonitions. But even Jesus himself did not pray to the Father that the church/believers be taken out of the world, but that they should be protected from the evil one as they are in the world (Jn. 17:15).

Holiness as a personal experience should be reflected ethically. Growth in this experience should be nurtured by the day to day life not in seclusion but within the community including the market place.

Ethical holiness engages the society. Schleiermacher in describing the church as “the fellowship of believers,” posited, “But the truth is that the new life of each individual springs from that of the community, while the life of the community springs from no other individual life

than that of the Redeemer. We must therefore hold that the totality of those who live in the state of sanctification is the inner fellowship; the totality of those on whom preparatory grace is at work is the outer fellowship, from which by regeneration members pass to the inner, and then keep helping to extend the wider circle.” He added “And just as sanctification is the progressive domination of the various functions, coming with time to consist less and less of fragmentary details and more and more to be a whole, with all its parts integrally connected and lending mutual support, so too the fellowship organizes itself... and becomes more and more co-operative and interactive,” (Hodgson & King, 1985:248,250).

So it is not amazing why Jesus charge the disciples which includes us all believers to be “salt of the earth” and light of the world,” (Matt. 5:13-16). As the salt effects some kind of change to the object it contacts with the Christian who is an advocate of holiness by experience and bearer of the image of God should generate change in the community.

Paul has given several guidelines or principles in practicing holiness ethically. Eph. 4:17-32 – deals with both speech and disposition in the community of believers or “creative fidelity.” Wiersbe commented, “It has been said that truth without love is brutality, but love without truth is hypocrisy,” (BEC, vol. 2: Ephesians – Revelation, 38). Col. 2:12-18 – by becoming “blameless and pure children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation,” we can shine like stars. Col. 4:6 – gives us one practical principle to foster a “creative fidelity.”

Ethical holiness is one practical reflection of the image of God in us. Dunning (1988, 493), gives “some implications” of the image of God as “it is renewed by the sanctifying work of the Spirit.” (1). “The essence of holiness in personal relations is sincerity.” (Phil. 1:10). (2). “The uninhibited activity of the Holy Spirit within a body of Christian believers is conditioned upon the presence of openness to each other.” (3). “Love in relation to neighbor outside the community entails service and seeking his well-being.” Paul said “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being,” (1 Cor. 10:24 NJKV). Dunning (1988:494) explains that “love finds neighbor in every man regardless of his status or other distinguishing characteristics.”

This concept of ethical holiness: an intersubjective movement of presence in creative fidelity was encapsulated in the poem which St. Francis of Assisi wrote from the summer of 1225 until his death in October 3, 1226, the Canticle of the Creatures or the Canticle of Brother Sun. (Walker, 1959: 236).

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled, as to console;

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

—St. Francis of Assisi).

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# The Humanization of Humanity:

## Christ-Likeness and the Renewal of the *Imago Dei*

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### Introduction

It is not an overestimation to aver that Wesleyan soteriology revolves around the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. This does not come as a surprise, especially since John Wesley himself, the forefather of the Wesleyan-Holiness movement, gave the *imago Dei* a pivotal role in his theological reflection. In Wesley's *imago*-grounded soteriology, in particular, we find a retrospective look at the salvific economy that goes far back to and is grounded in the creation narrative, which is then complemented by his assessment of the present human predicament. This means that although Wesley appreciates the primordial pre-lapsarian human condition, his theological cogitation is not trapped in the ideal past, but actually highlights what is at hand, i.e. the contemporary human situation in sin and death. The discovery and affirmation of present human circumstances, however, is greeted by the eschatological hope offered by the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Expressed in terms of the *ordo salutis* in relation to the *imago Dei*: (1) humanity was created in the image of God, (2) the image is marred, and (3) the image is restored.

This paper, however, is not exclusively interested in examining Wesley's theology. We are both concerned with the *imago Dei* and soteriology, but our discussion will move beyond Wesley's own formulation. This manoeuvre is important, if we are to see the relevance of Wesley and Wesleyan theology in the contemporary theological coliseum. We will follow the three-fold movement in the *ordo salutis* enumerated above, but we are going to relate this movement to the understanding of the *imago Dei* in the wider theological neighbourhood. Thus, we will engage in the different interpretations of the *imago Dei* expounded by non-Wesleyan theologians. It will be argued that Wesley's relational understanding stands closer to the biblical perspective, although some qualifications need to be made. It will be argued further that Wesley's relational view of the *imago Dei* needs to be complemented by a Christocentric approach. This is important, because one of the most significant soteriological understandings that has gained enthusiastic approval in recent years, particularly since Karl Barth and his protégées, is the humanization of humanity in Christ.

## Interpretations of the *Imago Dei*

There are only three texts<sup>1</sup> explicitly connecting humankind as created or made in the *imago Dei* – three in the Old Testament (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:5-6) and two in the New Testament (1 Cor 11:7; James 3:9) – and this fact may tempt scholars to relegate it as a peripheral concept. Although several references to the *imago Dei* are dispersed throughout the Scripture, popping out here and there, it is never taken up or singled out in detailed elaboration. Thus, one can point out the seeming disproportionality of the central place accorded to the doctrine of the *imago Dei* in Christian theology and the apparent little interest of it by the biblical writers. Old Testament scholar Gerhard von Rad, however, defends the Christian practice of giving weight to the concept, arguing that it in fact occupies a central place in the biblical narrative, no matter how modest its occurrences may be. He explains his position by presenting the premise that: “The central point of OT anthropology is that man is dust and ashes before God and that he cannot stand before His holiness.” With this in mind, what is surprising is not the scarce number of allusions to the *imago Dei*, but that it is even mentioned. Thus, von Rad adds that it is “highly significant that OT faith adopted this theologoumenon in dealing with the mystery of man’s origin.”<sup>2</sup>

Much of the published literature attempting to flesh out the meaning of the *imago Dei* is found in treatises concerning anthropology.<sup>3</sup> As Claus Westermann noted, “the main interest has been on what is being said theologically about humankind: what is a human being?”<sup>4</sup> Although some writings possess a narrower focus, such as human dignity, they are still concerned with the doctrine of humanity. Their anthropological concerns are virtually just echoes of each other.<sup>5</sup> Even well-recognized Wesleyan theologians such as Randy L. Maddox and Kenneth J. Collins, articulating Wesley’s theology, have placed their discussions of the *imago Dei* in their presentation of Wesley’s doctrine of humanity.<sup>6</sup> The unanimity in addressing the *imago Dei* in the context of theological anthropology, however, does not ensure that theologians consensually agree on the minute details of what the *imago Dei* consists in humanity. The history of Christian theology shows a wide array of interpretations.<sup>7</sup> Although there is a growing appreciation of

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<sup>1</sup> This statement has been left as in the original submission. The first response (see below, 47) mentions the error.

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard von Rad, “*eikon*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; ed. Gerhard Kittel; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 2: 390.

<sup>3</sup> An example would be G. C. Berkouwer’s *Man: The Image of God* (trans. Dirk W. Jellema; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).

<sup>4</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), 148.

<sup>5</sup> See R. Kendall and Linda Woodhead, eds., *God and Human Dignity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994), chapter 3; and Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup> See Dominic Robinson, *Understanding the “Imago Dei”: The Thought of Barth, von Balthasar and Moltmann* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011), 5-27, for a short history of the different interpretations.

understanding the *imago Dei* as dominion among Old Testament scholars recently, as J. Richard Middleton claims, a consensus is yet to be achieved.<sup>8</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to survey the different interpretations, and get mired down in the *minutiae* of intramural skirmishes in the process. Nevertheless, it is fitting that the broad picture is examined, so that the alternative proposal of this paper is better appreciated.

### Attributal/Qualitative Interpretations

It must be admitted that the Bible neither spells out nor elaborates what is meant to be created in the image of God. Genesis 1:26-27 passingly drops an indicative statement that humanity is created in the *imago*, but it provides no explanation as to what exactly the *imago* consists of.<sup>9</sup> Thus, with not much help from the Scripture itself, many interpreters have felt free to turn to extra-biblical sources – usually philosophical – to interpret the image. Hendrikus Berkhof’s analysis hits the bull’s eye: “systematic theologies have poured meaning into Genesis 1:26,” and their conclusions usually reflect their own *Zeitgeist*.<sup>10</sup> An example of this approach, and perhaps the most widely held throughout the Church’s history, is the attributal understanding, in which the *imago* is thought to refer to “certain characteristics or capacities inherent in human nature.”<sup>11</sup> Fuelled by a comparative approach, the question “What does it mean for humanity to be created in the image of God?” is replaced by “What makes humans *like* God and *unlike* animals?” If God has indeed placed humanity in a unique position vis-à-vis himself, creating us in his own image and likeness, then a special dignity exists that makes us god-like on the one hand and distinct from the rest of creation on the other hand. The search for qualities or attributes found in humanity thus becomes the primary procedure in framing anthropology. The *imago* is understood as a matter of “whats,” and enumeration of these “whats” is considered sufficient. But even for those who espouse this investigative formula, the list of qualities that they enumerate differs. The reason for the variegated conclusions, despite using the same methodology is that the identification of the *imago* is usually intertwined with the “values embraced by the particular cultures within which theologians were doing their work.”<sup>12</sup>

Thomas Smail labels this common procedure as “projectionism,” i.e., the projection of our human aspirations on to that which we wish to perceive. In terms of the *imago*, attributal formulations of the human-in-the-image-of-God tend to portray the idealized human being imagined and crafted by the theorist using preconceived tools. Smail argues that this projectionist

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<sup>8</sup> J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 24-29.

<sup>9</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 69.

<sup>10</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (trans. Sierd Woodstra; rev. ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 184.

<sup>11</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 142.

<sup>12</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 89.

approach is precisely what Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud had in common, and which theologians seem to uncritically emulate.<sup>13</sup> In anthropological formulations, the projectionist projects his own imagined image of the perfect human being as a consequence of his frustration about himself in particular or in humanity in general. Hence, the idealized human being is ultimately a product of a Dionysian *hyper*.

Smail's judgment is sharp, but his point is not implausible. A brief look at the development of Western theology provides abundantly sufficient evidence that substantiates Smail's critique. Grenz affirms that it is indeed in the Western Church where the attributive view of the *imago* became solidified.<sup>14</sup> Although there were antecedents in the early church, Augustine's view of humanity created *ad Imagenim Dei* is thought to be the strong representative of this view. Augustine's dualistic view of humanity, grounded in and coupled with his Platonic inclination, and his doctrine of the *vestigia Dei*, predisposed him to emphasize the centrality of the soul and its intellectual dimension. This consequently led him to emphasize, especially in his later writings, that the divine *imago* is rationality, viewed as a structure of the human soul in itself. He writes: "For a great thing truly is man, made after the image and similitude of God, not as respects the mortal body in which he is clothed, but as respects the rational soul by which he is exalted in honor above the beasts."<sup>15</sup> Augustine's position became the bedrock of medieval thought, and was even further strengthened by Thomas Aquinas' assertion that *only intellectual creatures* such as angels and humans, strictly speaking, are made in the image of God.<sup>16</sup> Here, the emphasized quality is rationality again, because it is perceived as the primary content of the *analogia entis*.

### Teleological/Eschatological Perspective

Precipitated by the two different terms in Genesis 1:26-27, theologians have pointed out the distinction between created in God's *tselem* ("image") and in God's *demut* ("likeness"). *Tselem* primarily refers to representations, and is connected with the Hebrew term *sel*, "shadow." *Demut* is derived from the verb *damah*, "be like" or "resemble," and so it carries the meaning of "likeness" or "resemblance." Although contemporary exegetes and theologians are almost unanimous in concluding that these two terms are synonymous and interchangeable, there were theologians who capitalized on their assumed distinction to explicate their anthropology. Irenaeus may be the first to highlight the peculiarity of the terms, inadvertently setting the

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Smail, *Like Father, Like Son: The Trinity Imaged in Our Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 5-24.

<sup>14</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 152-161.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* I.22; in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (first series; ed. Philip Schaff; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 2: 257 [henceforth *NPNF*]. See also *On the Trinity*, IV.4 on Augustine's discussion of the *imago* of God as located in the rational soul, in *NPNF* 3: 184-185.

<sup>16</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 158.

parameters for the understanding of the *imago* for subsequent theologians. Irenaeus' concern is intertwined with his understanding of the effects of the Fall, and his distinction between *tselem* and *demut* provided the foundation in identifying what humanity lost and retained after the Fall.

What is important to highlight at this juncture is that for Irenaeus, the *image* refers to those qualities and ontological structures that constitute humanness, and the *likeness* refers to the potentiality that is yet to be achieved. Dominic Robinson, building on J. N. D. Kelly's work, summarizes the distinction:

Inasmuch as Irenaeus taught that human beings were created in God's "image" he meant that the first human enjoyed the power of reason and of freedom of will. Inasmuch as he taught that human beings were created in God's "likeness" they enjoyed a supernatural endowment through the action of the Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Irenaeus, thus, held an attributal view of the *imago*, although one is mistaken to assume that he was a pure attributalist. Ironically, just as Irenaeus is pointed out as the father of the attributal position, his understanding of the *similitudo* is also regarded as the basis for later theologians in rejecting the attributal position and endorse a teleological construal.

In contrast to the attributal position, in which the *imago* is understood to refer to irremovable qualities infused in humanity, the teleological interpretation regards creation in the *imago* as an eschatological phenomenon. Human beings are on a journey and are involved in a process of an ongoing ascent toward god-likeness. Justo Gonzalez explains: "The Triune God created man according to his image. But man himself is not the image of God; the image is the Son, in whom and by whom man has been created... Therefore, the image of God is not something to be found in man, but is rather the direction in which we are to grow."<sup>18</sup> This goes well with Irenaeus' view that Adam and Eve, when they were created, were not "perfect beings" (in the Latin *perfectus* sense), but were immature. As Irenaeus writes, "God had power at the beginning to grant perfection to man; but as the latter was only recently created, he could not possibly have received it, or even if he had received it, could he have contained it, or containing it, could he have retained it."<sup>19</sup> He adds that creation is only the beginning of God's work in humanity, and that the whole human life is a progress from infancy to maturity:

Now it was necessary that man should in the first instance be created; and having been created, should receive growth; and having received growth, should be strengthened; and having been strengthened, should abound; and having abounded, should recover; and having recovered, should be glorified; and having been glorified, should see his Lord.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Robinson, *Understanding the "Imago Dei,"* 12. See J. N. D. Kelly's analysis of Irenaeus' view of the *imago Dei* in *Early Christian Doctrines* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958), 171.

<sup>18</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 1, *From the Beginning to the Council of Chalcedon* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 165.

<sup>19</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV.38.2; in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 1: 521 [henceforth ANF].

<sup>20</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV.38.3, in ANF 1: 522.



This developmental, eschatological *and telic* understanding of the *imago* is noticeably not Augustinian in orientation, in that it rejects the idea that Adam before the Fall was created perfect, complete, and mature, and was endowed with “original righteousness.” Maturity is not a state given to humanity in creation, but is a human potential that may be achieved in the future. John Macquarrie, as a proponent of what Grenz calls “an existentialist developmentalism,” argues that “We must think of the *imago Dei* more in terms of a potentiality for being that is given to man with his very being, than in terms of a fixed ‘endowment’ or ‘nature’. Man is a creature, but as the creature that ‘exists’, he has an openness into which he can move outward and upward.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Relational/Personalist Alternative**

The attributal understanding of the *imago* that dominated the medieval theological scene, according to Grenz, was challenged by the Reformation theologians and subsequent interpreters. Paradigmatic is the sarcastic comment of Martin Luther that if the *imago* consists primarily of capabilities or qualities, then “Satan was created according to the image of God, since he surely has these natural endowments, such as memory and a very superior intellect and a most determined will, to a far higher degree than we have them.”<sup>22</sup> H. Ray Dunning poses the same negative attitude towards the attributal position, and points out that the attributal “from below” approach that is grounded in the Aristotelian anthropological definition needs to be challenged and replaced by a more relational understanding in which the human being is viewed not as a *rational* animal, but a *relational* entity.<sup>23</sup> Quoting the ethicist Paul Ramsey, Grenz encapsulates:

The relational understanding of the *imago dei* [sic] moves the focus from noun to verb... Hence, the *imago dei* is less a faculty humans possess than an act that humans do. As Ramsey explains, “The image of God is... to be understood as a relationship *within which* man sometimes stand, whenever like a mirror he obediently reflects God’s will in his life and actions... The image of God, according to this view, consists of man’s

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<sup>21</sup> John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1977), 231. Other proponents of the *telic* view are James Orr and Wolfhart Pannenberg. See Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 140; and Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (trans. Matthew J. O’Connell; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 50. See also Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 177-182.

<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther, “Lectures in Genesis,” in *Luther’s Works* (trans. George V. Schick; St. Louis: Concordia, 1958) 1: 61.

<sup>23</sup> H. Ray Dunning, *Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 44.

*position* before God, or, rather, the image of God is reflected in man because of his position before him.”<sup>24</sup>

This relational paradigm is perhaps the most widely accepted theological interpretation today. Even recent Wesleyan studies are almost unanimous in pointing out that Wesley’s understanding of the *imago* falls under this perspective.<sup>25</sup> Exemplified by Mildred Wynkoop’s *A Theology of Love*, this relational matrix in understanding Wesley’s theology of the *imago* is typified by Collins’ judgment that “the *imago Dei* must be understood in a *relational* way as the emblem of holy love.”<sup>26</sup> Wesley himself affirms that “love is the very image of God,” and that “by love man is not only made like God, but in some sense one with him.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, just as God is love, so the *imago* found in humanity is found and expressed as love-in-relationships. Wesley’s high regard of relationality in his understanding of the *imago* is displayed most unambiguously in his sermon “The General Deliverance:”

What [is] the barrier between men and brutes? The line which they cannot pass? It was not reason. Set aside that ambiguous term: exchange it for plain word, understanding, and who can deny that brutes have this?... But it is this: man is capable of God; the inferior creatures are not. We have no ground to believe that they are in any degree capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God. This is the specific difference between man and brute—the great gulf which they cannot pass over.<sup>28</sup>

But what of Wesley’s more well-known three-fold characterization of the *imago* in his sermon, “The New Birth,” where he enumerates natural, political and moral image as constitutive of the *imago Dei*?<sup>29</sup> Collins argues that these three should be perceived as primarily relational as well. This means that the natural image, composed of understanding, will, and freedom, although they may appear at first as inherent human qualities or capabilities, are actually given in order for humanity to be able to have a genuine relationship with God. Similarly, the political image underscores humanity’s intended relationality, which is not exclusively vertical in orientation, but including a creaturely-horizontal dimension. Finally, the

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<sup>24</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 162; quoting Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1950), 255.

<sup>25</sup> Maddox names these Wesleyan scholars as Charles Luther Bence, “John Wesley’s Teleological Hermeneutic” (PhD thesis; Emory University, 1981), 72-73; Craig Alan Blaising, “John Wesley’s Doctrine of Sin” (ThD thesis; Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979), 261-268; Barry Edward Bryant, *John Wesley on the Origin of Evil* (Derbys, England: Moorley’s Bookshop, 1992); Harmon Lee Smith, “Wesley’s Doctrine of Justification: Beginning and Process,” *DrG* 28 (1963), 91; Rob Staples, “John Wesley’s Doctrine of Christian Perfection: A Reinterpretation” (PhD thesis; Pacific School of Religion, 1963), 248-249, 262.

<sup>26</sup> Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 51. See also Mildred Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1972).

<sup>27</sup> John Wesley, “The One Thing Needful,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 4, *Sermons IV* (ed. Albert C. Outler; Bicentennial Edition; Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 355 [henceforth *BI*].

<sup>28</sup> Wesley, “The General Deliverance,” in *BI* 2: 441.

<sup>29</sup> Wesley, “The New Birth,” in *BI* 2: 188.

moral image “is that dimension of the *imago Dei* that highlights the crucial truth that it is not just any love in which humanity was created but it was *holy* love.”<sup>30</sup> The life of holiness and righteousness, or its obverse, is hinged upon the current relationship human beings have with God. As Collins writes, describing the effects of the Fall, “relational change with respect to God, the fount of all life and holiness, necessary resulted in disposition change.”<sup>31</sup> The corruption of the *imago* primarily entails alienation, then moral decay. “*Deprived* of [the] essential relationship, our various faculties inevitably become *debilitated*, leaving us morally *depraved*.”<sup>32</sup>

The relational view of the *imago* has several advantages over the other two alternatives. First, the individualistic anthropological inclination of the attributal and telic views is overcome and replaced by a more other-incorporating model. The essence of human-ness is discerned not by an introspection of an isolated being, but by an analysis of persons-in-relation. Secondly, the relational interpretation resonates more faithfully to a fully Trinitarian theology. Instead of establishing what the *imago* constitutes of through an unqualified monotheistic understanding of a self-sufficient entity, the *imago* is comprehended by recourse to the Triune Godhead – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in an eternal *perichoretic* relationship. Because God’s *ousia* is *koinonia*, and as Leonardo Boff argues, “community is the deepest and most fundamental reality that exists,”<sup>33</sup> the *imago* which we inherited is identified primarily as community- or communion-centered. Finally, the relational approach does more *theological* justice to the concept of the *imago*. It can be asserted that the attributal and telic approaches rely more on abstract philosophical speculation than on actual reflective engagement with God’s self-revelation in the Scripture and the overall context of God’s salvific plan and act.

#### **Fourth Alternative: a *Person-al* Perspective**

It was mentioned above that the relational interpretation of the *imago* is grounded upon pure *theos*-logy, i.e., an understanding of who the Triune God is. While this is indubitably meritorious and better, at least in comparison with the other two approaches, it is still too vague. At best, it can offer general statements about the nature of human beings as relational agents, but this broad picture lacks particularity and specificity. In short, even the relational approach, left on its own, is ultimately unable to offer a concrete response to the question, “What is the content of the *imago Dei*?” So what do we do, now that we reached a cul-de-sac?

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<sup>30</sup> Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 55.

<sup>31</sup> Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 63.

<sup>32</sup> Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 81.

<sup>33</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity: Perfect Community* (trans. Phillip Berryman; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000),

It is here that Alain Badiou's proposal is prudent: "When a step forward is the order of the day, one may, among other things, find assistance in the greatest step back."<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the real problem lies not in the inability of theologians to provide the answer, but in the way the question is posed and the consequent response it anticipates. Could it be that inquiring about the "what" is the wrong procedure after all? To ask "what is the *imago Dei*?" ultimately requires a substantialist-phenomenological answer. As such, Carl F. H. Henry's conclusion that "the Bible does not define for us the precise content of the original *imago*,"<sup>35</sup> is precise and illuminating. Indeed, the Bible does not offer precise statements about *what* the *imago* consists of. In fact, the New Testament seems uninterested about the *what*, and bypasses and changes the question into "Who is the image of God?"<sup>36</sup> The New Testament univocally affirms that Jesus Christ is the image of God.

The attributal and qualitative understanding of the *imago* does not relate well with the biblical affirmation that Jesus is the image of God. While the attributal persuasion seeks for qualities-in-persons, the New Testament asserts that the *imago* is a person. The person spoken of here, however, is not us. Douglas Baker's assessment, grounded in semantic nominalism, that it is us as human beings who are the image of God, finds no NT support.<sup>37</sup> As Smail logically comments, one cannot know what the image-copy looks like without knowledge of the original image.<sup>38</sup> The original image has to be revealed first, because if the focus shifts to the image-copy, then we return to a human-centred "from below" projectionist strategy in which our human image is ultimately the basis of formulating the divine *imago*. It may be said that humanity is the image of God, but only in a secondary sense. Jesus is the true image of God; humans, in turn are made in the light of Christ.

For in times long past, it was *said* that man was created after the image of God, but it was not [in reality] *shown*; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created... 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 after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.<sup>39</sup>

Irenaeus' words epitomize a Christocentric hermeneutic, in which Old Testament indicatives and promises are interpreted in light of the New Testament fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Thus, when in

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<sup>34</sup> Alan Badiou, *St Paul: The Foundations of Universalism* (trans. Ray Brazzier; Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 2, *God who Speaks and Shows: Fifteen Theses, Part One* (Waco: Word, 1976), 125.

<sup>36</sup> See C. Clifton Black, "God's Promise for Humanity in the New Testament," in *God and Human Dignity* (eds. R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 179-195, for an exposition of the Matthean, Johannine and Pauline visions of the *imago* as Jesus Christ.

<sup>37</sup> Douglas P. Baker, *Covenant and Community: Our Role as the Image of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), especially chapter 5.

<sup>38</sup> Smail, *Like Father, Like Son*, 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.16.2; in *ANF* 1: 544.

Genesis 1:26-27, God said “Let us make man in our image,” the image being referred to is the one who is yet to be revealed. It is a prospective statement, centered on the most tangible and concrete *Immanuel*. The *imago* declared in the creation narrative remains as a “suspense” to be unveiled in the coming of the Creator himself in flesh. As Grenz encapsulates, “This suspenseful ending of the story of creation means that Gen. 1:26-27, placed as it is in the context not only of its own literary tradition but also of the canonical book of Genesis and the whole biblical narrative, opens the way not only to the second creation narrative but also ultimately to a transition from a creation-centered to a Christocentric anthropology.”<sup>40</sup>

### Christ, the Image of God

Paul is undeterred in claiming that Jesus is the image of God (2 Cor 4:6), and explains what he means throughout his epistles. In his missive to the Philippians, he describes Jesus as “in the *morphe* (“form”) of God” (2:6), which, according to Ben Witherington, means that “Christ by right and by nature had what God had.”<sup>41</sup> As the form of God on earth, he thus functions as God’s image on earth. The clearest expression of this argument is found in Paul’s exaltation of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20. In here, Jesus is explicitly described as the *eikon* (“image”) of the invisible God (1:15a), the mystery once hidden but now revealed (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:3-6; Col 1:26-27). Paul succinctly makes the important point that God and his nature are unknowable, the *imago* included, but Christ came to show us precisely what is beyond human investigation. We are sure that God is revealed in Christ because in Christ all the *pleroma* (“fullness”) of God was pleased to dwell (1:19). The totality of divine essence and all the attributes of God are in Christ. Hebrews 1:3 thus names Jesus as “the *apaugasma* (“radiance” or “reflection”) of God’s glory on earth and the exact *charakter* (“imprint” or “representation”) of God’s being. Jesus is not just a Platonic shadow or a Docetic hologram, but the very manifestation of God within space and time. To see Jesus is to behold God himself (John 14:9; 10:30). As C. K. Barrett writes, “Through Christ as the image of God men come to apprehend the *Göttlichkeit* of God—that is, to understand what it means really to be God.”<sup>42</sup>

In light of the above, there is a conspicuous shift from the Old to the New Testaments in their presentation of *who* the image of God is. Whereas the references in Genesis 1-11 refer to *adamah* – humanity in general – as the image of God, the Pauline corpus points to Christ – a particular human – as the exclusive *eikon* of God. But this paradigm shift should not come as a surprise. The New Testament writers peered into the Old Testament with the lens provided by their faith in Christ, the incarnate God. Jesus Christ is himself God, *Immanuel*, the divine-become-human. In this sense, the affirmation of Jesus Christ as the *imago* is intertwined with the

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<sup>40</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 202-203.

<sup>41</sup> Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 263.

<sup>42</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 132.

affirmation of his deity and Lordship. Jesus is the image of God precisely because he is God himself. There can be no better particularity than this. We should not, therefore, be shocked as well that the New Testament's consideration of Christ as the true *imago* led to the understanding of humanity as created in Christ. Paul writes that the rest of humanity, and the saved in particular, are "to be conformed to the image of the Son, so that [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Rom 8:9). This re-interpretation of creation in the *imago* is further elaborated in Colossians 1:16-17: "For in [Jesus Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Jesus Christ is the image of God, and we are created in, through, for and by Christ.

### **Jesus the Fully and True Human**

Inasmuch as the deity of Christ is to be confessed in the affirmation that Jesus is the *imago Dei*, to focus on the God-ness of Christ as the exclusive rationale for the affirmation is insufficiently one-sided. There is an inherent dilemma here that we need to face. The New Testament affirms that Jesus is the image of God, but the foundation of this confession is in the realization that Jesus is God.<sup>43</sup> But if we relate Jesus as the *imago* and our being created (and recreated) in Christ, we are faced with the question as to whether it is sufficient to interpret the *imago* only in light of Christ's God-ness. That we are created *by* Christ as God makes sense, but how about our creation *in* and *through* Christ? To pose the question differently, "When Paul refers to humanity as created in and through Christ as the *eikon* of God, did he mean to say that we are created in the image of the divine *Logos* or in the image of the human Jesus?"

Jesus, the image of God, is imaging God in his humanity. Jesus Christ as human is God's *tselem* and *demut*, representative and resemblance. It is logical that a thing cannot represent itself, or that the thing signified cannot itself be the sign. The representative should not be the one represented. Dick Eugenio cannot be his own representative and resemblance, and when he presents himself through himself, he does not represent as a representative or resemblance, but as himself. But this law seems to be violated in Christ's representation of God as God's *imago*. On the one hand, considering the deity of the incarnate Son, God represents himself through himself. God's personal and revealing presence is not technically a *tselem* or *demut*, but a being-there-as-he-is. On the other hand, when God was incarnate in Christ, he became something which he is inherently not, i.e. created and human. Hence, as human, and not only as God, he can be properly called the *imago* of God. Because he is representing God to humanity, he took upon himself the *morphe* of humanity, in order to reveal to us what it means to be created in his image.

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<sup>43</sup> "As we see from 2 Corinthians 4:1-6, Christ's being in the image of God leads to the result that men should come thereby to recognize the divinity of Christ," in Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 132.

## Adam-Christ Typology

The significant implication of the Pauline assertion that Christ is the *prototokos* (“firstborn,” Col 1:15b, 18b-c) of all creation is that in Christ, not only do we behold the *Göttlichkeit* of God, but also the human-ness of humanity. Jesus is the image of God not only because he is God representing God to humanity, but also because he is human, the *proto-anthropos*, revealing to humanity what it means to be human. Christology precedes anthropology. This is why Berkouwer summons his readers: “*Ecce homo!* Behold the man, the true man.”<sup>44</sup> Logic dictates that if Jesus the true human is the image of God, then we can only know what it means to be human created in God’s image by beholding Jesus, the archetypal human. Echoing John 14:6, just as no one can know the Father apart from the incarnate *Son*, no one can also know true humanness apart from the *incarnate* Son. It is here that un-Christological approaches to anthropology are brought to criticism. Autonomous existential “self-understanding” needs to be reviewed by Christo-anthropology. Cultural and regional anthropologies cannot be equated with biblical anthropology. Anthropological formulations guided by scientific knowledge of the physiological, biological, psychological and sociological aspects of human existence are of course not completely irrelevant. But it also does not mean that these un-theological approaches should either be the starting point or the final word.

Even biblical anthropology, moreover, needs to have its appropriate starting point. Two options are available: the creation of Adam or the life of Christ. Barth, following Irenaeus, chooses the latter, interpreting humanity (including Adam) in light of Jesus Christ. Commenting on Romans 5, he writes:

The primary anthropological truth and ordering principle... is made clear only through the relationship between Christ and us. Adam is, as is said in v.14 *typos tou mellontos*, the type of Him who was to come. Man’s essential and original nature is to be found, therefore, not in Adam but in Christ. In Adam we can only find it prefigured. Adam can therefore be interpreted only in the light of Christ and not the other way round.<sup>45</sup>

Barth’s preference is not without Pauline support. We must mention outright that like Paul, Barth’s concern is not purely anthropological, but is with anthropology *and* soteriology *together*. As such, the interest is not in the state of Adam as created in the *imago* before the Fall, but the state of humanity that Christ assumed and took upon himself in order to redeem. In fact, the main thrust of Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 is not the restoration of Adam’s lost

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<sup>44</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 90.

<sup>45</sup> Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956),

righteousness (whatever this means), but the recreation of humanity in light of who Christ is and what he has accomplished for us.<sup>46</sup>

The *prototokos*, in light of the above, is a soteriological concept. Jesus Christ is our eldest brother, whose image is the pattern through which our lives and destiny as human beings find fulfilment. Our future is not bound up with Adam, who is created *in* the image of God, but in Christ, who is himself *the* image of God.<sup>47</sup> As Hermann Ribberbos writes,

The glory that Adam as the Image of God and Firstborn of every creature was permitted to possess was only a reflection of Christ's being in the form of God. Thus Christ's exaltation as the second Adam refers back to the beginning of all things, makes him known as the one who from the very outset, in a much more glorious sense than the first Adam, was the Image of God and the Firstborn of every creature... The new creation that has broken through with Christ's resurrection takes the place of the first creation of which Adam was the representative.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the narrative of Jesus Christ provides an all-encompassing perspective on human nature, life, purpose and destiny. The life of Jesus "spans the ages from the eschatological new creation, which it inaugurates, back to the beginning, to the creation of humankind in the divine image, which is Christ, who through his death and resurrection is the true *imago dei*."<sup>49</sup> The humanity of Jesus Christ is the center of human existence, with both retrospective and prospective implications.

### **"Like Us in Every Way"**

For Berkouwer, Barth's Christo-conditioned anthropology is problematic. He writes that this approach, i.e. beginning with Jesus of Nazareth, "is driven, by inner necessity, to resort to speculation which can lead only to a striking modification of Biblical formulations, as is clear... when compared to that of Hebrews 2:14."<sup>50</sup> Berkouwer's pointed critique of Barth is precise, and yet also one-sided. Here we are faced with a paradoxical dialectic once more. On the one hand, Colossians argues that humanity is created in the image of Christ, the *prototokos* through and in whom all creation is made. On the other hand, Hebrews argues that Christ became human by "sharing in [our] humanity" and that "he had to be made like his brothers in every way" (2:14, 17). In contrast to the Colossians-Barthian model, the writer of Hebrews insinuates that Jesus became incarnate by assuming an already existing humanity. To quote Berkouwer, "It is man's

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<sup>46</sup> Black, "God's Promise for Humanity in the New Testament," 190.

<sup>47</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 217.

<sup>48</sup> Hermann Ribberbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (trans. John Richard de Witt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 145.

<sup>49</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 216.

<sup>50</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 97.



real situation which determines the mode of expression, man's lost and fallen state; and it is *from this situation*, in which man's fallen condition is impressive reality, that Scripture points to the Word becoming flesh."<sup>51</sup>

Romans 8:3 succinctly points out that God sent his own Son "in the likeness of sinful man." The incarnation is not only the appearance of the *proto-anthropos*, the entirely new human, but is also the assumption of the Son of what is old and existing. Humanity was created in the likeness of Christ, the archetypal human, but Christ is also made man in the likeness of humanity. Jesus Christ is both the image of God and in the likeness of sinful humanity. As the archetypal human, the *proto-anthropos*, and the image of God, he reveals what it means to be human beings in the *imago*; as the *anthropos pro nobis* he reveals the present predicament of human beings created in the *imago*. He is the human *with* God, the ideal humanity; but he is also the human *against* God, fallen and depraved. His humanity is both *new* and *old*; redeeming and redeemed.

So how do we make sense of this paradox? Instead of completely abandoning the idea that Christ the *prototokos* is the *original* human in favour of the idea that Christ the incarnate Son is the *remedial* human, we must conceive of the two as not mutually exclusive. One does not necessarily invalidate the other. We can still affirm, with Irenaeus and Barth that Christ is the primal human, and his incarnation is the arrival and manifestation of genuine humanity in the image of God. Our humanity is grounded in the human Christ, and we do not have an idea of what humanity-as-it-was-intended looks like apart from Jesus Christ. We do not have an idea of what being created in the image of God means apart from our gazing of God's own image, who is Christ. So, firstly, we are created in the image of Christ, the true human. Those who existed before the incarnation of the Son, including Adam and Eve, did not really know true humanity in God's image. But also, even though we are created in the *imago*, apart from Christ, and because of sin, we really do not know what the *imago* entails. As Luther comments, "When we speak about the image, we are speaking about something unknown.... we hear nothing except bare words."<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, even though as *homo creatus* we are created in the image of the true human, our extant predicament is that of being *homo peccator*. It is for this reason that Christ assumed a fallen humanity, becoming like us in every way, in order to redeem and restore us to his image. As Athanasius affirmed, following Irenaeus, Christ assumed our humanity in order to sanctify each part.<sup>53</sup> His becoming like us is salvific. As Thomas F. Torrance puts it,

The act of becoming incarnate is itself the *sanctification* of our human life in Jesus Christ, an elevating and fulfilling of it that far surpasses creation; it is a raising up of men

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<sup>51</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 95.

<sup>52</sup> Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," I: 631.

<sup>53</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 43.

and women to stand and have their being in the very life of God, but that raising up of man is achieved through his unutterable self-humiliation and condescension.<sup>54</sup>

This is what Luther and Calvin taught as the doctrine of *mirifica commutatio*, or the “blessed exchange” in which Christ assumed what was ours, so that we might receive what is his. In the words of Paul, this is “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). The salvific movement is that we are created in the image of Christ, but we lost the image. So Christ assumed our sinful existence in order to restore us to what we should be. Salvation is essentially the “redemptive translation of man *from* one state *into* another brought about by Christ who in his self-abnegating love took our place that we might have his place, becoming what we are that we might become what he is.”<sup>55</sup>

### **Christ-likeness and the Re-newal of the *Imago Dei* in Humanity**

Humanity is created in the image of God. Christ is the image of God. Therefore, humanity is created in light of Christ, the *prototokos* and *proto-anthropos*. Thus, we are created in the likeness of Christ, or Christ-likeness. The human Christ, in particular, as the specific manifestation of God in space and time, is the true humanity through which all image-copies (human beings) are made. Christ is the original image, and we are the image-copy. And yet, as biblical revelation teaches us, sin marred our creation in Christ-likeness, turning us to become anti-Christes instead. The *imago diaboli* replaced the *imago Dei*; *imitatio diaboli* replaced *imitatio Christi*. As Wesley himself affirmed, instead of reflecting Christ in our lives, fallen humanity turned “partly into the image of the devil” and “partly into the image of the brute.”<sup>56</sup> Humanity as it is now, although created as essentially Christ-like, is corrupted. It is for this reason that Christian writers whose interests lie in spelling out human dignity by turning to the creation of humanity in the *imago Dei* as their argumentative launching pads can be critiqued. While this procedure appears plausible, it is neither realistic nor holistically biblical, for a mere return to Genesis 1:26-27 is insufficient in the theological description of human dignity. We are no longer only *homo creatus*, but also *homo peccatur*. It is in this paradoxical state of being both *homo creatus* and *homo peccatur* that human beings exist. As Smail pointedly summarizes, “Our glory is that we are made to be like God; our shame is that, as we are, we are very unlike him.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (ed. Robert T. Walker; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2008), 66.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 179.

<sup>56</sup> Wesley, “God’s Love to Fallen Man,” in *BI* 2: 423.

<sup>57</sup> Smail, *Like Father, Like Son*, 201.

## The *Imago* Corrupted

The typical question raised when discussing the effects of the Fall on the *imago* is: Is the *imago* completely lost? It can be pointed out immediately that the question is not a neutral question. The use of the term “lost” is itself already biased, and the question erroneously simplifies the problem to a mere “Yes or No” inquiry. Over the centuries, theologians have grappled with this question and have provided variegated responses. One of the well-known nuanced answers is from Irenaeus, who, by distinguishing between “image” and “likeness” argued that the *imago* is lost, but the likeness is not. With some qualification, Irenaeus’ approach is echoed in the Reformed distinction between the “broad” and “narrow” interpretation of the *imago*,<sup>58</sup> and Maddox claims that even Wesley’s distinction between the natural and moral image echoes Irenaeus’ schema.<sup>59</sup> The main thrust of this dualistic tactic is obvious: to recognize that “in one sense the image was retained after the Fall and in another sense it was lost at the Fall.”<sup>60</sup> In a sense, the Irenaean distinction offers a convenient way forward, but for many who consider the two terms as synonymous and interchangeable,<sup>61</sup> the question remains unanswered. It is here that the bias of the term “lost” surfaces. And when the question is reduced to a mere “Is it lost or not?” the respondent is trapped into choosing between only two paths. For the attributalist, the *imago* is not totally lost. Because we are created in the *imago*, which makes us what we are and separates us from the rest of creation, to lose the *imago* is to be dehumanized, or to be bestialized or demonized.<sup>62</sup> This approach considers the image of God as an “expression analogous to the picture of man given by idealism, in which man is praised as *mikrotheos*, somehow divine, a characteristic which can never, despite all appearances, be lost.”<sup>63</sup> For the teleologist, the image is not lost because it was never ours in the first place. The *imago* is the potentiality or the possibility offered to humanity which will be attained in the future, not a possession in the past.

The relational interpretation of the *imago* offers a more promising solution. If the *imago* is understood as relationality, or more precisely, the relationship between God and humanity, then we can affirm that the *imago* is not really *lost*; rather, it is *corrupted*. This is because relationship with God is an inescapable human experience. Whether humanity acknowledges it or not, it does not disqualify the fact that human existence is entirely dependent on its Creator and Sustainer. Our creatureliness or human-ness involves existence-by-grace. As such, humanity remains in the image of God as a dependent relational creature, although the relationship is corrupted because even though we exist by grace, instead of being grateful recipients, we live as

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<sup>58</sup> See Baker, *Covenant and Community*, chapter 1; Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, chapter 2.

<sup>59</sup> Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 68.

<sup>60</sup> Dunning, *Reflecting the Divine Image*, 51.

<sup>61</sup> Like Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 187; and Baker who argue that *demut* is actually a gloss of *tselem*, in *Covenant and Community*, 60-70.

<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, Victor Shepherd interprets Wesley’s understanding of the Law inscribed in the human heart as “identical” with Wesley’s understanding of the *imago Dei*. Thus, “the *imago* is defaced but never effaced, or else the sinner would not be human.” See his article “John Wesley,” in *Reading Romans through the Centuries: From the Early Church to Karl Barth* (eds., Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 155.

<sup>63</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 36.

ungrateful prodigal children. If we turn to Genesis 9:5-6, a passage which theologians frequently use to argue that the *imago* is not lost in Genesis 3, we can interpret it to mean that taking the life of another human is prohibited not because of the god-like qualities inherent in humanity, but because every human being is related to God in our dependence for existence. Killing is forbidden not because of the human potentiality that would have been achieved if the person was spared, but because only God has the right to give and take life away (1 Samuel 2:6).

## The Human Christ

The relational approach also offers a better understanding of the human life of Christ. The human-ness of Christ cannot be seen in terms of inherent human characteristics or attributes that make humanity human. There is no set of “standards for humanness” that Christ needed to subscribe in order to be fully human, for as discussed above, Christ is himself the standard for humanness. We are created in him, not the other way around. Similarly, the life of Christ cannot be interpreted in terms of the potentiality that Jesus reveals concerning human life and *telos*, as mistakenly taught by Rudolf Bultmann’s existentialist view,<sup>64</sup> Hastings Rashdall’s moral exemplar theory,<sup>65</sup> and English Modernism’s understanding of the potentiality of humanity for divine-human union.<sup>66</sup>

Over the last four centuries, interest in the humanity of Christ swelled up to proportions that previous generations did not anticipate or thought of. In biblical studies, the emergence of the *Leben Jesu-Forschung* movement that coincided with the developing sophistication in biblical criticism brought the focus on the life of the particular human, Jesus of Nazareth. In theology, negatively, liberal theologians looked at the human life of Christ as the resource for developing existential perspectives of human destiny and purpose. Positively, the influence of the Scottish theologian Edward Irving in the early nineteenth century and the profound writings of Barth in the twentieth century also proved to fuel the emphasis on the humanity of Christ. Even recent Calvin scholarship has focused on the salvific significance of the humanity of Christ.<sup>67</sup> Integrative theology, which recently gained momentum, also brought the advent of

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<sup>64</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Scribner, 1958); and “New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth* (ed. Hans Bartsch; New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 18-19, 30. Bultmann utilizes Martin Heidegger’s discussion of the inauthentic existence *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 163-168.

<sup>65</sup> Hastings Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1919).

<sup>66</sup> See the discussion of Richard Bauckham about this group in “Jesus the Revelation of God,” in *Divine Revelation* (ed. Paul Avis; London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997), 178-180.

<sup>67</sup> Trevor Hart, “Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989), 67-84; Jonathan Slater, “Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of the Mediator in Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: A Reply to Carl Mosser.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005), 39-58; and Bruce McCormack, “For Us and Our Salvation:

Pneumatic Christology. In contrast, but not in rejection, of Logos Christology, which highlights the divinity of the incarnate Son, Spirit Christology highlights the humanity of Christ in the power of the Spirit. It is precisely as a human that Jesus needed the Spirit to fulfil his mission from the Father.<sup>68</sup>

Pneumatic Christology can be expanded to become Trinitarian Christology, in which the humanity of Christ is perceived in light of the relationship of the human Christ to both the Father and the Spirit. It is here that the relational approach has a significant bearing. The human-ness of Christ is evaluated not in light of the existential structures that make him who he is, but in light of the relationships that constitute his humanity. Being is not conceived as essentially *being as*, but as *being with*. The identity of the human Christ does not rest on his individual qualities and attributes, but on his personal relationships. Jesus is the image of God precisely because of the perfect relationship that he embodies and lives out. It is not, however, because of the inescapable relationship of the human Christ that makes him the *proto-anthropos*, but because he chose, as human, to live out the relationships which humans should properly have. The equation may be put as:

- (1) God created humanity in his image.
- (2) Christ is the image of God.
- (3) Christ lived in perfect relationship with both the Father and the Spirit.
- (4) To be human in the image of God is to have perfect relationship with both the Father and the Spirit.

Firstly, as human, Jesus Christ lived in utter obedience to the will of the Father. The New Testament witness portrays Jesus as the one sent by the Father (Matt 15:24; John 3:16-17; 5:23, 36-38; 6:57; 10:36; Heb 3:1-2). The penetrating statement of Jesus in John 14:31 is sufficiently illustrative: “The world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father commended me.” Jesus suffered, not because he was a masochist, but because of his “reverent submission” (Heb 5:7) to the Father’s will. In fact, we read the dramatic manifestation of Jesus’ obedience to the Father (and his capacity to disobey, should he choose to) in his prayer at Gethsemane: “He fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will’” (Matt 26:39, 42). Torrance explains:

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Incarnation and Atonement in the Reformed Tradition,” *Studies in Reformed Theology and History* 1 (Spring 1993), 1-38.

<sup>68</sup> Harold Hunter, “Sprit Christology: Dilemma and Promise (2),” *The Heythrop Journal* 24 (1983), 266-267; James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). See Smail, *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person* (London: Hodder&Stoughton, 1988), 92, where he recants his previous positing of Logos Christology and Pneumatic Christology as mutually exclusive.

Even in the fourth Gospel where the most profound theological teaching is found on the lips of Jesus, we have the strongest emphasis on the fact that Christ can do nothing of himself, and can say nothing of himself – he is entirely at one with, and obedient to, the Father who sent him. In the Gospels and in the Epistles is the obedience of Jesus to the God of Israel which is unflaggingly stressed. He knows himself to be under compulsion. He had come to do God’s will; he had come to suffer, and all that was written of him he had to fulfil – and though he shrank from it, or rather from the terrible cross and passion it entailed, he set his face like a flint toward it and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.<sup>69</sup>

We learn from Reformed theology that there are two aspects of Christ’s obedience: active and passive. *Active obedience* refers to the positive fulfilment of God’s saving will in the whole life of Jesus in his sonship. From the very beginning to the very end, he maintained a perfect filial relationship to the Father in which he yielded to him a life of utter love and faithfulness. *Passive obedience* refers to Christ’s submission to the judgment of the Father upon the sin which he assumed in our humanity. He willingly accepted the punishment of sin, death, and as Isaiah says, “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (53:7; quoted in Acts 8:32).

Secondly, Jesus, according to Dunn, is the “uniquely appointed Man of the Spirit.”<sup>70</sup> He is truly the *proto-anthropos* because his human life is pervaded through and through by the presence of the Spirit. He is born of the Spirit (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35); baptized by the Spirit (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10); led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (Matt 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1); anointed by the Spirit (Luke 4:16-21); mobilized by the Spirit (Luke 4:14); drives out evil spirits by the power of the Spirit (Matt 12:28); and is even raised from the dead in the power of the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18). The Holy Spirit permeated the whole life of Jesus. In the course of his life and ministry, he was not acting independently from the Spirit’s dynamic influence and power. Throughout his entire life, Jesus lived as *Christos*, the Anointed One, like the anointed ones in the Old Testament (Exo 28:41; 1 Sam 10:1; 19:16; etc). Jesus himself was aware of his being Spirit-filled and Spirit-led, something that is evident in his claim that he is the fulfilment of the one prophesied in Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:18-21).

So, if in relationship to the Father, he was submissive and obedient, in Jesus’ relation to the Spirit, he was dependent. The human Jesus lived his earthly life without recourse to his divine powers and privileges, but rather lived as a human in need, dependent upon another’s help, guidance and providence. In the words of Paul, he was in the *morphe* of God, but he chose not to consider equality with God, as independent, All-powerful, and Self-sufficient. Rather, “he made himself nothing, taking the *morphe* of a servant, being made in human likeness” and

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<sup>69</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 18.

<sup>70</sup> Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the Early Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 46.

“humbled himself, and became obedient to death” (Phil 2:6-8). Here in the human Jesus we see a life yielding to God’s faithfulness in faith and trust, a life of thankful reception and appreciation of God’s providence and leading, and a life of utter reliance on God’s pleasing and perfect guidance.

### **Christ, the Humanizing Human**

It is true that the human Christ reveals to us what it means to be human in his advent, but this does not mean that humanity is automatically enabled to imitate Christ in his coming. Our being in the *imago* is distorted, and the appearance of the *imago* in Christ does not imply that all we have to do is to imitate the One we now behold. Thus, unlike liberal theology’s understanding of Jesus as moral exemplar, humanity cannot begin the process of imitation as if humanity is neutral and dormant all these times. The fact is that our humanity is fallen, and the healing of our corruption is an important foundation for our restoration in Christ-likeness. Fortunately, Christ is not only our *prototokos*, but our redeeming *prototokos*. He is our brother, but he also is a saving brother.

Important here is the fact that the humanization of humanity, or being restored to Christ-likeness, requires the undoing of our previous inhumanity. Christ’s coming and work involves not only a prospective enablement, but a retrospective element. This is the import of Irenaeus’ doctrine of recapitulation, and the Pauline emphasis on the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).

The recapitulation to which [Irenaeus] bears witness calls man into account because it takes the form of a radical reversal of the essential direction of man’s life before God, from disobedience to obedience, from sin to faith, from apostasy to fellowship, and hence from death to life; and it is in this very reversal that the salvation of man is achieved. In the history of the New man the sinfulness of Adam is undone, and its horrific consequences eradicated.<sup>71</sup>

In short, Christ’s undoing of our inhumanity and the forgiveness of our sins is inseparable from his appearance as the *prototokos*. The prospective aspect of redemption, i.e. Christ-likeness, is intertwined with Christ’s death and resurrection. Christ our Brother is also Christ our Saviour. To be like him is to be saved by him. He is the humanizing human as the *prototokos* and as the *Christos*. As Saviour, he assumed every aspect of our human existence, redeeming and sanctifying each part, so that we may now live as proper humans before God. For instance, to be human involves having a personal relationship with the Spirit. But the indwelling presence of the Spirit cannot be experienced by humanity in sin, for the relationship between sinful humanity

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<sup>71</sup> Trevor A. Hart, “Irenaeus, Recapitulation, and Physical Redemption,” in *Christ in Our Place: The Humanity of God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the World* (eds. Trevor Hart and Daniel Thimell; Exeter: Paternoster, 1989), 171.

and the Spirit would be that of judgment and animosity. It is only because (1) Christ has forgiven us and (2) has received the Spirit in his humanity that

he is in a position to transfer in a profound and intimate way what belongs to us in our human nature to himself and to transfer what is his to our human nature in him. That applies above all to the gift of the Holy Spirit whom he received fully and completely in his human nature for us. Hence... the eternal Spirit of the living God has composed himself, as it were, to dwell with human nature, and human nature has been adapted and become accustomed to receive and bear the same Holy Spirit.<sup>72</sup>

By being restored to relationship with the Father and the Spirit, humanity is humanized. If, in light of Christ's life, to be human is to be person-in-relation, then to be humanized in Christ also implies the restoration of human personhood. It is in this sense that Jesus is not only the humanizing Human but also the personalizing Person, for in his life and work he not only "redeems us from the thralldom to depersonalizing forces [but] repersonalizes our human being in relation to himself."<sup>73</sup> By sharing in his humanity, we experience a *summorphos* existence, a life of mirroring and participation in a particular way of being as the new humanity.<sup>74</sup>

### Living as Humanized Humans

If we are created in Christ-likeness, which sin corrupted, then the re-newal leads to being re-made in Christ-likeness. "The miracle of restoration, the renewal of man's nature as a salvation, in eschatological and Christological perspective [involves] a destining to be 'conformed to the image of the Son'."<sup>75</sup> This renewal of the *imago* or conformity to Christ, however, entails not some sort of deification or divinization. As Elaine Graham writes, the "*imago Dei* cannot be used to justify narratives of the ascent of superhuman beings to become omniscient, omnipotent immortal demi-gods."<sup>76</sup> Rather, salvation involves "an affirmation of the essential finitude of human nature, not an escape from it."<sup>77</sup> When we are summoned to imitate Christ, we are not encouraged to imitate his divine life. In the first place, this is impossible. In the second place, to imitate divinity is idolatry. This means that there is a type of human imitation that goes against the purposes of God for humanity. There is a god-likeness that humans are prohibited to attempt to attain. In fact, the story of the Fall illustrates this aberration. When the serpent tempted Eve to eat from the forbidden tree of knowledge, he told her that

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM, 1965), 246.

<sup>73</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (rev. ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 69.

<sup>74</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 228-230.

<sup>75</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 45.

<sup>76</sup> Elaine L. Graham, "The 'End' of Human or the End of 'Human': Human Dignity in Technological Perspective," in *God and Human Dignity* (eds. R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 276.

<sup>77</sup> David H. Kelsey, "Human Being," in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to its Traditions and Tasks* (eds. Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Philadelphia: Fortress), 170.



eating the fruit would result in them becoming “like God” (Gen 3:5). God created us to be humans, and sin is the undoing of humanity to become god-like or gods. This is precisely what happened at the Fall, and in terms of the *imago*, Smail describes the transition as the change from “the likeness of reflection” to “the likeness of replacement.”<sup>78</sup> James Luther Mays expresses Adamic arrogance and its consequence: “that the human being should claim independent sovereignty over life puts him in conflict with the divine.”<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, our renewal in Christ-likeness is a renewal of our lost human-ness. Jesus lived as a fully human on earth, showing us the original copy of what we should be and should have been as humanity before God and others. Unlike Adam, who, in his self-will, became disobedient to the will of the Father, the human Jesus was completely obedient to the Father’s purposes, even dying on the cross. Unlike Adam, who relied on his own wisdom or on the faulty wisdom of Eve, the human Christ relied on the Holy Spirit for every single aspect of his human existence. Unlike Adam, who wanted to become “like God” (Gen 3:5, 22) but actually died (Gen 2:17; 3:19), the human Christ did not consider equality with God and lived humbly, and was exalted by God “to the highest place” (Phil 2:9). Salvation involves becoming like Christ, in his relationship with the Father and the Spirit in his human existence. To be renewed in Christ is not to become supra-human or to become children of Krypton. To be renewed in the image is to follow Paul’s admonition: “your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5).

To exist and live in Christ-likeness, therefore is to be humanized and to be fully human, possessing the same perfect relationships that the human Christ had with the Father and the Spirit in his earthly life. The fulfillment of our human-ness is to remain as humans, obedient to the Father’s will and dependent upon the Spirit’s sustaining presence. We are truly human when we exist in childlike faith, and we become less human when we begin to assert our own will and rely on ourselves. We are truly Christ-like when we, with humility and submission, offer our bodies as living sacrifices and instruments of the Father’s purposes (Rom 12:1-2; 6:13, 19), and when we allow the Spirit to become our Teacher to guide us into all truth (John 16:13) and to empower us to continue the mission of Christ on earth (Acts 1:8). We are truly Christ-like when we humble ourselves and pray, just as Jesus himself lived in humility and prayer (Phil 2:5-8). We are truly Christ-like when our prayers are “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10; 26:39) and “May your Spirit come upon us and cleanse us” (Luke 11:2). To be Christ-like is to “do exactly what [the] Father command[s]” (John 14:31) and to be “full of the Spirit” (Luke 4:1).

It is only in being Christ-like in our relationship with the Father and the Spirit that our human-ness as created in God’s image is also fully Trinitarian. Smail’s proposals in *Like Father, Like Son* that we are renewed in the *imago Trinitatis* if we display the image of the initiating

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<sup>78</sup> Smail, *Like Father, Like Son*, 202.

<sup>79</sup> James Luther Mays, “The Self in the Psalms and the Image of God,” in *God and Human Dignity*, 37.

Father, the image of the obedient Son and the image of the creative Spirit, is quite far-fetched.<sup>80</sup> If we are to remain faithful to the New Testament testimony that Jesus Christ is the image of God (Col 1:15), then the restoration of our corrupted image entails not a Father-likeness, Christ-likeness and Spirit-likeness together, but only Christ-likeness in his human life. Far from being insufficiently Trinitarian, Christ-likeness, when understood in terms of Christ's relationship with the Father and the Spirit, actually offers a better and more realistic picture of Trinitarian human-ness. To be human in the image of God is to be like Christ, who was completely obedient to the Father and dependent on the Spirit.

## Conclusion

This paper argued that traditional interpretations of the *imago Dei* (1) as inherent qualities in human nature, (2) as an eschatological goal that needs to be achieved, or (3) as an inherent relationality, are theologically inadmissible and biblically insupportable. It is true that God created humanity in his image, but the image is not revealed until the life of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God (Col 1:15). With this Christocentric view of humanity, we can interpret our creation in the image of God – who is Christ – as being created in Christ-likeness. The portrayal of Christ's life in the Gospels explains what human-ness as created in Christ-likeness entails, which is to live in perfect submission and obedience to the Father and to be completely dependent upon the guidance and sustenance of the Holy Spirit. Because of sin, instead of remaining Christ-like, humanity became inhuman un-Christ-like or anti-Christ. Humanity in sin exists in disobedience and independence, subverting the will of God and singing “my way,” and thriving in the ideals of William Ernest Henley's *Invictus*. To live in sin is to be self-reliant, self-willed, and self-fulfilled. The renewal of the *imago*, offered by Christ himself as well, is the restoration of humanity's Christ-likeness, living as Christ lived in relationship with the Father and the Spirit. It entails submission, obedience and dependence. As Graham writes, “to aspire to *imago Dei*, to see human fulfilment in the image of God as revealed in Christ, properly leads to humility rather than to self-aggrandizement.”<sup>81</sup> It is to exist as a creature, and to humbly recognize our contingent existence every day. To be renewed in the *imago*, therefore, is to be human, just as Jesus Christ himself was human.

But how is this related to Wesleyan theology? On the one hand, the proposal of this paper builds upon the Wesleyan relational view of the *imago Dei*, and hence the relationships of Christ with the Father and the Spirit were highlighted as that which constitute his human-ness. On the other hand, it stands as a corrective to our insufficiently Christocentric interpretation of the *imago Dei*, which leads to a neglect of some important aspects of sanctification. To fail to consider the humanity of Christ in soteriological formulation, Dianne Leclerc asserts, results in a

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<sup>80</sup> Smail, *Like Father, Like Son*, chapter 5.

<sup>81</sup> Graham, “The ‘End’ of the Human,” 277.

moralistic understanding of sanctification. She laments: “I believe this has been neglected in our tradition – the goal of being truly human.”<sup>82</sup> Thus, a Christocentric view of the *imago Dei*, with an emphasis on the human Christ in relation to the Father and the Spirit, provides a new dimension of our understanding of what it means to be renewed in the *imago Dei*: Christ-likeness and human-ness.

The proposal of the paper is admittedly incomplete. The arm of the pendulum tended to remain at the vertical relationship of the human Christ to the Father and the Spirit which inadvertently led to the neglect of the horizontal relationship of Christ to other humans and the rest of the created order in his earthly life. This paper in no way argues for the insignificance or the lesser significance of what it did not include. Rather, the apparent neglect is due to lack of space and time. Future projects will need to look at the relationships of Christ to humanity and to the created world, and spell out their implications to our understanding of the *imago Dei* and Christ-likeness. Even the celebrated moral aspect is not dealt with here (Eph 4:22-24), although it is by no means, considered unimportant. For now, the emphasis belongs to the soteriological and anthropological implications of the life of the human Christ in relation to the Father and the Spirit.

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<sup>82</sup> Dianne Leclerc, “Holiness: Sin’s Anticipated Cure,” in *The Holiness Manifesto* (eds. Kevin W. Mannoia and Don Thorsen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 122.



## Response

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I was raised a Methodist as a young man in our province but I have no recollection of elements of Wesleyan theological thought. Neither was I ever exposed to it in my seminary studies. (I may have gone to the wrong schools). Reading Dick Eugenio's paper and preparing to respond to it have afforded me the opportunity to read on Wesleyan theology for the first time, in particular its understanding of the *imago Dei* in relation to salvation and sanctification. Though limited, my readings on the subject and analysis of the paper itself, have been enriching and challenging personally and professionally.

The author of the paper exhibits a high degree of erudition in the general organization of the material and treatment of the subject. The bibliography and the references used show a wide-ranging acquaintance with the topic. There is a great effort on the part of the writer to attain a proper balance among diverse views and nuances of the subject and related topics. It is understandable of course that, being a Wesleyan, he upholds his denomination's view<sup>1</sup> on the subject. However, he goes beyond Wesley's theology and moves past the usual Wesleyan style in treating the subject, as he feels the need to complement the Wesleyan view "by a Christocentric approach..." because, as he states it, "one of the most significant soteriological understandings that has gained enthusiastic approval in recent years...is the humanization of humanity in Christ." Hence, the title of the paper. The author also feels that there is need to correct the "insufficiently Christocentric interpretation of the *imago Dei* which leads to a neglect of some important aspects of sanctification." Along with Dianne Lecrec he believes that this lack of a Christocentric focus in interpreting the *imago* "results in a moralistic understanding of sanctification" and removes the possibility of renewal in the *imago* which is nothing less than "Christlikeness and human-ness."

The author's exposition of the subject is structured around the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) in relation to the *Imago Dei* as follows: 1) humanity was created in the image of God; 2) the image is marred; 3) the image is restored.

Under the first segment of his elucidation, the writer surveys four views on the interpretation of the *imago Dei* which focus on theological anthropology, namely: 1) the attributal (the *imago* consists of attributes or faculties in man); 2) the teleological/eschatological (pointing to potentialities that are yet to be achieved in the future); 3) the relational/personalist (which views man not as a rational but relational entity); 4) the personal perspective (seeks to

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<sup>1</sup> Here, "Wesleyan" refers to the Wesleyan tradition. "Wesleyan" may also refer to The Wesleyan Church, a church within the Wesleyan tradition. The author is responding to Dick Eugenio, who is a member of the Church of the Nazarene, which is another such denomination [Editor].

answer the question “Who is the image of God?”, not “What is the image?”). It is here where the writer answers the question “Who is the image” and introduces the thought that the image is no less than Christ. Since he is a proponent of “Christ is the image” view of the *imago*, he discusses this subject lengthily, defending it vigorously, and in the processes disposing of the other views as inadmissible and without adequate scriptural support, so he thinks. By and large, they are views “from below” according to him.

The second main section of the paper explains why Christ-likeness is the way to renew the *imago Dei*, since Christ is the true image of God. Christ-likeness, or as the paper proposes, humanization, is the way of renewing the *imago Dei* in man. Here Christ-likeness, patterned after Christ’s relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit (in a Trinitarian sense), is affirmed as perfect obedience to the Father and full dependence upon the Holy Spirit both in the life and ministry of the Christian.

This response will consist of three considerations. First, there will be comments on style and the text itself along with some suggestions to improve the use of some expressions, and clarify the use of words in the text. This will be followed by an interaction on the meaning of the *imago* as used in Old Testament and New Testament passages, and secondly, on the terms *humanization* and *human-ness* as used in the paper.

### **Comments on the Text**

First, depending on the educational and theological knowledge of the audience or readers of the material now and in days to come, it is not easy to understand the meaning of some statements in the text (unless it is intended exclusively for an esoteric audience) due to the use of several Latin and German words and phrases (without supplying their meaning in English), along with some theological jargon. The following are examples: *ordo salutis*; Dionysian hyper; *ad Imagenim Dei*; *vestigia Dei*; *similitudo*; telic; perichoretic; God’s *ousia* is *koinonia*; the *morphe* of humanity; Gottlichkeit of God; *proto-anthropos*; *anthropos pro nobis*; *homo creatus*; *imago diabolic*; *Leben Jesu- Forschung* movement; *summorphous* existence; *imago Trinitatis*.

Also, it is not accurate for the author to state that “there are only three texts explicitly connecting humankind as created or made in the *imago Dei*-three in the Old Testament (Gen.1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:5-6) and two in the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9)...” when in fact there is a total of five cited.

I think there is need to rephrase or clarify some statements in the paper to make them more intelligible and accurate. Christ is presented as “imaging God in his humanity” as God’s *tselem* and *demut*. But “considering the deity of the incarnate Son, God represents himself through himself.” Does this statement intend to blur the personal distinction between the Father

and Son so that the Son cannot represent the Father? And which of the two them is “original” and “copy” (likeness)?

Further down, in two places, “un-Christological” should probably be changed to “non-Christological” in the sentence “It is here that un-Christological approaches to anthropology...” In addition, it may be awkward to use “inhumanity” to describe the believer’s state before being “restored to Christ-likeness”, but we are not prepared to suggest another word. Since “inhuman” means “not worthy or conforming to the needs of human beings,” there should be a more appropriate word used.

### Interaction

At this point, I wish to interact with the author over two themes, namely, the meaning of the *imago Dei* and “human-ness” and “humanization” as expounded in the paper.

1. On the meaning of *imago Dei*. In relation to the exposition on the *image of God* in man, there is no exegesis in the paper of the pertinent biblical passages in the Old and New Testaments. The author instead immediately deals with theological formulations developed throughout the history of the Church. While Christ indeed is truly the image of God as set forth in the New Testament, the meaning of the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1:26-28; 5:1-3; 9:1-7 with Psalm 8 as applied to humanity in general should not be overlooked. The thrust of these biblical portions is that human dignity arises from man being created in the image of God and after his likeness. It is agreed that “image” and “likeness” may be used interchangeably, where “image” means representation and “likeness”, resemblance. In ancient cultures, a statue or image of a god “represented that god on earth, just as the image of a king in a land he had conquered.” In Genesis man represents God on earth as vice-gerent to have dominion over creation and manage it for the glory of the Creator. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Douglas John Hall, a relationalist, in a penetrating discussion of this subject, concedes that “the biblical ontology that conceives human being—and all being—in relational terms does not deny the uniqueness of the human creature.” He maintains that “there is no need to reject outright Aristotle’s definition of *anthropos* as ‘rational animal,’ or repudiate those who marvel at human capacities for deciding, determining, planning, judging, changing, and so forth.” Sounding like a structuralist, he adds that a relational view of man requires “that we view all such capacities and endowments according to their functions as attributes enabling us to become what we are intended to be: serving and representative creatures, stewards whose complexity of mental, spiritual, and volitional powers make it possible...to image the holy and suffering love of the Creator” (*Imaging God*, p. 141).

In stressing that the content of the *imago Dei* in man is Christ-likeness, Eugenio critiques Christian writers for “spelling out human dignity by turning to the creation of humanity” in Genesis and Psalm 8. He then argues that “this procedure...is neither realistic nor holistically biblical, for a mere return to Genesis 1:26-27 is insufficient in the theological description of human dignity” (p. 15). This writer holds that though man is both *homo creatus* and *homo peccator* and thus lies in a paradoxical state, humanity in a generic sense bears the primeval dignity and honor as indicated in Psalm 8. Moreover, the

prohibition against murder in Genesis 9:6 is anchored on man's inherent worth and dignity as created in the image of God, not just "because only God has the right to take life away..." (p. 16). Similarly cursing one's fellowmen is forbidden because they are created in God's image (James 3:9). Taking these into account, men in a generic sense are still image-bearers even after the Fall.

2. On Human-ness and Humanization. In the paper, the terms "human-ness" and "humanization" are used to mean differently from the way they are ordinarily employed. Being human or human-ness negatively points to human attributes or "sympathies and frailties of human nature". On the other hand, the word "humanize" expresses a positive idea—either to make more human or promote human dignity and worth. To be humane is to show consideration or compassion to the weak and needy. But as meant to be understood in the paper, human-ness is "to be conformed to the likeness of his Son" (Rom. 8:29), Christ the *protokokos*, the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-49). As our pattern, Christ "assumed every aspect of our human existence, redeeming and sanctifying each part, so that we may now live as proper humans before God." Human-ness is to put on Christ-likeness. Humanization then is the process of growing in Christ-likeness. And Christ-likeness is explained as perfect obedience to God the Father and the Holy Spirit, since Christ in his earthly life and ministry was perfectly committed to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In practical terms Christ-likeness or humanization is "taking off the old self with its practices and putting on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Col. 3:9-10). Or, as the apostle Paul similarly exhorts believers elsewhere, humanization is being "made new in the attitude of your minds;..." and putting on "the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:23-24).

To avoid lapsing into a pietistic understanding of sanctification, there is need to spell out what it means to be Christ-like as renewal of the divine image in the believer. It will not do simply to coldly state that Christ-likeness is walking in perfect obedience to God and the Holy Spirit. The verses surrounding Colossians 3:9-10 and Ephesians 4:23-24 deal with what to overcome (sins of the flesh and negative emotions, unwholesome talk). In Colossians 3:11, putting on the new self should result in putting aside discrimination against others due to racial, cultural and social distinctions. Christ-likeness has social dimensions, in other words. For in the Church, as the new humanity, "there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ in all, and is in all."

Let us then strive to attain that level of humanization in Christ where we truly image God in a world needing redemption and renewal.



## Response

San Young Lee

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Thank you, Dr. Eugenio, for presenting dominant views or perspectives in understanding the image of God. There are, starting with attributal/qualitative interpretation, teleological view, eschatological view, relational view, and Christocentric approach to imago dei that, apart from Christ, the very image of God, one cannot know what being created in the image of God entails. It is helpful to see that in relation to soteriology, how Christ's humanization of humans that are corrupted and became inhuman is closely related to how humans should live as created in the image of God, the life that human Christ lived out, which is that being human is to be in relationship with God, totally obedient to God and totally dependent upon the Spirit. In our Wesleyan language, being in relationship with God is to be in absolute obedience to God and absolute dependence upon the Spirit, which is what sanctification is all about, isn't it? Dr. Eugenio's paper is very important in the sense that it deepens our understanding of what it means to be human, what being created in the image of God entails, and the significance of Christ as our brother and our savior who is created in the likeness of humanity for our redemption, or to "humanize humanity".

However, as Dr. Eugenio admitted, his presentation this time on the image of God, that focuses on the vertical relationship of human Christ with God and the Spirit, is incomplete in the sense that it did not cover how the horizontal relationship of human Christ with the other human beings and the rest of the creatures would look like. I cannot help but wonder how Christ, being the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God, but took the form of servant and obeyed God even unto death, would be like when the human Christ, as the imago dei, is in relationship with the other human beings and the rest of the creatures in Dr. Eugenio's paper. Would Christ have treated women as second citizens as sinful men do? Would Christ, the imago dei, have treated people of different skin color, culture and custom as subhuman, as sinful humans did and do?

Although Dr. Eugenio did not mention anything about Augustine, Ambrose or the Apostle Paul, to name a few, when he discussed about attributal/qualitative interpretations of the imago dei, and how they made man as the sole gender of being and reflecting the image of God, it has been a sad reality that women are treated as second citizens, lower beings than men in the church from very early on. To quote from Augustine from his treatise on the trinity, "The woman together with the man is the image of God, so that the whole substance is one image. But when she is assigned as a helpmate, which pertains to her alone, she is not the image of God; however, in what pertains to man alone, is the image of God just as fully and completely as he is joined with the woman into one." What Augustine is saying is that woman alone is not the image of

God, only when she is joined with man, together with him, can she be the image of God, but alone, she is not the image of God, whereas man is the image of God regardless whether he is alone or joined with woman. If woman alone is not the image of God, then, alone she is not a human being?! 1 Cor 11:7, "For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man". From this bible verse it could be controversial arguing that Apostle Paul is also saying that woman is not the image of God. No one could argue that "woman being "the reflection of man" is one step removed from being the image of God, whereas there is no ambiguity regards to-man being "the image and reflection of God" According to St. Paul, at least, that was how it has been interpreted in the church (Andy Little, "Feminist Perspectives and Genesis 1:26-28). The idea that women are given second-class status, if not considered subhuman, are not the image of God, becomes clearer if we quote from St. Ambrose, a Bishop of Milan, "Remember that God took the rib out of Adam's body, not a part of his soul, to make her. She was not made in the image of God, like man." Ambrose is saying that woman does not have a soul since she was made out of the Adam's rib, not of his soul, therefore, not the image of God. Hence making man as the sole image of God and placing man equal to the status of God, while assigning woman to second-class status, woman is less than the complete being as the image and reflection of God. What is more, placing woman right above the animal, not so higher from animal status, in the chain of being, unlike men, women are closer, if not belonging, to the animal and carnal.

This attitude toward women has been the dominant attitude throughout church history until today. Women alone are not complete, somehow insufficient to be leaders in the church. Regardless how competent they are as preachers and no matter how strong their callings are into the ministry, they struggle to find pulpit ministry, mostly serving as assistants, or in the capacity of children ministry, the secondary place in the eyes of people. In this context, I would like to ask Dr. Eugenio and the participants whether women are created in the image of God, whether women are also bearers of God's image. I would like to challenge you as educators and pastors of the church to correct the wrong. Perhaps we should start examining our attitude first, whether we are still in that discriminatory, sinful, un-holy, un-sanctified attitude toward women.

In addition, if we understand the image of God from an attributal and qualitative view, like Augustine, this can cause further serious problems. For one, when the image of God is understood as a matter of elements, enumerating qualities and characteristics, it can be very dangerous as the list of elements is embedded in one's own cultural bias and prejudices, as Dr. Eugenio pointed out. In coming up with universal characteristics of human nature, a philosophical version of *imago Dei*, David Hume and other philosophers, heroes of the Enlightenment, concluded that people of color are inherently inferior to caucasians. In David Hume's own words in his essay "Of national characters", he said, "I am apt to suspect the negroes and all the other species of men to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences." This idea was

further developed by Edward Long saying that “though Negroes have the look of humans but they are not. They are lower in the chain of being, a link between humans and ape.” Turning Negroes into subhuman, these Philosophers, including John Locke, laid the philosophical ground for slavery and racism , providing justification for turning humans into commodities even in the church among Christians.

With these things said, I appreciate Dr. Eugenio for presenting Christocentric approach to imago dei, how Christ assumed human likeness to humanize these sinful humans, you and I, who discriminate other fellow human beings, the bearers of image of God, based on their gender, color, race and class.

Thanks be to God!

## **Renewal in Love:**

### **Living Holy Lives in God's Good Creation**

Michael Lodahl

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I intend to explore with you the biblical and Christian teaching that human beings are created in the image of God. This can only be undertaken in the light of the New Testament proclamation that Jesus Christ is the image of God, and that through Jesus Christ fallen human beings can be renewed in the divine image.

Each of these convictions – that humans are created in God's image, that Jesus Christ is God's very image, and that through Christ human beings may be renewed in God's image – is crucial to a Christian theologian anthropology. But what is entailed in these ideas? For example, what does the phrase “image of God” actually mean, or even imply? What does it suggest about our relationship to God on the one hand, and to the rest of God's vast creation on the other? Why is Jesus necessary to the renewal of human beings? What exactly is being renewed, and why? How does this renewal or restoration occur? Further, how ought our answers to such questions shape our everyday behaviors in this world – a world that we affirm to be God's own good creation? These are critical questions.

The proposition that we are created in the image of God is a universally affirmed teaching in both Judaism and Christianity. It is, after all, clearly stated in the opening chapter of Genesis (1:26-27). But what it actually means for us to be created in God's image is far less clear. The list of possible interpretations is considerably long. There may be considerable wisdom in many of those interpretations. However, I have become convinced by contemporary biblical scholarship that the essence of this idea that we are created in God's image, or that we are created to ‘image’ God, is a function, or vocation, to which we are called. That function is the human role and responsibility to protect and to nurture the world's well-being, fruitfulness and beauty, in the great hope that God's good creation may enjoy a viable, even rich, future. This idea lies at the very heart of my reflections today.

There is a deep problem facing us, however. While Christian tradition as a whole has affirmed the idea that human beings are created in God's image, it is also generally believed (and widely acknowledged) that we human beings have distorted, marred, or perhaps even entirely effaced this image through our resistance against our Maker. This, of course, is the problem of sin. Differing streams within the Christian faith have disagreed regarding the extent to which sin has damaged human existence and thus compromised the human vocation to be the image of God.

Given this conference's explicit attention to John and Charles Wesley and, in their wake, the Wesleyan tradition, it should not be surprising that we will give primary attention to their wrestling with this deep problem of human sinfulness. Certainly the reality of sin challenges any premature celebrations of our having been created in the divine image! Nonetheless, I hope to demonstrate in what follows that the Wesley brothers placed a particularly strong emphasis upon this doctrine of the image of God in their understanding of salvation through Jesus Christ. In other words, the Wesleys maintained high hopes for what God's redeeming grace might accomplish for, in and through human lives; for them, accordingly, the power of sin can be overcome and human beings can indeed be restored to living in God's image. Of course they are not alone in this emphasis, by far – and yet it is arguable that under their leadership the Wesleyan tradition has developed an especially robust understanding of salvation as renewal in the image of God. Further, it is clear that Colossians 3:10 – which speaks of a “new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator” – provided the Wesleys with the biblical warrant for their rhetoric of renewal.

The Wesley brothers' emphasis ought to help us to appreciate the idea that the doctrine of salvation is concerned not simply with “going to heaven when we die.” Rather, far more profoundly, salvation through Jesus Christ raises hopes about the kind of lives we can live here and now, in this world, through the renewing grace of God. Realizing that salvation is intended to make a profound difference in this life, in turn, helps to underscore the important biblical teaching about the goodness of this material creation, in which each of us is a participant, in the eyes of its Maker. Life in this world is not simply a place to wait for the next world – even if occasionally we hear sermons and hymns that suggest otherwise. The recurring Wesleyan theme of sanctification as renewal in the image of God underscores this important idea that Christian redemption does not involve escape from the world, but instead a deep and enduring participation in God's good creation.

### **Renewal in the Image of God**

Let us, then, explore some examples of this emphasis on renewal in the image of God in the Wesley brothers' preaching. In Charles's 1736 sermon “The One Thing Needful,” he insisted that God's fundamental goal for humanity – that “one thing needful” – “is the renewal of our fallen nature. In the image of God man was made . . . but sin has now effaced the image of God.” Accordingly, this renewal in God's image is “the one end of our redemption as well as our creation” – meaning that God's purpose both in creating us and redeeming us is that we might truly reflect or ‘image’ our Creator within the realm of creation. In “Original Sin,” John Wesley proclaimed that “the great end [or purpose] of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God.” In “The Means of Grace,” John insisted that God has given us practices such as prayer, corporate worship, reading the Scriptures and the sacraments so that we, by grace, might attain “a heart renewed after the image of God.”

For the Wesleys, then, salvation is not merely God's forgiveness of our sins, nor is its end simply our being rescued from hell and someday going to heaven. Even when preaching a passionate sermon on the final judgment – where perhaps it may have been easy simply to try to scare people into “getting their ticket to heaven punched” – Wesley still emphasized the idea that salvation is the Christian's journey “by faith to spotless love, to the full image of God renewed in the heart.” But what did that mean for the early Methodists? What was our original creaturely status to which human beings can be renewed?

Most fundamentally, we can answer such questions with one term: love. The Wesleys believed that the simple proclamation of 1 John, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16), was the central and controlling truth regarding God's character; accordingly, they taught that the basic purpose of human life was to represent (re-present) and reflect God's love within the realm of creation. Consider for example John's rhetoric in his sermon “The Image of God,” where he wrote that, in the beginning,

man's affections were rational, even, and regular – if we may be allowed to [use the plural term] ‘affections’, for properly speaking he had only one [affection]: man was what God is, Love. Love filled the whole expansion of his soul; it possessed him without a rival. Every movement of his heart was love: it knew no other fervor.

It is not difficult to suspect this sermon of overstating the case for original human perfection, even if we are thinking not of absolute perfection but simply in terms of the perfection of love. There is really nothing in Genesis to encourage such strong, unqualified descriptions of humanity in the beginning – that from the very outset humanity was what God is: purely love. It would be better, I suggest, to interpret John Wesley's description of Adam and Eve in Eden as more the ideal to which humanity is called rather than as a perfection from which humanity has fallen. But even putting it that way is probably too strong. In traditional Christian teaching, the ideal for humanity is really never identified with Adam but with Jesus; in the words of Paul, Adam is but “a type of the one who was to come” (Rom. 5:14). In Jesus Christ we confess and believe that true human nature is unveiled; Jesus is the “last Adam,” the ultimate revelation of human existence as intended by God (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45-47). We are led to confess that “God is love” not by the life of Adam in Genesis, but by the self-giving life of Jesus who “laid down his life for us” (1 Jn 3:16). There is precious little in Genesis that would even begin to suggest such love in the lives of our earliest parents.

Nonetheless, we acknowledge that the Wesleys tended to describe humanity in grandiose imagery:

Love was [the human's] vital heat; it was the genial warmth that animated his whole frame. And the flame of [love] was continually streaming forth, directly to him from whom it came [i.e., God], and by reflection [from the human] to all sensitive natures,

inasmuch as they too were [God's] offspring, but especially to those superior beings who bore not only the superscription, but likewise the image of their Creator.

Even if we do in fact question such exuberant speculations about the perfections of Adam – and again, I believe we should – we can still appreciate that in this description we uncover a fundamental point in a Wesleyan theological anthropology. God is love, and human beings are created by God to be creatures from whom “the flame of [divine love] was continually streaming forth” – streaming back to God, its Source, and thus also inevitably streaming forth also to all that God has created, including and especially all of our fellow human beings who bear “the image of their Creator.” But note that John assumes that this divine love is intended by its Source to “stream forth . . . by reflection” from human beings “to all sensitive natures” – by which he clearly means all animals who experience any measure of pleasure or pain – “inasmuch as they too were [God's] offspring.” It is worth noting that Wesley here described non-human creatures as the “offspring” of God! That is intriguing language, but the main point for now is that the Wesleys offer us a remarkable description of God's intention for human beings: we are created to reflect or ‘image’ God's love back to God, to all fellow human beings, and even beyond humans to “all sensitive natures.” This, for the Wesleys, is what it means to be truly and faithfully human.

It comes as no surprise, then, that in his very early sermon “The Circumcision of the Heart” (1733) John Wesley preached to his Oxford listeners that holiness is “being so ‘renewed in the image of our mind’ as to be ‘perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect’.” It may be instructive to note the immediate context of these words of Jesus directed to his disciples, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). Jesus has just observed that whereas human beings tend to love those who love them back, God loves all – the good and the evil, the just and the unjust. Jesus appeals to the evidence of nature to substantiate his message that God loves all people unconditionally: the blessings of sunshine and rain flow indiscriminately to everyone. Likewise, Jesus's disciples are called to love not only their neighbors but also their enemies – and this is precisely the substance of what it means to “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” It is the perfection of divine love.

There is one other important consideration that will help to round out our discussion of the Wesleys' understanding of humanity created in God's image. In his sermon “The New Birth” (1760) John Wesley, under the influence of ideas derived from the famous hymnist Isaac Watts, suggested that the concept of the image of God could be analyzed under three different aspects or expressions: the natural, the political, and the moral. Under the category of the natural image, we find Wesley describing humanity as “a picture of [God's] own immortality, a spiritual being endowed with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections.” The natural image, then, refers to the capacities that we identify as more or less unique to human creatures, which tend to distinguish us from the other species. John further identifies these capacities as abstract and comparative thought; the power of willing, i.e., of being aware of the desires and drives that move us; and liberty, or the capacity for responsible choice when presented with meaningful

options, particularly between good and evil. It is noteworthy that, as he grew older, he became less willing to draw a bold line between humans and other animals of higher intelligence in regards to such capacities as these. Even so, for Wesley the “natural image” generally meant those relatively unique capacities which tend to distinguish us humans from the rest of our fellow living creatures.

It may be mildly surprising that by the political image John Wesley did not mean that humans are political animals in the way we often use that phrase. Rather, it has to do with the human calling and function to exercise godly rule among all of the rest of God’s creatures. The political image refers to the human as created and called by God to be “the governor of this lower world,” reflecting most particularly the language of Genesis 1:26 (“have dominion”) and Psalm 8:6 (“all things under humanity’s feet”). In his classic sermon “The General Deliverance,” Wesley wrote that the human is created to be God’s “representative upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world.” Thus, it is specifically as the political image that we humans are called to be, in Wesley’s words, “the channel of conveyance” between the Creator and all other creatures so that “all the blessings of God” should “flow through [us]” to the other creatures. “Thus,” writes contemporary Methodist theologian Theodore Runyon, “humanity is the image of God insofar as the benevolence of God is reflected in human actions toward the rest of creation. This role as steward and caretaker of creation presupposes a continuing faithfulness to the order of the Creator.”

Both of these aspects of the image of God – the natural and the political – bear important implications for my present argument. Thus far, admittedly, we have concerned ourselves primarily with the moral image: humanity’s God-given and God-graced potential for godliness, or godlikeness, as revealed in Jesus Christ. This should not be surprising, though, since for the Wesleys the most important dimension of the image of God that is restored through Christ is the moral. “‘God is love’; . . . In this image of God was man made,” Wesley preached. Presumably, however, these three aspects of the image of God are not airtight; surely we may anticipate, for example, that a restoration of the human being toward wholehearted love for God and neighbor (the “moral”) will have immediate ramifications for how such a restored person lives in relation to the more-than-human world of material creation (the “political”). In other words, if the moral image is essentially divine love, and if human beings can be restored or renewed in that love through Jesus Christ, then such a life of love must necessarily find expression in actual, practical, everyday relationships with all other creatures. Put even more simply, the life of holiness must include careful reflection (a capacity associated with the “natural”) upon questions of how we may most effectively reflect the love of God to all of creation – and to every one of God’s creatures.



## The Image of God in Genesis 1

But why “every one of God’s creatures”? Is there scriptural warrant for this claim? My argument is that in fact the claim is rooted precisely in Genesis 1, and so within the context of our considerations of what it means to be made in the image of God. In other words, the Wesley brothers do provide us the beginnings of an ecological theology. Indeed, my project is simply to root their reading of humanity in the image of God more deeply in the earthiness of Genesis 1. One of the immediate benefits of this strategy is that it should help to keep our ideas about humanity as God’s image enmeshed with the reality that is described in the opening of our Bible: this world in which we live. As we have already noted, too often the common assumption regarding Christianity is that it is not about this earth upon which we live and upon which we depend, nor about the atmosphere above us from which we receive our breath and our warmth. And yet, of course, that is precisely what “the heavens and the earth” of Genesis 1:1 are. Our Scriptures – thanks to the Jewish tradition’s ancient, divinely-guided wisdom – begin not in some other world, some far-off spiritual realm of angels and demons, but with the creation of this material world of trees and seas, of light and night, moon and monsoon, fish and fowl, whales and quails. Further, the Creator repeatedly offers a highly positive evaluation of what is coming into being: “God saw that it was good.” Indeed, that little stanza is announced six times before human beings have even made their first appearance in the story. God sees that creation is good prior to – and thus quite apart from – the creation of adam, humankind.

It is also critical to note that in Genesis 1, God speaks to nonhuman creatures before there are any human beings at all. “God blessed [the creatures of sky and sea, including the sea monsters], saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth’” (v. 22). All of God’s creatures are blessed by their Creator to thrive, to produce generations of offspring far beyond themselves. We should recall, too, that the creation of adam is on the sixth day – along with the other land animals. We do not even have a day for ourselves! We are *adam* from the *adamah* – earthlings, we might say, from the earth. We are creatures of the land, finite and frail.

Nonetheless, in the creation of humanity we do encounter a new style of divine discourse. It is no longer “Let there be” or even “Let the earth bring forth.” It is, instead, “Let us make humankind [*adam*] in our image, according to our likeness” (1:26). We encounter perhaps a more careful, a more self-reflective act on God’s part. Further, we encounter the somewhat baffling plural pronouns in God’s self-reflective activity. What do we make of the “Let us”?

It is true that the Hebrew term *elohim* translated as “God” is plural in form, such that it can, in literal terms, be translated “gods.” (Indeed, it often is so translated at times in the Old Testament, including, perhaps most significantly, in Psalm 8:5.) But the verbs are all singular, as are most of the other divine pronouns throughout the chapter. Further, Israel’s confession that God is One is a treasured inheritance of the Church (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:32). It seems, however, of potential significance that it is precisely here in the creation narrative, when its subject is the

creation of *adam* as male and female in the image of God, that we encounter “Let us” and “in our image.”

While it would be hasty and unwise to assume a full-blown Trinitarian teaching in these verses, we might nonetheless venture in that direction. We could at least say that the text seems to gesture toward some kind of sociality in God’s being, vague and unformed as that gesture might be. God is One, and yet God may also speak forth in a “plural” voice. Again, given that God creates the *adam* as a singular reality (“human”) and yet also a plural reality (“male and female”), we find the tantalizing possibility that it is somehow in our human plurality and diversity that we are created and called upon to “image” or reflect God. Human community is, in some way and to some extent, intended by God to represent (or “re-present”) God within the creaturely realm.

We can assume with great confidence that the prologue to the gospel of John (1:1-18) overtly offers a reading of Genesis 1 that contributes to this discussion. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” – or, more precisely, “and what God was, the Word was.” God is the Creator, to be sure, but “all things came into being through [the Word], and without [the Word] not one thing came into being” (Jn. 1:3). This Word is not a human being until the point in history of the incarnation: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us” (1:14). When much later in this same gospel the Word that become flesh prays, “Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed” (17:5), it becomes obvious that John’s gospel directs its readers to read the language of Genesis 1:26, “Let us make *adam* in our image, according to our likeness,” as a kind of ‘conversation’ between God and the Word.

For us who confess and believe that the Word became flesh and lived among us in the historical person of Jesus, then, the life and mission of Jesus become of critical importance for how we interpret Genesis 1. If the speech God employed in the labor of creation has become a human being in the miracle of incarnation, then that divine speech, as well as its creative intention, must be heard through the gospel of Jesus Christ. This intimate, loving and revealing relationship between God and the Word, or between the Father and the Son, is proclaimed in John’s gospel to be the basis and ground for restored human community. This in turn reinforces the earlier suggestion that humanity as “male and female,” i.e., as plural, social and relational, is created to function as God’s image. Jesus’s high priestly prayer in John 17 certainly inspires such a notion. “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us . . . They glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, so that they may become completely one” (17:21-23). This “glory” God has given Jesus, a glory that Jesus in turn shares with his followers, is explicitly described as a glory “which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world” (17:24). Thus, in Jesus’s fellowship of disciples there is a kind of fulfillment of the intentions stated in Genesis 1:26; the “Let us” of Genesis is God and the Word, a relation that becomes enfleshed and realized within creation through the incarnation. The Incarnate Word, in turn, provides the

opening (“I am the door”) through which humans may return to the kind of divinely constituted communion for which we were, and are, created.

We ought to – we must – bring this Christological principle with us when we read the language of Genesis 1 in its description of the human vocation. “Be fruitful and multiply” – and we immediately should recall that this same command had already been issued to all of the other creatures in God’s good world. Hence we may readily assume that our human multiplying ought not to be accomplished at the expense of all the other creatures to whom God has already spoken the same Word. Further, that same Word became flesh and lived among us as a servant, washing his disciples’ feet and even laying down his life for them (1 Jn. 3:16). If my argument is right, Jesus’s life provides the model for the restored human community’s life together in the world amongst all of God’s creatures. We are to replenish ourselves, and care for all human children, in ways that bespeak humble, self-giving love for all of the rest of God’s beloved creatures on the land, and in the waters and the sky as well – and not at their expense.

Granted, the language of Genesis 1 is strong: “fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over” all the nonhuman creatures (v. 28). The Hebrew term generally translated as “dominion” (*rada*) does suggest a kind of “treading” or “trampling” upon these other creatures. However, if we take seriously our Christological lens for interpreting Genesis 1, we cannot run amok with the rhetoric of *rada*. If the Creator we are to image has been revealed in Jesus, presumably we are called to live gently and peaceably upon the earth. Indeed, the term “dominion,” from the Latin *dominus* or “lord,” itself takes on radically new meanings when the lord in question is Jesus of Nazareth.

We can certainly continue to take seriously the fact that the language has a certain kind of vigor to it. Even when we understand human “dominion” Christologically, there is something about the term that realistically recognizes that there are elements in creation that call for real struggle. We humans have to work hard to make a home in this world – but we are also called upon by God to the same kind of hard work, utilizing all our intellectual and creative gifts, to ensure that all of God’s beloved creatures have a home, an environment conducive to life. We build dwellings, cities, dams, dikes; we establish animal and land preserves; we labor to protect and nourish the diversity of animal species; we consider dietary issues; we seek alternative modes of energy and agriculture; we recycle; and the list goes on. Obviously we do not all devote our energies to such activities, and obviously some of these activities at times work at cross-purposes with others, even in our best intentions. It is difficult work. It requires serious thought and exertion. The fact that we can exercise our minds and wills in these ways is, for Wesley, a direct expression of the “natural image.”

## Renewal in “the Whole Image of God”

But do we human beings possess the collective will necessary to act redemptively in behalf of God’s creation, of which we are inextricably a part? We acknowledged at the outset that the Christian doctrine of sin would tend strongly to reply in the negative. This is why Wesley’s insisting that all true religion is concerned with humanity’s renewal of the image of God is so critical. In a second sermon entitled “What is Man?” (1788) Wesley proclaimed that through active faith in Jesus Christ human beings may be renewed and restored “into the whole image of God. And being restored both to the favour and image of God, thou shalt know, love, and serve [God] to all eternity.” This is the true end of all human beings, the fundamental reason that “[y]our life is continued to you upon earth.”

Whatever Wesley may have meant when he wrote about being restored “into the whole image of God,” it surely does include the human role of representing the Creator, in conscious and intentional ways, within creation. In other words, it includes what he meant by the political image. It falls to us human beings to exercise this sort of power – and to be increasingly conscious that we do so. We might say that both the natural image and the political image are “givens”; we cannot avoid our human capacities for knowledge about the world and the power to alter it (the “natural”), nor can we shy away from the brute fact that this knowledge and this power exercise inestimable effects upon ourselves, other creatures and our planet as a whole (the “political”). So much depends upon what we human beings choose to do, collectively speaking, with the power entrusted by the Creator to us.

This is why we desperately need the transforming grace of God in Jesus Christ. To be restored “into the whole image of God” most particularly demands our renewal in what Wesley called the moral image, embodied perfectly in Jesus Christ. This is also why Wesley, in the conclusion of “The General Deliverance,” could hope that his preaching might “encourage us to imitate [God] whose mercy is over all his works,” that it might “soften our hearts” toward all of God’s creatures, that it might “enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures to reflect that . . . not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven.” It is safe to assume Wesley believed that softened and enlarged hearts would lead inevitably to concrete acts of compassion and love for the nonhuman world. To imitate the compassion of God for all of God’s creation is, in essence, what is implied in the political image when the human being is renewed in the moral image of God through Jesus Christ. This renewal issues in a sobering call to responsibility for the well-being of the more-than-human world, to the extent that human beings may collectively discern what actions we can and must take in order to “imitate [God] whose mercy is over all [God’s] works.”

## **Response**

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It is my honor to response to Dr. Michael Lodahl's paper entitled, "Renewal in Love: Living Holy Lives in God's Good Creation." I believe theology is a consequence of revivals and awakenings, thus, renewal movements in general encompass every area of Christian body spanning from orthodoxy to reformed, early Methodism to holiness Wesleyanism, and classical Pentecostalism to independent/indigenous Global South Christianity around the globe. Having seen, studied, and visited several thousand denominations around the world, Protestant churches and denominations demonstrate not only cross-traditional lines, but also cross-denominational flavors as well. One of the significant factors of global Christian growth is from Evangelical, Wesleyan, holiness and Methodist movement worldwide.

Strong merit of Wesleyan evangelicalism is actually shown in rationalistic empiricism, in which evangelical praxis makes a good balance of soteriological implication of Wesleyan perfectionism, where holiness and perfection in love may have havens of theological and ethical practices properly applied in lives of Christian believers. As the decline of primitive Methodist spirit appeared apparent in the Global North, Evangelical Wesleyan theological metaphor of which Dr. Lodahl argues in his paper, clearly touches a profound ground of the Word of God yet we can have a journey together with him in his paper to observe incrementally rich resources of holiness tradition of Wesleyanism, heartening our hearts and heads together as systematic theology and practical theology are combined.

### **Origins of Wesleyan Evangelical Awakening**

Before giving my response in which I have to deal with several key issues which Dr. Lodahl addressed in his paper, it is important to first go over the historical background of the growth of Wesleyan movements worldwide. The beginning of the Methodist movements in Britain and British America had grown from religious tensions and conflicts between the conformist Church, the Church of England that provoked them to yearn for spiritual hunger and longing for spiritual awakening, revival and renewal. The spiritual awakening by outpouring of the Holy Spirit led John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards to new dimensions on theological discourses and new born dissent groups in transatlantic regions.

Before the birth of Methodist movement by Wesley brothers and George Whitefield, some groups within the Church of England already had modest fashions of Pietistic religious

societies, such as a upper class and devout groups who paved a way of the early Methodist movement. As early as in 1718, a short-lived revival took place in Lakenheath in Suffolk, England, and it was followed by a more succeeding revival in Wales, later on, the Evangelical revivals and awakenings swept over in the British Isles and British America. In vivid interaction between transatlantic continents, the Evangelical revivals and Great Awakening, particularly through influence of Jonathan Edwards and Wesley brothers, the wildfire of revivals predisposed in Wales and Scotland in 1740. It is obvious that the early Methodists as one of dissent groups in Great Britain had grown extensively from 1772, because itinerant preachers and circuit riders boosted Methodist Bible classes and small group meetings.

They broadly fascinated the artisan groups who were lower class people, of whom most of them eventually upgraded to the middle class. The early Methodist leaders led a great number of dissidents, while the Church of England unwelcomed them. Along with the Wesley brothers, the early Methodists evangelized masses and common people in open areas such as the marketplace, prison cells, poor villages, and public plaza. Noticeably, the Eighteenth century Methodist revivals caused social changes as they became the second largest dissenting group next to Puritans midst the transatlantic region. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Methodist groups branched out to become different forms and denominations of holiness movements throughout the world. Due to unparalleled growth of Methodist movements, the Church of England also espoused Methodist itinerant preachers' methods and revival meetings in mid-eighteenth century.

Between the late 1840s and early 1850s, Methodist groups such as Primitive Methodists and British Methodists experienced leadership disputes even during their extensive development. Methodist membership and attendance exceeded all other nonconformist churches combined, and this occurred during the Industrial Revolution in British society. The great influence of Methodists all over Protestant denominations throughout the world caused one of serious theological topics to become that of the holiness of believers. The topic of holiness brought several other theological dogmas to light, such as repentance, regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification. Holiness denominations nurtured not only Wesleyan and holiness denominations but also classical Pentecostal denominations during the early twentieth century. At the end of the twentieth century, the Methodist denominations turned out to become the largest component of Protestant denominations in the entire world.

To celebrate and honor the birth of John Wesley more than 300 years ago, his core value of theology must be revisited as most Christian believers are influenced by the Methodist movements, whether they belong to these denominations or not. As we looked into two significant Methodist groups, one in Britain and the other in America, we can see some tendencies within the British Methodist Church that distinguished themselves from the Church of England, while American Methodist groups were established as more free forms of their movements. Randy L. Maddox reminds us about this distinction,

In Great Britain Methodists tended to align their self-understanding and practices with the dissenting churches, over against Anglicanism; in North America, with Anglican presence minimalized, Methodists were forced to articulate their self-understanding and practices over against the competition of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists.<sup>2</sup>

Having seen different versions of Wesleyan traditions throughout the world, Albert C. Outler pinpoints of one of American Wesleyan versions. He says,

The ironic outcome of stone in the arch of Wesley's own theological "system" came to be a pebble in the shoe standard-brand Methodists, even as a distorted version of Wesley's doctrine of sanctification (as "a second and separate work of grace subsequent to regeneration") was becoming a shibboleth of self-righteousness amongst a pious minority of Methodists who professed themselves holier than the rest.

According to Point Loma Nazarene University's the Faith Statement, Wesleyan family denominations are listed of "United Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal, and African Methodist Episcopal, Zion" and "the American Holiness movement (e.g., Church of the Nazarene, Wesleyan Church, Salvation Army, Free Methodist Church, and Church of God—Anderson), most Pentecostal denominations (e.g., Church of God in Christ, Foursquare Gospel Church, Church of God—Cleveland, and the Assemblies of God), and many independent evangelical churches."

### **Holiness and *Imago Dei***

As far as Methodist movements are concerned in history, there is no doubt that Wesley brothers' emphasis was the transformational holiness of believers. Dr. Lodahl's primary view in his paper demonstrates the nature of Wesleyan theology in biblical and systematic theology, and then he designates hermeneutic narratives of holiness in his descriptive and analytic study of the *imago Dei*. Along with the Wesley brothers' focal points of perfectionism and sanctification, themes spanning from the creation to the cross and even up to the second coming of Christ are mentioned. Without doubt, the core aspect of sanctification according to the Wesley brothers is the renewal of human beings into the *imago Dei*.

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<sup>2</sup> The author of the response left citations out of his paper [Editor].

Therefore, sanctification must be defined in detail along with the entire process of holiness. In fact, the process of sanctification interrelates with issues of the imago Dei of human being and various ministries of Holy Trinity. Therefore Lodahl draws our attention to the relational dimension of renewal of humanity to the image of God, and as seen in his paper, the centrality of holiness is expressed in the renewal in love. Furthermore, his creative mega-narrative on holiness of believers leads our awareness to first the imago Dei (Image of God), that we are created according to the image and likeness of God. Not only according to Wesleyan theologians but also other reformed theologians recognize the imago Dei as relational, all the way from the Garden of Eden. Rightmire states fourfold relational dimensions of the imago Dei, “The primary relation constituting the imago Dei is humanity’s relation to God, in the sense that a person’s right relation to others, the earth, and self is dependent on a right relation to God.”

First of all, Adam’s fall at the Garden of Eden caused us to lose the imago Dei. According to John Wesley’s sermon, “The effect of disobedience is cumulative and corrosive. Bit by bit the divine image disintegrates, and Satan stamps his own image in its place, so that man now bears of a family to him that to God.” Jesus Christ as the second Adam came to the world to restore the imago Dei. Eventually the renewal of humanity to imitate Jesus Christ brings all believers can be accomplished into Christlikeness of the imago Dei through the work of the Spirit of God. Hence, the colossal function of redemption must be understood in the context of restoring humanity to the image of God. Rightmire pinpoints;

The total process of salvation from its beginning in the new birth, its “perfection in love” at entire sanctification, and its progressive development toward final glorification has as its objective the restoring of humanity to its original destiny.

The imago Dei in the likeness and image of Jesus Christ offers the best model of holy life for all believers in Christ Jesus, our Savior and the Lord.

### **Perfection in Love and *Imago Dei***

In the words of John Wesley, perfect love implies to him the sanctified life, in other words, holy life, and “holiness of heart and life.” It is also critical to remember the work of the Holy Spirit in the process of sanctification, that the renewal of the image of God is obtainable through the grace of God by “the atoning work of Jesus Christ and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit” unto our living God. (2 Cor. 5:18-21) According to the “Our Wesleyan Tradition” of Point Loma Nazarene University states,

To talk about prevenient grace is another way of saying that the Holy Spirit perpetually convicts us of our sin, reveals to us God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness, calls us to repentance, and gives us the ability to offer ourselves in confession and obedience to



God. In this way we are empowered by the gracious presence of God to respond by faith in repentance and obedience to the call of God for our salvation.

The way of salvation teaching and preaching in which the early Methodists practiced in meetings such as societies, bands, classes, provided a spiritual awakening that “sinners became aware of God’s prevenient grace working in their lives, the class meeting helped people come to faith in Jesus Christ and receive the forgiveness of their sins, and the band meeting was intended to help those who had already experienced the new birth to grow in holiness through God’s sanctifying grace.” Rightmire emphasizes to distinguish between ethical perfection and perfection in love. (Gal. 5:6; Mt 22:37-39; Mk 12:30-31; Lk 10:27)

In summary, the matter of love is the absolute love of God. At the same time, this love is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. As a consequence of perfection in love, it can accomplish all of the law, not only in true relation to our God but also to others in the world. As Wynkoop indicates, “Perfection of love, Wesley’s favored term, cannot be pooled up into a mystical “love for God” which goes nowhere except to get stirred up into an emotional flurry once in a while.” A practical manner by John Wesley’s encouragement to delineate a method for the Methodists was to “unite together to encourage and help each other in that they may help each other to work out their salvation’ and for that end watch over one another in love.”

It is important to notice that the Wesley brothers’ redemptive ministry of God in human beings comprised of “regeneration, entire sanctification, and growth in grace.” Wesley encouraged the start of a so-called structure where we “watch over one another in love” through small group meetings, classes, bands, societies, and open-air evangelism. However, Kevin M. Watson expresses his grief that “the United Methodist Church has almost entirely abandoned the original Methodist structure for making disciples of Jesus Christ.” The structure wherein Wesley brothers established was to encourage the early Methodists to grow in the “Christian life and it enabled Christians to participate in their own salvation.” Loving one another in Christian growth fulfills a true aspect of Christlikeness of the *imago Dei* for believers in Jesus Christ.

### **Prevenient Grace and *Imago Dei***

As described by Dr. Lodahl, the restoration of the *Imago Dei* as renewal for believers’ sanctification process requires us to recognize that the core redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ is to give an opportunity for human beings to be renewed according to the *Imago Dei* of Jesus, all because Jesus Christ is the image of God Himself. His excellent theological discourse intrigues us to focus on the essence of the *imago Dei* from the state of the first Adam, to Jesus Christ, and to believers’ holiness to be restored in the very likeness of Jesus Christ, Christlikeness. Kenneth E. Geiger indicates that the Spirit of God works as the “divine agent in the communication of the divine nature to man.” Likewise the Holy Trinity works during the entire process of

sanctification. Lodahl then raises a question whether the Image of God is to be a function or vocation.

However, I have become convinced by contemporary biblical scholarship that the essence of this idea that we are created in God's image, or that we are created to 'image' God, is a function, or vocation, to which we are called. That function is the human role and responsibility to protect and to nurture the world's well-being, fruitfulness and beauty, in the great hope that God's good creation may enjoy a viable, even rich, future. This idea lies at the very heart of my reflections today.

One deep theological concern is the total depravity of sinfulness in human nature, particularly in regards to the Wesley brothers' standpoint explicit agreement with Calvinism as well, in which "human beings have distorted, marred, or perhaps even entirely effaced this image through our resistance against our Maker," due to the fall and sin although we were originally created according to the image of God. As far as the function or vocation of human nature being created in the imago Dei is concerned, Dr. Lodahl draws our attention to the extent of sin's effect to human nature and vocation to the imago Dei which the Wesley brothers also deeply expressed, mainly regarding the sinfulness of human being after the fall at the Garden of Eden. Thus he smoothly describes our theological pilgrimage that human beings can be restored in the imago Dei only through Jesus Christ. In this regard, renewal becomes a key issue of his theological debate. Lodahl indicates,

...the Wesleyan tradition has developed an especially robust understanding of salvation as renewal in the image of God. Further, it is clear that Colossians 3:10 – which speaks of a "new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator" – provided the Wesleys with the biblical warrant for their rhetoric of renewal. ... The recurring Wesleyan theme of sanctification as renewal in the image of God underscores this important idea that Christian redemption does not involve escape from the world, but instead a deep and enduring participation in God's good creation.

John Wesley himself states as well,

By salvation I mean, not barely deliverance from hell, or going to heaven, but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth.

Lodahl suggests that the fallenness of human beings, though created in the imago Dei requires us to experience redemptive grace in order for us to be renewed through "prayer, corporate worship, reading the Scriptures and the sacraments" which is what the Wesley brothers assert. R. David Rightmire pinpoints that the Wesleys emphasized the prevenient and indispensable grace of God, that human beings have access to pardoning salvific state with their responsive participation. The ever present prevenient grace of God was given to us even "before

we have come to faith in Christ.” Nonetheless, it is obvious that salvation is primarily a continuing process to the perfection. He draws key emphasis of the Wesley brothers salvation view not as a forever one way ticket to heaven, but that it “is the Christian’s journey “by faith to spotless love, to the full image of God renewed in the heart.”

As for the Wesleys, salvation is understood as a way of immediate permissible work of pardon, that justification can be the end-all of salvation in which in due course, transformation functions essentially in requiring the ongoing development of holiness. This is what Rightmire states regarding the doctrine of salvation by Wesley brothers, “although emphasizing progressive growth, understood the important place of instantaneous transitions in Christian life.” Therefore the first work of grace as justification and second work of grace as entire sanctification are considered both central in the process of salvation. Rightmire points out that as soon as we experience the new birth in our humanity, this process results in “gradual therapeutic transformation.” Rightmire states,

Wesley understood salvation to involve three dimensions: 1) justification/pardon – salvation begun; 2) sanctification/holiness – salvation continued; and 3) consummation/glory – salvation finished. Salvation is thus understood as deliverance 1) immediately from the penalty of sin; 2) progressively from the plague of sin; and 3) eschatologically from the very presence of sin and its effects.

Having seen the second work of prevenient grace by the atonement of Jesus Christ, all believers in Christ can be participated of the epic drama in which the redemptive work of God influences over human beings from creation to the end of the world to attain Christlikeness, the image of God in Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

### **Perfection in Love and Final point of *Imago Dei***

As a result of Wesley brothers’ viewpoint on the restoration of the *imago Dei* in human beings, if the beginning of it was in the Garden of Eden, the final stage of it in the Christian faith must be focused on the renewal of our hearts into the image of God through the work of Jesus Christ. What can be a means of being made into the *imago Dei*? Obviously as Dr. Lodahl quotes Wesley brothers, the primary element is ‘love’ as indicated in “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16) and also as in “Love filled the whole expansion of his soul” in which it is called not as absolute love, but more as love of perfection, that we have this love in the *imago Dei* from creation to the cross. Thus, love itself also requires us to love our family, society, and our neighbors. This is what Maddox emphasizes the fundamental point of John Wesley,

[He] believed that both Scripture and Christian tradition attested that God's loving grace can transform our lives to the point where our own love for God and others becomes a 'natural' response... To deny this possibility would be to deny the sufficiency of God's empowering grace – to make the power of sin greater than that of grace.

Jesus Christ is the second and last Adam who manifested the true love of God giving His life for us all. Therefore, Dr. Lodahl unveils the relationship between the love of God and image of God, as much as the love of God reflecting the image of God;

God is love, and human beings are created by God to be creatures from whom “the flame of [divine love] was continually streaming forth” – streaming back to God, its Source, and thus also inevitably streaming forth also to all that God has created, including and especially all of our fellow human beings who bear “the image of their Creator.”

A political aspect of the image of God is expressed surprisingly by the Wesley brothers. They emphasize that the human being's function is “to exercise godly rule among all of the rest of God's creatures” as human being as the governor and representative of this lower world when they are working as stewards and caretakers of God toward to the rest of creation in order to manifest “a continuing faithfulness to the order of the Creator.” In this respect human beings are called “the channel of conveyance” between all creatures and the Creator in order that every blessing of the Creator “should “flow through [us]” to the other creatures.” In addition, it is important to see that an aspect of the image of God is moral image because the Wesley brothers stressed that the image of God is re-established through Christ, making the moral perfect.

H. Orton Wiley states, “Holiness as it relates to the Father, expresses the perfection of moral excellence which in Him exists unoriginated and underived.” Dr. Lodahl elucidates that “humanity's God-given and God-graced potential for godliness, or godlikeness, as revealed in Jesus Christ.” Consequently Lodahl illustrates Gen. 1 as the *imago Dei*, the place of God's ecology in which humanity has elements of the earthiness reflecting *admah* – earthlings, that human beings are “creatures of the land, finite and frail.” He interrelates the *imago Dei* between Gen. 1-3 and Gospel of John that the image of God in the creation is seen as the word when God himself incarnated in the life of Jesus Christ. He states, “For us who confess and believe that the Word became flesh and lived among us in the historical person of Jesus, then, the life and mission of Jesus become of critical importance for how we interpret Genesis 1.” In due course, Jesus glorified the Father and the Father has given his glory to Jesus can be shared Jesus followers. In Lodahl's assumption;

Thus, in Jesus's fellowship of disciples there is a kind of fulfillment of the intentions stated in Genesis 1:26; the “Let us” of Genesis is God and the Word, a relation that becomes enfleshed and realized within creation through the incarnation. The Incarnate Word, in turn, provides the opening (“I am the door”) through which humans may return to the kind of divinely constituted communion for which we were, and are, created.

If the image of God is fully manifested in the life of Jesus, humility of Jesus must be continued in the lives of Jesus' followers as well, and that "We are to replenish ourselves, and care for all human children, in ways that bespeak humble, self-giving love for all of the rest of God's beloved creatures on the land, and in the waters and the sky as well – and not at their expense." In this part, the image of God reflects natural parts of God's creation to preserve and govern well according to His commands in Genesis chapter 1. If we are to be restored into the natural, political, and moral dimensions of the imago Dei, this actually, might well be the whole image of God's restoration. Dr. Lohahl trumpets "renewal issues in a sobering call to responsibility for the wellbeing of the more-than-human world, to the extent that human beings may collectively discern what actions we can and must take in order to "imitate [God] whose mercy is over all [God's] works."

## **Conclusion**

Lodahl's positive and classical assumption on Holiness-Evangelical Wesleyanism reminds us to theologically think about the Christlikeness of the image of God in Jesus Christ through a transformational, relational, spiritual and theological renewal process. The best praxis displayed by Jesus Christ of the prototype of imago Dei was revived in the Evangelical Awakening by Wesley brothers, and later theologized by John Wesley himself. Dr. Michael Lodahl may have had the same experience as John Wesley because a practical type of Wesleyan holiness theology may be compound within a boundary of Wesleyanism, and later may become a renewal factor for leading individual Christians to be sanctified. In my agreement with Ralph Waller, he states the influence of Wesley's renewal movement was not only by profound theological directives but also by a clear example of Christlikeness in his life all over the world.

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## Response

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The Wesleyan Church

This reflection covers the very content of the Word of God, emphasizes the very need of man, outlines the very purpose of the creation of human beings, and the imperatives on the plan of full salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. The presenter shows his sound theology, balance knowledge between anthropology and ecology in connection to Christians' engagement to the world. The following are the perceived point of emphasis:

*God created man and woman in His own image.* This reflection pointed out the very nature of God, a God of love which He wants to emanate from Him through human beings toward all His creation. Wesley Duewel wrote, “*God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have existed without beginning from all eternity in a trinity of holy love. Holy love is the greatest reality of their nature*” (1991:5).

The emphasis of salvation by grace through faith in Christ was also reiterated to bring back the depraved and defaced image of God in human beings. It was also presented clearly through John Wesley's theology that God's image in man can be restored by experiencing justification and sanctification whereby the heart will be cleansed from original sin and can be filled with the Holy Spirit and God's love by faith. This is called “*perfect love*” which synonymous with “*pure heart*” which means – *Motives laid open to the cleansing of God! False ego consumed in the perpetual fires of the Holy Ghost, and the real self, offered up in a living flame of uttermost devotion to Christ*” (Glenn Black, “Paul Rees” 2008:85).

The presenter affirmed and I agree that believers have the privilege of growing in grace, of going on to holiness of heart, of knowing that all sin has been purged, cleansed, washed away by the blood of Christ. It is also important to note what the presenter's emphasis by quoting John Wesley's “*Means of Grace*” needed for believers to have their “*hearts renewed after the image of God*” such as prayer, corporate worship, reading of Scriptures and the sacraments.

*God created man and woman in His own image for a purpose.* I agree with the presenter's heart of idea in his reflection “*that the essence ... we are created in God's image, or that we are created to 'image' God, is a function, or vocation, to which we are called*”. In connection to the *renewal of God's image* through the renewing grace of God, it was emphasized by quoting Wesley's theology that holy men *are not to escape from the world, but instead a deep and enduring participation in God's good creation.* It was mentioned about the call, to make this world more *fruitful and beautiful.*

It was brought out the concept about the image of God in human that could be analysed under three different expressions: *the natural, the political, and the moral.* He quoted the idea of



Wesley that the “natural image” generally meant those relatively unique capacities which tend to distinguish us humans from the rest of our fellow living creatures. The “political image” refers to the human as created and called by God to be “the governor of this lower world”. The “moral image”: humanities God-given and God-graced potential for godliness, or godlikeness. I strongly agree with the idea that holiness is in relation to the world where we are in or with the communities where we belong. Dag Hammarskjold said, *“The road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action”* (Jo Anne Lyon, “The Ultimate Blessing”, 2003:65).

The explanation of Dr. Lodahl about the whole creation as a part of God’s image which he says that it was mentioned six times in the very opening chapter of the Bible is very important to note. Considering this reflection, it is a reality that the created world is not innately evil because it was affirmed that *“it was good”*. Bonhoeffer wrote, *“In Jesus Christ the reality of God has entered into the reality of the world. Partaking in Christ, we stand at the same time in the reality of God and in the reality of the world.”* (Metaxas, 2010:469). He further posited, *“God’s action is invisible to the world – but the action of community is visible”* (Lyon, 2003:31). This means that God expects Christians to care, to connect and to engage with the world where they are in.

In the concluding part of this reflection the emphasis of Wesley was clearly noted that *“...through active faith in Jesus Christ human beings may be renewed and restored into the whole image of God. And being restored both to the favour and image of God, thou shalt know, love and serve (God) to all eternity”*. This is very important in Wesleyan theology and I would like to affirm such truth. In conformity to this idea, the following steps are deemed necessary in the part of human beings in reaching such state, *“renewed and restored into the whole image of God”*:

1. The need be born again by confession and asking forgiveness of sins committed and asking Christ to enter the heart by faith (I John 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 5:1; I John 5:12).
2. The need to be sanctified so that the work of the Holy Spirit in cleansing, purging, refining the mind and heart from the nature which is unlike Christ, occurs in a moment of time by faith (Rom.12:1-2; I Thess.4:3,7; 5:23; Heb.12:14).
3. The need be filled with the Holy Spirit that will give power to witness, to love and to reflect God’s image or re-present Christ to the world (Acts 1:8; Phil.1:9; 1 Thess.3:12).
4. The need to be consecrated, committed, total surrender to His will and to grow into Christlikeness as evidenced in a life of perfect love toward God, man, and creation (Matt.22:35-37; I John 4:12,17-18).

*“It’s the work of the Holy Spirit to teach us and to bring a keen sense of need to our hearts”*. (Caldwell, 1991:31).

John Wesley's theology has connections with the community which he was in and gave transformation to his country and extended to the known world. He was an evangelist and also a reformer as seen in many ways:

*He was an early opponent of slavery, calling for its abolition in a day when few seemed concern. He took up the cause of the poor, creating interest-free loans, free medical services, and a jobs program that was far ahead of its time. He advised prison wardens not to abuse and brutal to prisoners. He fight against distilleries who make wines and elevated the role of women* (Black & Drury, "The Story of the Wesleyan Church", 2012:18).

Summing up the totality of Dr. Lodahl's reflection, a challenge sparked my heart to go back to the DNA of Wesleyans, "*There must be a clear association of God's sovereignty with man's responsibility*" (Wood, 1967:150), to work hard for a better world. Adonis Gorospe wrote, "*If we want to believe we can build a better world, we must stand by the needy, against the cruelty in our locality. For it is only by standing by the needy, with integrity (emphasis mine: with holiness), against the cruelty in our locality, that any of us will have reason to believe we can build a better world*" ("The Church and Poverty in Asia" 2008:227). Finally, Billy Graham once told a Wesleyan congregation, "*In your message, you have what the world needs. You just need to do more to get that message out.*" *Now and ever!* (Black & Drury, 2012:282).

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## Humanity in God's Image and the Future of Creation:

### A Critical Retrieval of John Wesley's 'The General Spread of the Gospel'

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*The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*  
(Isaiah 11:9)

That is the biblical text John Wesley chose for the sermon I intend to revisit and re-read with you today, "The General Spread of the Gospel." It is a text brimming with eschatological hope, plucked from an Isaian passage that prophesies about "the root of Jesse" who shall bring about peace, justice, righteousness, faithfulness throughout God's creation – and we are left to wonder what it would take to have such a world, to live in such a world, as this one the prophet envisions. It certainly calls for great *hope* – specifically, a hope in God's good intention (in the poetic words of his brother Charles) to "new-create a World of Grace in all the Image of Thy Love."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, Wesley's sermon does not begin in hope; indeed, he opens by lamenting, "In what a condition is the world at present!" "The world at present" was the world as Wesley, by now the 80 year-old leader of the Methodist movement, knew it in the spring of 1783. Rather than the knowledge of God, it was (in his words) "darkness, intellectual darkness, ignorance, with vice and misery attendant upon it"<sup>2</sup> that covered the face of the earth.

Drawing upon the book *Enquiries touching the Diversities of Languages and Religions Through the Chief Parts of the Earth* by early 17<sup>th</sup>-century mathematician, logician, and astronomer Edward Brerewood, Wesley was dismayed to learn that at the time of his writing the book, Brerewood estimated that about 17 percent of the world's population were of Christian faith, while roughly 20 percent were Muslim. Everyone else, in Brerewood's accounting, were lumped into the category of "heathen," including even Jews, presumably.

I trust that it will be no great shock if I suggest that we must improve upon Wesley's mode of reflection regarding the variety of religious peoples and traditions on planet Earth. Certainly on this matter he is no model for us. There is no question that his caricatures of the "heathens" ("more savage than lions"), "Mahometans" ("as void of mercy as lions and tigers"),

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Wesley, "Hymns . . ."

<sup>2</sup> John Wesley, "The General . . ."

Orthodox Christianity under Islamic political rule (“total, stupid, barbarous irreligion”)<sup>3</sup> and even Roman Catholics are deeply infected by 18<sup>th</sup>-century British, white, colonial assumptions. I suppose in his mild defense, we may observe that Protestants don’t fare much better under Wesley’s perfectionist scrutiny. “Such is the present state of humanity,” he proclaims, “in all parts of the world! But how astonishing is this, if there is a God in heaven! . . . Surely this is one of the greatest mysteries under heaven!”<sup>4</sup>

Wesley here struggles with the world’s stubborn refusal to be a utopia, the stark facticity of its unanswered questions and unfulfilled hopes – to say nothing of the stark struggle of its creatures to live through hunger, sickness, predation, natural disaster and human violence. This is surely no less true of our world than it was of Wesley’s. The world was then, and is now, full of heartache and mystery, suffering and anguish – the traditional teaching on divine providence left hanging, subject to radical doubt. And Wesley is willing to go there, at least for a moment: “How is it possible to reconcile this with either the wisdom or the goodness of God?”<sup>5</sup> That is a good question.

But one may suspect that Wesley is unwilling to entertain it very seriously, or at least for very long, in this sermon. What gives ease to his “thoughtful mind under so melancholy a prospect? What but the consideration that things will not always be so; that another scene will soon be opened?”<sup>6</sup> Wesley longingly appeals to the eschatological vision – the hopeful yearning for a new world, a less troubled and troublesome world, a world in which faith in God is not problematized by ambiguity or diversity or pain, and in which theological difference is overcome by a universally self-evident knowledge of God. He proclaims that God “will arise and maintain his own cause,” such that “the loving knowledge of God, producing uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness, shall cover the earth, shall fill every human soul.”<sup>7</sup> This is indeed a vision of hope!

But Wesley imagines the response: “‘Impossible!’ some will say. ‘Indeed, the greatest of all impossibilities, that we should see a Christian world! Or for that matter, a Christian nation, or city!’”<sup>8</sup> The passage of two and a quarter centuries only adds greater weight to his imaginary interlocutors’ objection. But Wesley’s initial response is pertinent regardless of the passage of time; he replies,

On one supposition, indeed, not only all impossibility but all difficulty vanishes away. Only suppose the Almighty to act *irresistibly*, and the thing is done; yea, with just the same ease as when ‘God said, Let there be light; and there was light.’<sup>9</sup>

It may be significant that in this one place Wesley uses the traditional term “the Almighty” to refer to God. If “the Almighty” were to become fully manifest as “Almighty,” “to act

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

*irresistibly*,” then the perfect state of affairs presumably could be ushered in – in the blink of an eye, “just like that.” The eschatological dream once more has quickly asserted itself. Wesley compares such power to thoroughly redeem the world with the power of creation, the power of calling light itself to be – that is, the might of the Almighty. What is fascinating, though, is that while Wesley briefly mentions this “supposition” of an irresistible act of God, he seems to do so only to dismiss it immediately:

But then man would be man no longer; his inmost nature would be changed. He would no longer be a moral agent, any more than the sun or the wind, as he would no longer be endued with liberty, a power of choosing or self-determination. Consequently he would no longer be capable of virtue or vice, of reward or punishment.<sup>10</sup>

Given this immediate dismissal of apocalyptic might, why did Wesley even mention it? Presumably because of its enduring fascination, its widespread appeal, its popularity among many of his presumed audience; perhaps Wesley felt himself drawn to its scenario even as he deemed this scenario to be theologically unacceptable. Indeed, anthropologically unacceptable: for then the human being would be human no longer; “our inmost nature,” he observed, “would be changed.”

In terms of this conference’s theme, we might state it this way: If God truly has created human beings to function as the divine image in the world, i.e., to “image” or reflect God’s character within creation, *and* if an important aspect of that function is the human capacity for moral agency, do we have good reason to expect our Creator to rescind this vocation for humanity? Do we not believe with Paul that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29)? As Drew theologian Catherine Keller has commented upon Wesley’s quandary, “If God ultimately overpowers the creation, even for the sake of the creatures’ own ‘restoration,’ would this not violate the human creature’s freedom to ‘react upon’ grace, either resisting or embracing it? . . . Yet, despite his synergism, Wesley seems to have presumed such a final, monergistic, consummation.”<sup>11</sup>

And that is so. Yet we should appreciate that, in the sermon under consideration, Wesley in the space of a few sentences dismisses the sort of presuppositions about divine power that generally dominate typical eschatological expectations. For Wesley such an irresistible act of God would be a betrayal of creation, an undoing of the divine purpose in creating creatures of agency to begin with. This is reminiscent of Irenaeus, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century pastor-theologian who wrote that God redeems us “by persuasion, as it is fitting for God to receive what [God] wishes by gentleness and not by force. So neither was the

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 488-489.

<sup>11</sup> Catherine Keller, “Salvation Flows: Eschatology for a Feminist Wesleyanism,” *Quarterly Review* Vol. 23, No. 4 (Winter 2003), 416. Her citation of the phrase “react upon” comes from Wesley’s sermon “The Great Privilege of Those Who are Born of God,” where he speaks of grace as “a continual action of God upon the soul” and the human response of gratitude, obedience and prayer as “the re-action of the soul upon God.”

standard of what is just infringed, nor did the ancient creation of God perish”<sup>12</sup> in God’s redeeming labor in Jesus Christ. To put it simply by splicing Irenaeus with Wesley, were “the Almighty to act *irresistibly*” then in fact “the ancient creation of God [would] perish.” God’s creation would “perish” because it would no longer exercise an existence distinct from its Creator; it would be utterly absorbed by divine power. This would be a tragic reversal of God’s purposes, an undoing of the creative Word, “*Let there be . . .*” More specifically, the “ancient creation” of human beings as the image of God would “perish” because their agency, and thus their responsibility before God and one another, would be entirely annulled.

Wesley proceeds to call an eschatological expectation of irresistible divine power such as this a “clumsy way of cutting the knot which we are not able to untie.”<sup>13</sup> The knot to which Wesley here alludes is created by the tightly interlaced threads of human identity and destiny, human agency and responsibility, inescapably complex as those are, interwoven always already also with divine presence, purpose and power: the very mystery of divine providence. We cannot untie the knot of divine power and human agency. We may, however, loosen the knot a bit if we understand divine power primarily, /and fundamentally, as the *empowering* of the creature. This is not an *overpowering* that would render the creature (human or otherwise) incapable of living, moving and having actual being – and thus lacking integrity. Rather, divine power is a subtle yet real *sharing* of power, of being, with the creature. I maintain that this notion of divine power not only coheres with the invitational “*Let there be*” encountered repeatedly in Genesis 1, but also with the ultimate revelation given to us in the person, words and works of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Nonetheless, if we are unable finally to untie this knot – and good Wesleyans, it seems to me, ought not simply to be unable, but also unwilling, to untie this knot – then, as Wesley asks, “How can all [human beings] be made holy and happy while they continue *to be* [truly] human beings?”<sup>14</sup> Wesley’s question reminds me of a delightful rabbinic midrash on the story of Nehemiah, found in the Mishnah tractate entitled *Yoma* (69b):

“And they cried with a loud voice to the Lord their God” (Neh. 9:4). What did they cry? “Woe, woe, it is he who has destroyed the sanctuary, burnt the temple, killed all the righteous, driven all Israel into exile, and is still dancing around among us.

This “he” is the *yetzer hara*, often translated “the evil impulse” in rabbinic anthropology, but might be better understood as the *elan vital* of human life. I would associate it with impulses like the thrill of competition, the sex drive, the attraction for excitement, perhaps even the sort of thing we associate with daredevil stunt artists and a crowd’s fascination for their antics. All of

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<sup>12</sup> Irenaeus

<sup>13</sup> Wesley, “General Spread,” 489.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

this, while adding great spice to life, easily veers dangerously and wildly out of control, e.g., blood lust, sexual lust, violence, etc. So the *yetzer hara* is the gift of God for human vitality but is also always threatening to overflow proper boundaries. In this passage of the Talmud, the *yetzer hara* is personified. The people of Israel continue their lament over his destructive presence in their lives:

Surely You have given him to us so that we may receive reward through [being tested by, and resisting,] him. We want neither him nor reward through him!" . . . They ordered a fast of three days and three nights (cf. Neh. 9:1), whereupon he [the *yetzer hara*] surrendered to them. He came forth from the holy of holies like a young fiery lion.

We should note that in this rabbinic reflection the *yetzer hara* is said to have come forth from the holy of holies! I assume this to be a graphic way of instructing us that this bundle of human drives, even as they threaten to explode into destructive behavior, are created by God for the good of creation and in fact exist in close company, as it were, with the Creator. This is quite intriguing.

The prophet [Nehemiah] said to them: "Cast [the *yetzer hara*] into a leaden pot, closing its opening with lead, because lead absorbs the voice," . . . They prayed for mercy and he was handed over to them. [But God] said to them: "Realize that if you kill him, the world goes down." They imprisoned him for three days, then looked in the whole land of Israel for a fresh egg and could not find one. Thereupon they said: "What shall we do now? Shall we kill him? The world would then go down. Shall we beg for half mercy? [i.e., only a half-dose of *yetzer hara*?] They do not grant halves in heaven." [So] they put out his eyes and let him go. That helped, inasmuch as he no more entices men to commit incest.<sup>15</sup>

That last line certainly is little more than wishful thinking. Nonetheless, the fundamental point of the rabbis here is that to have a world such as this one that we have – a world of love and passion, of friendship and enjoyment, of laughter and courage, and so many other wonderful modes of experience – is possible only where there are alternative, even contrary possibilities always looming: the possibilities of lust and anger, of hatred and violence, of scapegoating and racism, of abuse and hunger and even just of denial and apathy. "They do not grant halves in heaven."

Wesley was not aware, I am sure, of this rabbinic slice of narrative theology! Accordingly, he insists that "there seems to be a plain, simple way of removing this difficulty without entangling ourselves in any subtle, metaphysical disquisitions."<sup>16</sup> But, perhaps in spite of himself, Wesley has already led us into those disquisitions. Indeed, they are unavoidable. To have appealed to human nature, to agency and responsibility, as Wesley did is to have become entangled in metaphysics. And he is not finished. He proceeds immediately with what sounds

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<sup>15</sup> As cited by David Hartman, *A Living Covenant: The Innovative Spirit in Traditional Judaism* [bibliographical info missing—Editor], 214-215.

<sup>16</sup> Wesley, *Ibid.*

like a suspiciously metaphysical proposition: “As God is one, so the work of God is uniform in all ages.”<sup>17</sup>

We must interrupt Wesley mid-thought. He is about to appeal to the idea that the way God has labored in the world’s past should give us a good sense for how God shall work in the future, how God shall “soon and very soon” bring about a world “filled with knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Ponder anew this line from Wesley: “As God is one, so the work of God is uniform in all ages.” Wesley assumes a consistency, a constancy, a reliability in God’s faithful relation with – and labors within – creation. No doubt for Wesley this uniformity is due not simply to God’s unity (as he suggests) but also to God’s moral nature of sacrificial love revealed in Jesus Christ: God is love, and thus God always, everlastingly acts consistently in love. Interestingly, then, Wesley counsels us *not* to expect a radical change in the manner and mode of God’s creating and redeeming activity in the world. The pattern of divine activity that Wesley detects in human experience, “God’s general manner of working,” is one of gracious assistance, not of force. God enlightens and empowers human understanding and affections, God does not delete or undo them. This gracious synergism between God and human creatures provided Wesley with a model not simply for divine-human interaction, but for the entirety of the God-world relation. After all, “as God is One, so the work of God is uniform in all ages” – including (is it possible?) even the anticipated *age to come*? If Wesley is fundamentally correct in this theological conviction, we need only to expand considerably on his relatively limited awareness of just how many, how wide, and how vast all those “ages” actually have been in our planet’s history, to say nothing of the universe in which our infinitesimal earth-orb spins. I am convinced that this consideration does make a difference, and should make a difference; Wesley assumed a universe of 6,000 relatively uncomplicated years’ worth of history, while most of us likely assume a radically different story of the universe: approximately 15 billion years old and still evolving. God makes time – and makes a lot of it, and makes use of it.

But even from within the constraints of a radically differing cosmology, Wesley still could insist that “God’s general manner of working” is not to labor irresistibly. Here he is reminded of his favorite quotation from the sainted bishop of Hippo, “[God] who made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves”; indeed, Wesley calls it “one of the noblest [sayings] Augustine ever uttered,”<sup>18</sup> underscoring as it does Wesley’s own hard-fought synergism.

Further, this would be a rare Wesley sermon indeed if it did not include an appeal to our experience: “May we not then conceive how [God] *will* work on the souls of human beings in times to come by considering how [God] *does* work *now*? And how [God] *has* wrought in times past?”<sup>19</sup> Oddly, Wesley seems to miss the sizable problem his rhetoric has created: he began this sermon by agonizing over the present state of the world, which state presumably has at least something to do with how “God does work now” and “how God has [labored] in times past”!

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> The bibliographic information is missing here [Editor].

<sup>19</sup> p. 489.



Further, an appeal to the metaphysical proposition, “As God is one, so the work of God is uniform in all ages,” would seem to offer little assurance. The lamentable mess in which Wesley found his world would presumably be a function, more or less, of “how God has [labored] in times past.” Even if the mess is largely a result of human sin, frailty or error, the Wesleyan tradition in particular fundamentally recognizes human agency to be grounded in the “pure, unbounded love” of God. It is our infinitely loving Creator’s wisdom and will that has gifted us with this precious, yet dangerous, power.

Undaunted, Wesley continues the appeal to his audience’s Christian experience:

You know how God wrought in *your own* soul when he first enabled you to say, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He did not take away your understanding, but enlightened and strengthened it. He did not destroy any of your affections; rather, they were more vigorous than before. Least of all did he take away your liberty, your power of choosing good or evil; [God] did not *force* you; but being *assisted* by his grace you, like Mary, *chose* the better part.<sup>20</sup>

This classic depiction of Wesley’s doctrine of prevenient grace underscores the difficulty of walking the tightrope he has woven out of “the knot[s] which we are not able to untie.” If “the work of God is uniform in all ages,” and if “God’s general manner of working” is not by coercion or almighty fiat but rather by enlightening, strengthening and assisting, then Wesley has knotted a difficult tightrope indeed.

We have all undoubtedly heard of what Gordon Rupp famously called Wesley’s “optimism of grace”<sup>21</sup>; surely this sermon – indeed, this juncture in this sermon – is the epitome of such optimism. “Now in the same manner as God *has* converted so many to himself without destroying their liberty, he *can* undoubtedly convert whole nations, or the whole world. And it is as easy for him to convert a world as one individual soul.”<sup>22</sup> Why does this simply not sound intuitively true? Is it really the case that God “can undoubtedly convert whole nations, or the whole world,” without violating the structures of human existence and agency? Is there a shred of evidence for this claim of Wesley’s? If God were in fact to act in this way, would it not in fact entail the perishing of “the ancient creation of God”? Would God not deem this a failure?

I do not suppose Wesley considered such questions as these, even though in this sermon he has brought us to their brink. But his optimism of grace wins! – at least on paper. He proceeds to offer a brief and somewhat romanticized account of the beginnings and spread of the Methodist movement throughout “Great Britain and Ireland, [and] in every part of America, from south to north, wherever the word of God came with power.”<sup>23</sup> He then asks: “Is it not then highly probable that God will carry on [t]his work in the same manner as [God] has begun?”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Gordon Rupp. [This is the only bibliographic information offered here—Editor].

<sup>22</sup> Wesley, "General Spread," 490.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 492.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

He acknowledges Martin Luther's musing that "a revival of religion never lasts [more than] a generation."<sup>25</sup> but replies that the Methodist revival already has that beat and that "God has [not] wrought so glorious a work to let it sink and die away in a few years. No; I trust this is only the beginning of a far greater work – the dawn of 'the latter day glory.'"<sup>26</sup>

And thus Wesley begins to imagine how the Methodist revival would spread – "not ' . . . with observation,' but [by] silently increas[ing] wherever it is set up, and spread from heart to heart, from house to house, from town to town, from one kingdom to another" – first among the "Protestant nations in Europe," and then among the Roman Catholics, including "those countries that are [exclusively] popish," and then "gradually diffused" to the Orthodox Christians under Muslim rule.

This thorough renewal of worldwide Christendom in "experimental knowledge and love of God, of inward and outward holiness,"<sup>27</sup> would recreate a Christian community like the Jerusalem church described early in Acts: "they will 'continue steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers,' . . . and 'none of them will say that [any] of the things which he possesses is his own, but they will have all things common.'"<sup>28</sup> In this renewed and radical community "there will be no partiality; no 'widows neglected in the daily ministrations,'" no rancor or competitiveness – and thus Wesley envisions a kind of Methodist-infected, universal Christian community where "only love informs the whole."<sup>29</sup>

Then, and only then, Wesley surmises, will all those Muslims who outnumber Christians on the planet have any reason at all to "give attention to [Christians'] words" of proclamation. Only when Christians actually live together as a distinct polity grounded in grace and love, sharing radically in life's material goods, will the worldwide Muslim community take serious note. Wesley seems to have realized, even if unconsciously and unintentionally, that only that kind of concrete, communal witness could bear weight among the *umma* or worldwide community of Islam. Muslims, understanding themselves profoundly to be such an alternative community around the world, would understandably give no serious heed to a disembodied, individualized, spiritualized gospel message. It would take a people, a polis "doing the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven," even to get the attention of Wesley's "Mahometans" – and rightly so.

And thus the gospel and its new community continues to spread, in Wesley's mind, all around the world till finally "'all Israel' too 'shall be saved.'"<sup>30</sup> Writing out of this virtually unbounded optimism of grace, then, Wesley predicted the triumphal spread of the gospel from one nation and people to another as God gradually "renews the face of the earth" until the vision of the Revelator is fulfilled and "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" I recall to you Keller's

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 493.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 494.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

<sup>30</sup> No bibliographic information given [Editor].

observation that, “despite his synergism, Wesley seems to have presumed such a final, monergistic, consummation.”

Wesley probably would beg to differ; he certainly wanted to hold tightly to “the knot which we are not able to untie.” He wanted to affirm the proposition that God does not nullify human understanding, affections or agency, but instead graciously empowers and assists us. Nonetheless, he can end this sermon by taking a page from the book of Revelation – “Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” – confidently assuming that this great eschatological vista is virtually “just around the corner.” Of course we should acknowledge that Wesley’s eschatological fantasy has thus far gone unfulfilled. After the technologically-enhanced horrors of world wars and mass genocides of the past century – not to mention the rather stubborn unwillingness of the other great world religious traditions to lie down and breathe their last in the face of the general spread of the gospel! – we are likely to smile dismissively at Wesley’s naïve optimism. Even as we grant that it is an optimism born of grace it still sounds naïve, does it not? Indeed, historical evidence suggests that Wesley had harbored hopes for his class meetings for those who professed Christian perfection – hopes that they would in fact get this renewal of all creation begun in earnest by living in radical Christian community, reenacting the practices of the church as envisioned in the second chapter of Acts, including the sharing of all material goods in common with one another. For Wesley, apparently, such life together would be the inevitable (and perhaps necessary) expression of sanctified social human existence. His hopes even in this particular regard, of course, also went unfulfilled.

Even so, I wonder, is there any good reason to reject his interpretation of God’s mode of working in the world as evocative and empowering *presence* rather than as *irresistible* victory? Keller, I think, is quite right to insist that “surely no Wesleyan eschatology can well dispense with the new creation.” But I wonder if we shall not have to dispense with the manner and mode of new creation that Wesley projected in this sermon – or at least, perhaps, we should hold Wesley closer to his own insistence regarding the manner of God’s working in the world. Indeed, I have argued in writing, repeatedly, that a Wesleyan-shaped eschatology must keep its attention on what, after all, Wesley believed to be God’s ultimate intention for human existence: that we, and all people, might flourish ever more greatly and deeply in love for God and neighbor. Essentially, this is the meaning and goal of our having been created in God’s image. Holding that conviction with seriousness may well lead us, then, to consider which manner of working best suits the divine telos, *God’s true end* for the world. The new creation is always a creation of greater possibilities for love – and perhaps for love to exist, let alone to grow and thrive, it may require a world such as the one in which we live. We recall the rabbinic wisdom, “They do not grant halves in heaven.”

As I conclude these musings, then, allow me to offer three concluding points that have arisen for me as I reflect upon this somewhat unusual sermon of John Wesley:

- God’s mode of labor in the world is that of the quiet, unassuming persuasion of love, such that God does not undo, devalue or nullify human thought, imagination, creativity, affections or activity; indeed, we confess that the divine wisdom we

encounter in Jesus Christ is “gentle and humble in heart” (Mt. 11:29), inviting us to learn from Jesus how we too might become gentle and humble human beings – and so much more faithfully as the image of God.

- God’s quietly and subtly transforming act in Jesus Christ is intended to create a radical alternative community of human beings whose life together is a concrete, corporeal, communal witness visible to the rest of the world, including people of other religious traditions who also share in distinctive ways of life together. The onus upon the Church is not to convince other people that we are right, but to live together in such a way that we offer compelling testimony to the Lord we love and serve.
- If indeed it is true that “as God is one, so the work of God is uniform in all ages,” then we who confess Christian faith must re-think eschatology in less dramatic apocalyptic ways, and in more mundane, quiet, communal ecclesiological ways, that can in turn be communicated clearly to our congregations. The church, we believe, wherever it is in local congregation, is an eschatological community, a people gathered to live already in, or at least very seriously toward, the age to come. “No Wesleyan eschatology can well dispense with the new creation,” indeed; however, the time is ripe to think “new creation” as occurring at local levels, in particular places where Jesus’ disciples live together in such a way as to reflect and bear witness to God’s gentle reign in this world – perhaps something like a tiny, seemingly insignificant, mustard seed. Perhaps in just such a way God is able, and willing, to gradually “renew the face of the earth.” For there is no evidence at hand to suggest that our Creator is ready to give up on the divine intention, borne witness to in the very opening of our Bibles, to create humanity, male and female, to function as God’s image in creation.

## Response

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The issue Dr. Lodahl raises in his paper is focused on the question, “Will God act irresistibly by overpowering human beings in order to bring all things into final consummation?” In answering this, John Wesley would definitely say, “No!” This is not how God would operate because “such an irresistible act of God would be a betrayal of creation, an undoing of the divine purpose in creating creatures of agency.” This is a disavowal of the very purpose of God in creating human beings in his own image because their responsibility before God and one another will be entirely annulled. In his sermon, Wesley insisted that God’s general manner of working would rather synergistically empower human beings than monergistically overpower them in bringing the eschatological hope into realization.

God’s work in the world is consistent at the times. God assists, enlightens, and strengthens human understanding and affections. As seen in the past, God, through the universal working of grace, helped individual souls to return to and believe in Him without destroying his or her liberty. Most likely, God will do the same thing to the whole world “without violating the structures of human existence and agency.” This is the optimism of grace. Although what Wesley envisioned here seems to be naïve optimism—for it far went unfulfilled—his hope will surely be carried out in eschaton because it is a hope in God’s good and ultimate intention for human existence created in the image of God.

Dr. Lodahl finally concludes that, in bringing all things into telos (true end of the world), God will not undo, devalue or nullify human thought, imagination, creativity, affection or activity—as parts of the restored image of God. It is the divine intention to create humanity to function as God’s image in (new) creation. Such a true humanity consequently will enable the members of Church to live as an eschatological community and to witness to the rest of the world in the future creation. The coming event of this new creation will be in less dramatic apocalyptic ways since God will gently and gradually renew “the face of the earth” in more ordinary, quiet, and communal ecclesiological ways. It is very similar to the growth of a tiny mustard seed.

Dr. Lodahl’s paper explains important teaching for Wesleyans to know, especially in countering today’s “popular eschatology.” We often hear people say that the new creation will come with the presence of “the final apocalyptic solution of all unresolved problems” in the cosmos. God will speak the final word. The good will go to heaven, the wicked to hell, and the earth will be annihilated in a lake of fire. However, this is not the main intention of God because what he is concerned most is not the final solutions but the process toward it. The focus then is

not on the end of life but on the beginning of it, the beginning of the Kingdom of God in human life. Wesleyan eschatology apparently, as Dr. Lodahl highlights, is in the same vein with that notion because its concerns are on the importance and the dynamic of divine-human relationship (God-world interaction) rather than on such dramatic-catastrophic scenarios of the end of the world.

New creation is a creation of new humanity in Christ. God's work in this created world is not only to save fallen human beings but also to transform them into his own image through the work of grace. In doing so, God uses a mode of activity, through persuasion and gracious enablement. It is divine involvement in assisting and empowering restored human beings to cooperate with divine grace. This reminds us to an ancient aphorism: *finitum capax infiniti* (the finite is capable of the infinite). Such a term is used to convey that the finite will be enabled to embrace the infinite, or, as Moltmann suggests, "The new creation will be fashioned to fellowship with God and to endure his glory without perishing from it." Therefore, new creation is not the end of the world but the beginning of it. It is not the downfall or the cut down of the creation (humanity) but the raising up of and the making things right in it.

Reflecting on Dr. Lodahl's paper from a biblical perspective, the idea of divine gracious assistance in enlightening and strengthening human understanding and affections is in accordance with the fulfillment of the messianic promise, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:9). The prophet Isaiah envisioned that at the coming of the messianic age, there will be "the sovereign execution of a new act of creation in which the righteous will of God is embraced and the whole earth now reflects a reverent devotion 'as water covers the sea.'" Such a condition, a just world peace, will only happen if the restored human beings respond the Holy One, who is righteous and faithful, in a mutual commitment. Again, the idea of God's work in empowering humanity is clear in the passage.

However, Dr. Lodahl's paper (Wesley in his sermon, too) does not give enough explanation on the "biblical" meaning of the phrase "the knowledge of the Lord" (da'at yhwh). It is simply asserted as "the loving knowledge of God, producing uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness." In fact, the meaning of this term in its literary context is broader than that and may contribute to deeper understanding of the divine empowerment on humanity in the new creation. The poem (Isa 11:1-9) offers a vision of restored creation that culminates in the last verse. Although the term may be related to cognitive knowledge or obedience, the term "knowledge" correctly means "intimate relationship" and "commitment" to Yahweh and his ways. That kind of knowledge cannot simply be meant as one having knowledge about but rather an intimate engagement with the Lord. Such a thought affirms the truth that the basis of the restored humanity is a restoration of da'at yhwh, an intimate divine-human relation (interaction).

Further, the usage of both “the knowledge of God” and “the fear of the Lord” is synonymous in wisdom materials (Prov 1:7; 2:5). The combination of the knowledge of the Lord and wisdom can lead one to an understanding that *da’at yhwh* comprises the right knowledge of Yahweh’s essence including his ways and his will as well as the right relation with him and obedience to his commands. The phrase then may refer to “an awed, discerning sense of responsible, liberated, and caring life in Yahweh’s world.” In any case, Brueggemann adds, “the phrase is a promise and expectation that the hoping human person may be, in the end, fully immersed in the wondrous mystery that is Yahweh—the overcoming of every distance between Yahweh and Yahweh’s cared-for human creature.” In Wesleyan tradition, this may refer to “human responsiveness,” an ability to respond to God’s grace brought through God’s renewal of the spirit of human mind in the image of God. Thus, the knowledge of the Lord here could be equated as the renewed human understanding and affections assisted by divine grace.

The context of the passage used in Wesley’s sermon also explains how God will make himself known to the whole earth at this messianic age. Divine work is essentially pneumatic where the Spirit of the Lord (Isa 11:2) will impart the knowledge of the Lord and will make such knowledge available to the whole earth. The purpose of it is that fellowship with the Lord “is made possible and easy, and the fulfillment of his pleasure is presumed in all.” Wesley mentioned “the Spirit” several times in his “General Spread of the Gospel.” He used this term in the context of divine all-embracing work. The Holy Spirit regenerates sinners, fills them for holy living, empowers them to witness and minister and, at the end, wins them in glorious triumph at the day of the Lord. In Wesleyan tradition, the Spirit of God plays important roles along the *via salutis* (the way of salvation), because “salvation is the Spirit drawing us toward participation in the life of triune God. The Spirit summons us to the transforming friendship with God that leads to sharing life in the triune life.” The universal work of the Spirit prepares the restored human beings to anticipate sharing in God’s glory in the new creation. Unfortunately, Dr. Lodahl seems to have overlooked this important part in his paper.

Dr. Lodahl’s presentation today is very helpful for me personally to understand another aspect of Wesleyan eschatology, a relation between new creation and humanization. It is an in-depth and critical reflection on how God’s work will bring all things to the final consummation through empowering Christians to be truly human beings—restored in the image of God—so that they may bear Christian witness and bring transformation to the whole (new) creation in the future.

## Response

Melba Padilla Maggay

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‘Why Can’t Jesus Be Like Superman?’

This question from a child of a friend of mine, then five years old, came to mind upon reading this article of Dr. Lohdal, whose gentle tone is much like its main insight -- the quiet, unassuming presence of the re-creative Spirit of Christ in our humanness.

My comments are more in the nature of resonances – words and phrases that, like Mary, you ‘ponder’ or move in your heart until indeed, you come to that place in your inward being where ‘deep calls to deep.’

Let me just name some of these themes which rolled in my mind, like threads going round and round a spool. There was, first, an awakening in me to the ever-present possibility of the Almighty acting ‘irresistibly,’ – like ‘overpowering’ the double-bladed gift of ‘yetzer hara.’ Second, there was the constant reminder of the ‘knot which we are unable to untie,’ – the mystery of divine power and human agency -- unsatisfactorily loosened by the notion of a prevenient grace. I prefer the author’s idea of God ‘empowering’ human nature by ‘sharing’ his divine character and power. And thirdly, there is for me some discomfort in the rather strange Wesleyan assertion that “the work of God is uniform in all ages.”

From where I sit, I certainly resonate with Dr. Lohdal’s concluding remark that “God’s mode of labor in the world is that of the quiet, unassuming persuasion of love,” with the church serving as social context where the saving power of God is made visible, and as a Sign, however dimly, of the age to come. How and why this happens needs some more explaining, however.

For God can, and has in times past, acted ‘irresistibly’ – there was the apparently inexorable march of fated destruction and bloodshed as God wiped out the Canaanite nations, for instance. Later, there was the terrible judgment of Israel, God vomiting them out of the land because of idolatry and oppression. Why stop short in containing wickedness, I wonder, -- leaving it to the uncertain choices of a community whose morals are not exactly far above the usual norms of the larger society?

The hint of an answer is perhaps better located, not so much in navigating through such tortuous antinomies as divine sovereignty and human responsibility, but in the effort to make a straightforward reply to the child’s question: “Why can’t Jesus be like Superman?”



Contrary to Wesley's rather a-historical notion that "the work of God is uniform in all ages," something happened two thousand years ago that is not quite our usual understandings of what it means to rescue people, -- or at least, not quite the way Superman would do it. God became, in our weakness and vulnerability, quite like us. In the incarnation, God immersed himself in the life of the world without the usual trappings and, more importantly, immunity. Willingly and willfully, he circumscribed himself within the history, the limits and the mess of our humanity.

"It is fitting," he tells John, "that all righteousness should be fulfilled," and so submitted himself to the cleansing rite of John's baptism of repentance. This is the 'second Adam' who stood in our stead, and who, while without sin, was neither immune to temptation, nor to our inherent weakness and frailty. He in fact became, in the provocative language of Paul, 'sin' for us.

No other religion speaks of God in this way. Hinduism speaks of avatars that make fleeting appearances, but not of a god who entered the human story and 'dwelt' there -- walked the dusty streets of Jerusalem, shared in the pain and struggles of its colonial history, and for thirty years was shaped by the rugged terrain and geography of Palestine, the Torah and the feasts and traditions of his culture and people. You can pin him down on the calendar and locate him within Israel's social history, just like the way Luke did in his Gospel account.

It is in the incarnation, and, later, in the indwelling Spirit of Christ among his people, that I find the locus of our optimism about human nature. A theologian once said that God became a man, not so that we may become divine, but so that we may become more truly human. In that event, something happened to the 'original creation' that was not there before -- he re-wrote the commandments into our hearts, giving us, by his Spirit, 'a heart of flesh.'

Also, a new element in our history has appeared, which gives us warrant for optimism. Out of human failure, and the collapse of the political and religious institutions of Israel, came the promised king -- riding humbly on a donkey, destined to fulfill the messianic expectations of Israel, though not in the way they imagined it would be. The 'kingdom is within you,' he tells his disciples. To the extent that we are truly his subjects, the kingdom advances. The parable of the wheat and the tares tells us that while the world grows worse and worse, it is also getting better and better. The kingdom is at work, and soon, the 'kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God.'

So we do not despise the 'day of small things.' The mustard seed is growing. While there are moments in history when we sense that 'the axe is laid at the root of the tree,' and all is eruption and upheaval, Dr. Lohdal is correct in sensing that for the most part, the work of God is not apocalyptic nor catastrophic, but continuous with the humdrum ordinariness of human life.

Creation is being renewed every day, in so far as we participate in the work of God in the world. “Behold, I make things new,” we are told. This is not just future eschatology, but present reality. I have just been to a conference where a speaker was expounding on Revelation 19. The Rider on the White Horse and his army of saints are massing together against the army of the Beast and the Antichrist. Quite startlingly, it was pointed out, there was no battle. The enemies were captured, and the saints were not even in battle gear. They were instead dressed in white, an image of purity that suggests to us that perhaps this is really all that we need to be on the winning side.

On the cross, the crucial battle had long been over. Paul’s ‘war among the members’ – this conflict between the first and second Adam in our nature, has been decisively won. Our ultimate destiny is not primarily making it to heaven – by the way, we are told that we shall inherit the earth, not heaven – but being conformed, gradually, to the image of God’s great Son.

And so we take heart, confident that while evil may seem strong, it is in fact on its death throes. There is a hiddenness to the kingdom that makes its work unspectacular. It does not advertise itself. And like yeast, we do not see exactly how it works. We only know it by its effects.

I am increasingly convinced, as I study social movements, that the kingdom is not so much revolutionary as subversive. It goes in quietly, penetrates deeply, and transforms, -- without fanfare and the glare of publicity,-- apparently monolithic structures of injustice and unrighteousness. And like the mustard seed, --- without our knowing it, -- we wake up one morning into the awareness that it has grown into a mighty tree.

## **Endnote:**

### **“How, Then, Shall We Live?”**

Floyd T. Cunningham

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For some conferences, the outcome is the preparation and presentation of an agreed-upon declaration or proposition. We as Wesleyans tend to take things more personally. What does all of this “mean to me?” we ask. “How, then, shall *I* live?”

Hearing, more than writing, is the purest form of communication. The Christian faith is personally given, as we have had in these lectures. We should have become more confident and knowledgeable of our Wesleyan tradition, and how it continues to be a help for us a pastors and ministers.

#### **Common Themes**

FIRST, holiness is thoroughly RELATIONAL. This is the way we understand the Bible. The presentations follow the lines that Mildred Bangs Wynkoop set a generation ago – lines that emphasize the side of John Wesley that was content with neither a static nor substantial conception of holiness.

SECOND, the presentations are also thoroughly TRINITARIAN. This emphasis has been of more recent origin among theologians of the Wesleyan tradition, who at one time divided the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit so completely as to imply that they worked independently of each other and apart from the Father. No more. From the beginning, God is “us” and creates humanity in that likeness.

Therefore, THIRD, as human beings reflecting the image of God we are intended for COMMUNITY. How then shall *we* live? is the question. My life is connected to the lives of others. I find my true self, my Christ-like self, in inter-subjective relationships. I must not think of myself as an isolated being as if I could pursue holiness on my own apart from others. That kind of individual-centered conception of holiness (common from the perspective of the Western holiness heritage to which we are heir more than to Asian mentality) is the opposite of perfect love, which always demands a subject to love.

Just as Christ entered fully into our sphere of being so we are called upon to enter deeply into the lives of others, with empathy. This call to penetrate into the life spaces of others seems consistent with John Wesley’s bands and class meetings, and, as well, calls these days for discipleship. In all, inter-subjectivity invites us to find our ways into the very personal space of others. Inter-subjectivity sends us into the lives of others. The “feed-back” of others close to us we can receive as God’s perfecting grace.

The inter-connectedness of human beings to each other resonates with Asia-Pacific worldviews. Asians tend to be more personally-connected, more relational, than Westerners. Yet, somehow, intimacy or transparency is not altogether easy unless it is among family members or members of one’s extended

family, clan or tribe. To those outside our particular community, there is distrust. The gospel calls us toward an inter-subjectivity that is wider than this.

At the same time, we must go beyond any inter-subjectivity that does not recognize the community in which we live, and through which we demonstrate the gospel. Collectively, not individually, we embody Christ in the world. It is the edifice that we built through the mortar of multiple inter-subjective relations that Christ ultimately is manifest. Indeed, the hope of the world is in the purity of God's church.

FOURTH, Christ is the perfect image of our humanness as well as our holiness. To say that we are human in no way demeans. Christ lifts up our HUMANNESS, and in so doing adds to it its own dignity. The speakers represent a reaction to the tendency of a previous generation to so emphasize Christ's divinity as to minimize his humanity. There is nothing inconsistent between holiness and humanness. We are nothing less than human. Our becoming like Christ is identical with being more human. Being more like Christ, we return to our original essence.

FIFTH, unlike most of our predecessors in the Wesleyan theological tradition, the presenters preferred not to identify any particular "ATTRIBUTE" of the image of God until we see God in Christ. We must look to CHRIST and not to Adam to understand the image of God. The one attribute that sums the character of Christ is LOVE. God is love and any other description of Jesus' life and ministry can be epitomized in this one word. The "mystic" connection we have with each other is none other than love. The more human we become, the more like Christ, and the more like Christ the more human.

Out of this inward subjectivity rather than as from the outside – as an inner voice, or as a law "inscribed on our hearts" – comes a call for Spirit-empowered obedience and fidelity. The law that once was alien to us becomes personal to us through the of the Spirit of God, and through that Spirit, rather than through our innate abilities comes the response of fidelity to God. Every moment beckons obedience that comes, as Jesus' did, out of love toward his Father and toward his followers, and in every moment there is grace.

In Christ we see a persuasive, humble God, a God who is unassuming, a God who is vulnerable, a God who is submissive, a God who is loyal and who is faithful and obedient. That provides not only the image of God but also the image of what we are to be.

### **What Now?**

This was not a conference intended to provide specific answers to practical problems. There are other conferences intended for that, which would cover such important topics as church planting and church growth, discipleship, leadership, and the like. A conference such as this prepares our minds and hearts to rightly assess such practical training and application from the lens of our Wesleyan tradition.

We hunger for "conference" (to confer) with God's people as did Wesley's and Asbury's preachers. This conference has provided that, and so we will with God's people as we go with the somewhat paradoxical commitments to be both more relational and more reflective. We will continue to

celebrate; we will continue to dialogue. In so doing we will not be so readily tossed to and fro by “every wind of doctrine.”

# **An Educational Model for Improving English Proficiency Scores<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Introduction**

Students from many Asian countries are enrolling in English learner programs with the desire to improve their English in a minimum span of time. Costs for students not only include tuition and living expenses, but also sacrificing time away from their family. Most students are on scholarships and those providing financial assistance do not recognize the stress factors that complicate the language learning process. In addition, the government in our setting will not continue to issue visas to students taking longer than two semesters at a graduate theological institution without the student taking graduate seminary level classes. To provide possible solutions, this research will explore the reasons why students fail to reach the desired proficiency for admission into APNTS.

The results of the proficiency exams given at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS), Manila, Philippines, June 2010-June 2012, will be analyzed. The range of scores that have a 68% probability rate of reaching 500 in one semester will be found by looking at the standard deviation of the average increase in proficiency scores after one semester of language study. In addition, the data will be studied of those who have obtained a score of 500 to see if there is a positive correlation to the initial score and the number of semesters of English study.

The goal of the study is to show a need for an improvement of the educational model to increase the proficiency scores of the students in a minimum number of semesters.

## **Background Study**

These students have earned undergraduate degrees from universities in non-English speaking environments with various levels of academic requirements. A theoretical foundation of second language acquisition of adults, teaching methodology, and curriculum design for adults with advanced beginner English skills will be given.

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<sup>1</sup>Presented at the Christians in English Language Teaching Conference (CELT), March 20, 2013, at Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, TX, as part of the Christian English Language Educators Association.

## Second Language Acquisition

Research reflecting adult second language learners will be reviewed. The philosophy of second language acquisition (SLA), factors that affect learning, and observable traits of SLA will be addressed to present a summary of the current research that applies to the research problem.

### Philosophy of SLA

Second language acquisition (SLA) has two major divisions among theorists, those who view SLA as a social process and those who feel it is a cognitive process according to Long.<sup>2</sup> Those who look at the acquisition of a language as a cognitive process are either nativist or empiricist. Nativists base their view on innate abilities, innate mechanisms, or a combination of the two in language learning. Most children will learn the language without problems, but adults often have difficulty. These difficulties may be due to not being able to use all the mechanisms (general nativists) or that adults may have passed the time in their lives when language is naturally acquired (hybrid nativists). Long continues that the empiricists base their theory on the belief that experience with the target language has a stronger influence than any genetic tendencies on fluency.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, as adults learning a second language, the philosophy of the educational model must be based on empiricism.

### Factors that Affect Learning

Empiricist models interact with the cognitive and affective domains within the physical brain. In recent years, technology has allowed scientists to observe the brain while it is working. These observations have given documentation to support or refute theories of how language is learned.

The style and ease of learning a second language is directly affected by the way people think and process information, their cognitive style. Cognitive styles have been studied to try to describe what characteristics are necessary for successful language learners. Empirically, it is obvious that some students seem to learn a second language fluently in a relatively short period of time while others seem to study diligently and continue to have difficulty in improving their proficiency scores. Two characteristics, shown on a continuum, are reflection / impulsivity and field independence / dependence. These characteristics were studied by Sperry in 1972.<sup>4</sup> Several

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<sup>2</sup>Michael H. Long, *Problems in SLA* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Joan Jamieson, "The Cognitive Styles of Reflection/Impulsivity and Field Independence/Dependence and ESL Success," in *Reading on Second Language Acquisition*, ed. H. Douglas Brown and Susan Gonzo (Upper Saddle

characteristics have been studied in other areas of social science, but these two have been found to affect language learning the most. Jamieson explains that reflection and impulsivity as the style of thinking a person does when several alternative solutions are given to a problem. Field dependence is also defined as how a person perceives what they see as separate from its surroundings (independent) or blended into the whole (dependent). In other words, it is the ability to think analytically. Jamieson reflects on the research in SLA and has come to the conclusion that these two styles affect language learning as a whole. For example, she says that field independent and impulsive, but accurate thinkers will succeed on the TOEFL paper based test (PBT) much more easily than those who do not have these characteristics. She continues in her summary that this example does not give proof that field independence and accurate impulsivity are the only skills that should be valued. Her recommendation is that research should be done on a variety of language tasks needed for fluency, rather than just the receptive skills measured by the (PBT) TOEFL proficiency test.<sup>5</sup> Communicative competence (fluency) cannot be truly measured by the (PBT) TOEFL score. Long has noted empirically that students who perform well on a proficiency test such as the (PBT) TOEFL does not guarantee success in the academic setting. Long also shares that the reverse may be true, someone who performs well in the academic setting may have trouble earning the proficiency exam score needed.<sup>6</sup>

Another major factor concerns the affective domain. Personality varies with each individual and plays a significant role in language learning. The Affective Filter Hypothesis, Krashen defines the best environment for second language learners is where they feel positive and relaxed.<sup>7</sup>

From experiential observations, international students at APNTS are often stressed by culture shock and financial pressures. Dye gives four causes of stress due to culture shock: 1) emotionally and mentally involvement in situations that deal with a culture different than their own, 2) cultural values that differ between ethnic groups, 3) frustration occurring when working with people from other cultures, and 4) different personalities reactions to the cultural differences due to personality.<sup>8</sup> Culture shock is unavoidable; there will be stress for those in a new environment. As a result, the efficiency of their language learning is affected, especially in their first semester. When the student retakes the proficiency exam, the fear of not succeeding causes more stress. Then after one year, a few students are caught in a cycle of fear and stress, with some unsuccessful in increasing their score forcing them to leave.

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River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Regents, 1995) citing L. Sperry, *Learning Performances and Individual Differences* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1972).

<sup>5</sup>Joan Jamieson, "The Cognitive Styles of Reflection/Impulsivity and Field Independence/Dependence and ESL Success," in *Reading on Second Language Acquisition*, ed. H. Douglas Brown and Susan Gonzo (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Regents, 1995).

<sup>6</sup>Long.

<sup>7</sup>S. D. Krashen, *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications* (New York: Longman, 1985).

<sup>8</sup>T. Wayne Dye, "Stress-Producing Factors in Cultural Adjustment," (*Missiology: An International Review* 2 (1974): 61-77.



Advances in neuroscience have provided new insights into learning from the physical viewpoint. Our physical brain has capabilities and limitations that affect language learning. David Sousa has summarized some major discoveries in neuroscience, with seven impacting adults who are learning a second language. First, increased activity increases blood flow to the brain, which improves cognitive processing. Exercise is a key to successful learning. Second, the lack of emotional security and safety is stressful and has biological implications in the learning process. Third, social and cultural responses occur in specific brain areas, which are related to self-esteem. Development of these brain areas that create responses which benefit learning is crucial. Fourth, new neurons can be developed in the hippocampus area of the brain, which is the location of long-term memory development. This development is also inter-related to attitude, good nutrition, regular exercise, and maintaining low levels of stress. Fifth, neuroplasticity of the brain allows the brain to find new pathways to process brain functions. Dyslexic students as well as poor language learners can be shown how to improve their skills. Sixth, retention of working memory depends largely on the purposefulness of the information and the way it is encoded in the long-term memory. Finally, sleep is important for the brain's health, but also it is the time it works to make connections and carry-out process for long-term memory.<sup>9</sup> Neuroscience research has given physical proof to support many SLA theories that have been developed in recent years.

### **Important Theories Related to SLA**

The following three theories are very important in designing an educational model for graduate students.

Interlanguage development, the internal language skill set used between beginning to learn language and achieving fluency, according to Wilkins, is not a straight upward line toward proficiency).<sup>10</sup> Students should be aware of that often the subsequent exam score does not show improvement or can even be less. Without being aware of this, students can become discouraged which will affect the student's learning potential.

Comprehensible and meaningful learning are interrelated. A well-known theorist, Krashen developed the Monitor Theory that includes two aspects: Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis which impact adults that are learning a second language. The Input Hypothesis refers to giving comprehensible material to students that is just one level higher than

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<sup>9</sup>David Sousa, ed., *Mind, Brain, and Education: Neuroscience Implications for the Classroom* (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2010).

<sup>10</sup>D. Wilkins, "Language, Language Acquisition and Syllabus Design: Some Recent Issues," (*English Teacher Korea* 49, 41-56) quoted in Michael H. Long, *Problems in SLA* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

the student can easily comprehend.<sup>11</sup> Immersion in graduate level courses before the student has adequate communication skills is not beneficial in language learning, as the Input Hypothesis by Krashen supports. The student would also be penalized by the incomplete comprehension of a foundational course. In addition, professors at the graduate level should not be expected to provide additional materials to support the fledging student.

Meaningful learning is contrasted to rote learning according to David Ausubel in his subsumption theory. Ausubel theorized in 1963 that learning occurs when new information relates in some way to knowledge and concepts already existing in the permanent memory of a person. The brain organizes the new information with the existing information, allowing the new material to fit into and become part of the cognitive structure.<sup>12</sup>

All three of these theories dramatically impact the design of an educational model for learning a second language.

## **Teaching Methodology**

There have been many methodologies used in teaching language. Grammar translation was used for many years, followed by the audio-lingual method after WWII. Currently, communicative language teaching (CLT) has emerged as the predominant teaching method.

Prior to the communicative language teaching methodology (CLT), the audio-lingual method (ALM) was popular in Asia. Many current non-native English language teachers were trained using ALM. These teachers were successful at learning language to a level that was required to pass proficiency tests that primarily measured language proficiency through good objective test taking strategies. ALM used dialogues, drills, repetition, memorization, and pattern practice and is considered a synthetic or bottom-up method which teaches grammatical and vocabulary rules first, and then asks the student to synthesize the elements of language. CLT is based on the theory that language is more about communication of meaning by interacting with people through language.<sup>13</sup> CLT is not teacher-oriented, but student-oriented. Students are involved in tasks that develop their communication skills in a second language. CLT is considered analytical or a top-down method which uses topics, readings, and interesting tasks for the learner allowing the student to discover the parts of the language.

CLT methodology is imperative for students who need to progress quickly to fluency in a cross-cultural situation. CLT teaching principles<sup>14</sup> that are critical for ESL training at the

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<sup>11</sup>Krashen.

<sup>12</sup>H. Douglas Brown, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Pearson Education, Inc., 2007).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

seminary level are 1) automaticity – developing the ability to process information fast enough to comprehend large amounts of reading and writing assignments; 2) strategic investment - reinforcing the need for students to find their personal learning style, and to wean from depending on the teacher to give information; 3) autonomy – strengthening the student’s concept of their own ability to discover and improve skills and strategies by practicing or doing more than just the homework assigned; and 4) language ego – instilling confidence in students who were top English students in their home country, but now feel that they know very little in the English speaking atmosphere of the seminary. These principles combined with the student-oriented active learning processing are needed to learn a language fluently.

Another type of learning that should be incorporated into the curriculum, is cooperative learning. Suggested by Brozo & Simpson, this type of activity would allow students to learn social and collaboration skills that are needed in ministry. A cooperative learning group would learn to succeed as a team, to be personally accountable for providing input, to work directly with people who have different cultural ways, and to use good collaborative skills.<sup>15</sup>

Tomlinson emphasized that learners should be able to have opportunities to develop higher cognitive skills needed in their ministries as they develop fluency, not just language acquisition at the basic level.<sup>16</sup> Students are often more familiar with synthetic styles (student must synthesize the language from grammar rules and vocabulary) of education in Asia, which causes frustration for students who are not adaptable or flexible in nature. Students who have been accustomed to an ALM emphasis in language education will continue to focus on memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary. The students’ perception that the obstacle to graduate level classes is a score of 500 on the proficiency exam, feeds this expectation for language training to be familiar to the educational methodology in their home country. Reality is that academic success on the graduate level takes additional cognitive skills that are not measured on the PBT TOEFL exam. CLT methodology is necessary to prepare students in the cognitive skills necessary for graduate level classes taught in English.

Another aspect of CLT is that grammar is interwoven into the curriculum to guide students to communicative competency at all levels of language. Grammar deals with the sentence level structure and does not look at how sentences work together to communicate meaning in both the spoken and written language. Also, language is much more than the discourse level, but also the semantic (word meaning) and the pragmatic (contextual meaning) aspects of language. Brown notes the importance of these three dimensions: grammar, semantics, and pragmatics. He also adds that grammar is important, not as a set of rules or facts, but as a skill.<sup>17</sup> Sandra Savignon in her chapter on CLT, explains that communicative

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<sup>15</sup>William G. Brozo, and Michele L. Simpson, *Readers, Teachers, Learners: Expanding Literacy Across the Content Areas*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003).

<sup>16</sup>Brian Tomlinson, “Principles of Effective Materials Development,” in *English Language Teaching Materials: Theory and Practice*, ed. Nigel Harwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

<sup>17</sup>Brown.

competency consists of grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence.<sup>18</sup>

Celce-Murcia & Hilles also remind teachers that different approaches to grammar should be used to reach the different types of learner strategies: analytical and holistic. They quote Hatch, et al. that “rule learners”<sup>19</sup> are analytical which is not often utilized by children. Children are often holistic “data gatherers”<sup>20</sup> along with many adults and learn when they are exposed to meaningful language. Brown reminds teachers that grammar instruction should vary in its delivery because of the learning styles of the students. Analytical students will benefit from technical terminology and explanations, while holistic learners will have difficulty in this type of presentation.<sup>21</sup> CLT methodology proves a framework for both learner styles of strategizing.

On the seminary campus, vocabulary is an important aspect. Reading comprehension and writing on a graduate level uses a large academic vocabulary in addition to using a register that is not found in proficiency study books. Stahl summarized research and concluded that vocabulary is learned best by seeing and using the words in context.<sup>22</sup> According to neuroscience, if data in the working memory can connect to a purpose, then it will be added to long term-memory. To make the connection between the purpose and new vocabulary, active participation in learning vocabulary is necessary. Active participation is accomplished by 1) looking for relationships between the new vocabulary and the student’s background knowledge, 2) seeing how the new vocabulary can be applied to other contexts, 3) examining examples to see if they are using the vocabulary correctly, and 4) making new applications of the vocabulary words in writing and speaking.<sup>23</sup> All of these activities help establish a structure or encoding for the retrieval from long term memory, which does not often occur when vocabulary is memorized (passive activity) as a word or definition in the mother tongue. Brozo & Simpson reiterate that it takes time and many different types of active processing for a student to increase their vocabulary.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Sandra J. Savignon, “Communication Language Teaching for the Twenty-First Century,” in *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Marianne Celce-Murcia (USA: Heinle & Heinle Thomson Learning, 2001).

<sup>19</sup>E. Hatch, et. al., “What Case Studies Reveal About System Sequence and Variation in Second Language Acquisition,” quoted in Marianne Celce-Murcia and Sharon Hilles, *Techniques and Resources in Teaching Grammar* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Brown.

<sup>22</sup>S. A. Stahl, *Vocabulary Development* (Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 1999) quoted in William G. Brozo, and Michele L. Simpson, *Readers, Teachers, Learners: Expanding Literacy Across the Content Areas* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003).

<sup>23</sup> William G. Brozo and Michele L. Simpson, *Readers, Teachers, Learners: Expanding Literacy Across the Content Areas* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

## Curriculum Design

Curriculum design is based on meeting the needs of student by providing good content (vocabulary) and language (grammar and reading, writing, speaking, and listening strategies) goals with quality materials that will help the student be competent in the new language.

Published ESL curriculum is readily available, but to meet the needs of the of seminary students, a specialized curriculum must be designed to expose students to a rich, meaningful, and comprehensible language<sup>25</sup> that gives reinforcement for the vocabulary needed for graduate theological study. Tomlinson also emphasized the active enrollment in both the affective and cognitive domains through exercises that give practice in the skills needed for success in what the student will be doing is important in curriculum development.<sup>26</sup> In the seminary setting, that would be ministry and Bible-related activities.

Increasing comprehension and critical thinking skills is vital for seminary students. The curriculum must include readings in areas that have a purpose for the ministry and is of interest to the students. The principles that must be remembered are summarized by Brozo & Simpson: 1) recalling prior knowledge, 2) summarizing and organizing the text, 3) thinking critically (analyzing and evaluating) about the text and then creating personal responses, 4) being aware of thinking (metacognition), and 5) using reading and learning strategies to comprehend and construct ways of using the information in the future.<sup>27</sup>

Writing skills are often the most difficult tasks for students and should relate to activities that will be required in graduate level courses and in their future ministry. Speaking, also a creative language skills, does not need to be grammatically perfect to be comprehensible, whereas writing at the graduate level requires a much higher level of production. Learners need to be critical thinkers and active problem solvers<sup>28</sup> to be able to achieve this production skill.

Authentic texts can be simplified (using restricted vocabularies and simplified grammar) or elaborated (adding word definitions and word to show clear relationships between phrases). Long shares that the elaborated versions help in comprehension like the simplified, but there is improved acquisition of new vocabulary and increased language complexity.<sup>29</sup> Language curriculum should embrace the principle that learning is best when complete and genuine texts offer sources for students to read and respond to in writing, as well as in speaking, and listening.<sup>30</sup> The meaningful texts should be used to integrate all four language skills so students

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<sup>25</sup>Tomlinson.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Brozo & Simpson.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Long.

<sup>30</sup>Brozo & Simpson.

will have full, functional communication skills in their ministry. This focus on ministry related topics will motivate the student which aids in developing fluency.<sup>31</sup>

If scheduling demands separate classes for different skills, such as a reading/writing and a separate speaking/listening course, Evans, et. al., stress that the curriculum cohesive in that classes have materials and lessons that contribute to and build upon each other and stable in that the curriculum is planned, purposeful, and carefully reviewed.<sup>32</sup>

Assessments (proficiency, placement, diagnosis, and achievement) are vital to this design according to Brown.<sup>33</sup> Formative assessment, first introduced by British researchers Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam in 1998 is a different paradigm of assessment and can be utilized in the language learning classroom.<sup>34</sup> Popham indicates that formative assessment's key difference is that the feedback from the assessment (not necessarily an exam) during instruction gives information to the student and teacher for adapting the content and the method of delivery to meet the needs of the student.<sup>35</sup>

In summary, the needs of the students should be met with a curriculum design that will give skills and strategies in language learning to be communicatively competent through the use of authentic texts and tasks in all four areas of language. Curriculum should include grammar skills and vocabulary comprehension to support the development of language competency.

## Methodology and Data

The data was drawn from the proficiency scores recorded by the registrar from June 2010 through June 2012. All student scores were used that did not earn 500 (PBT TOEFL equivalency) or greater on their initial proficiency exam. The initial and the final scores after one semester of English language study were used. Some students would have two or three sets of scores, depending on the length of time they were in language training. Pre- and post- exam data for summer school were not included, because the course length differs with the regular semester.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Norman W. Evans, K. James Hartshorn, and Neil J. Anderson, "A Principles Approach to Content-based Materials Development for Reading," in *English Language Teaching Materials: Theory and Practice*, ed. Nigel Harwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>33</sup>James Dean Brown, *The Elements of Language Curriculum: A Systematic Approach to Program Development* (Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1995).

<sup>34</sup>P. Black and D. Wiliam, "Assessment and Classroom Learning," *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy, and Practice* 5 (1), 7-73, quoted in W. James Popham, *Transformative Assessment* (Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008).

<sup>35</sup>W. James Popham, *Transformative Assessment* (Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008).

This descriptive statistical study of the students (June 2010-June 2012) will be based on the difference between the initial and ending score for each semester. The data will be analyzed to identify the minimum initial score that is needed at the beginning of the semester to have a 68% probability in achieving 500 or greater after one semester of English language study.

A sub-sample of this population, students who have already earned a proficiency score of at least 500, will be analyzed to see if there is any relationship with the length of time needed for earning 500 and the initial proficiency score. It is an assumption of the researcher that the length of time used for the period between school years (summer school) will equal a value of 0.5.

Students may or may not have had language classes, but the length of time to process the language is a factor necessary for correctly interpreting the results. Excel 2010 will be used to calculate the strength of correlation between the initial score and the number of semesters of language training.

The data from the population shows that the lowest proficiency score was 323 and the highest initial score was 494 (see Table 1). The median (446) is the best reflection of the students that are studied. The mean is affected by the low score of 323 which is not typical (outlier). The mode (480) reflects that more students earned this score, but on a continuum of 1-594 this does not have any impact on the interpretation of the data. The count of 51 is the number of exam score pairs (final – initial) within a time frame of one semester.

The change is the difference of the initial and the final score. Scores do not always increase, with a decrease of -15 occurring more often than any other value. It is important for students to understand that it is not abnormal to earn a lower score on the subsequent test. The mean (8) is the average difference and the standard deviation is 26.4 (see Table 1), which means that students have 68% chance of earning a minimum of 500 in one semester if they have an initial score of 474 or greater.

Table 1. Average Change After One Semester of Language Training  
(Score Equivalent to TOEFL PBT)

n=51	Initial	After	Change
Lowest	323	358	---
Highest	494	534	---
Mean	439	447	8

Median	446	446	3.5
Mode	480	433	-15
Standard Deviation			26.4

The mean and the mode reflect that often students score less on the proficiency exam the second time they take it. There are two potential causes of a lower score. First, the proficiency test is not the same each time. Between June 2010 and November 2011, there was one semester that a sample TOEFL exam was given instead of the two proficiency exams designed for APNTS. Therefore, the scores cannot provide a perfect correlation to the number of semesters. This may have allowed three students to achieve a 500 without the second semester of English. Second, students who have been on campus for only one semester have high expectations of increasing their score. Under financial and time pressure along with the desire to begin their graduate program, last minute memorization and study with too little rest overtake the student, resulting in less ability to think clearly on the exam.

The data in Table 2 is from the sample of students (15) who have already earned a 500 on the proficiency exam and have been involved in the language learning courses. The median (453) is higher than the population, which is reasonable since these students have achieved a score of 500. The population includes those that have not been successful and may have left after one or more semesters of language learning classes without reaching 500. The average length (mean) of language study is 2 semesters and the median final score is 508. The length of 2 semesters is consistent with the data from Table 1 that 26.4 points is the standard deviation for one semester of study. Standard deviation means that a score has a 68% probability to increase or decrease by a maximum of 26. The difference of the median (453) of the initial score and median (508) of the final score is 55 which indicates that most students will need to have two semesters of language classes. The problem is that approximately half of the students arrive with scores less than 453 and still expect to finish language training in one or two semesters.

Table 2. Data of Students Enrolled in English Program

June 2010 - June 2012

Students Acquiring Minimum of 500 (TOEFL PBT Equivalency)

	Initial Score	# of Semesters	GPA 4.0 (Cumulative)	Final Score
n=15	483	1	4.00	534



	480	2.5	3.09	560
	480	2	2.95	495
	478	2	2.71	503
	473	2.5	2.60	535
	473	2	2.49	503
	470	2	3.15	503
	453	1	2.87	508
	450	2.5	3.01	518
	444	1.5	3.26	543
	433	1.5	3.35	498
	415	1	2.90	525
	414	1.5	2.00	493
	410	1.5	3.32	518
	323	1.5	2.00	488
Mean	445	2	2.91	515
Median	453	1	2.95	508
Mode	480	1	2.00	503

The data in Table 3 shows that there is a weak positive correlation ( $r=0.378$ ), meaning that the lower the score the less number of semesters it will be needed to achieve a score of 500. This weak correlation may seem inconsistent with the prior data results. The low sample size is one factor for this error. Also, the value of .5 for the summer session may not reflect the true numerical value. Finally, the initial scores may not reflect the true proficiency level due to a variable of student test-taking skills of a proficiency exam.

Table 3. Correlation of Initial Scores to # Semester of Language Training

	Initial Scores	# Semesters
Initial Scores	1	
# Semesters	0.378	1

### Summary

Data indicate that students often come to the seminary with language skills that are too low to be able to achieve the score of 500 or greater on the proficiency exam in the time limitation of two semesters. Some students come with expectations that they can quickly learn English when they are in the Philippines. They do not understand the process of acquiring a second language. Under the excitement of God’s leading or even with just the drive to get more education, they don’t understand the processes needed to accomplish the goal. They become discouraged and disillusioned about how long it will take before they can take graduate level courses in their area of interest. English becomes a hurdle, something to be jumped over or pushed out of their way, so they can do what God has called them to do.

Based on the literature and empirical observations in the language classes there are five major reasons why students struggle. These reasons can be categorized by looking at the cognitive, affective, and physical domains of life. Cognitively, 1) the initial skills are low, 2) a lack of literacy skills in the first language due. Affectively, 3) financial stress and the change of culture, 4) motivation is hampered by the struggle of balancing ministerial and family obligations with attendance, 5) cross-cultural expectations and perception of the role of teacher and student. Physically, 6) students do not understand the purpose of homework and the curriculum design.

Cognitively, from the research data, it shows that students with low scores do not have a very high probability of increasing their scores more than 8 (mean) and 26 (S.D.). Students need to have realistic goals of the time it will take to be fluent in English. The analytical, evaluating, and synthesizing (creating) aspects are very important in increasing the fluency in a language from the mid-400s upward. These skills are vital in graduate school. So, it is very important for students to develop these skills, not just for the sake of passing the proficiency exam, but for the academic rigors of seminary education. Unfortunately, students want to learn how to take the exam more than wanting to learn the cognitive skills needed to be successful graduate level seminarians. A professor is obligated to prepare students to be able to achieve the desired scores

and yet has the responsibility to develop the strategies and skills needed to get the most out of classes, so that they will be effectively prepared for the ministry.

Affectively, students need to understand the role of culture shock in their lives. Acknowledgement of what is happening in their emotional and social lives helps to relieve the stress. Ways of coping with the stress should be given. Those working with students must be encouragers and motivators on this very difficult journey of learning. The student must be able to relax and trust those in the classroom so that they can become free to try new language skills.

Physically, students need to understand how language learning occurs in the brain. Learning a second language may use different learning strategies than they have used in their home country. The student must understand how the brain functions to understand why rote memorization alone is not effective for language learning. Students need opportunities for physical exercise and good nutrition that aids in healthy brains as well as stress relief.

An educational model at APNTS should have the following characteristics to address the needs of the students, guiding them to develop communicative skills to pass the proficiency exam in a reasonable length of time and to become successful graduate students.

## **Curriculum Content**

Authentic materials will be used for meaningful learning. Materials should be difficult enough to challenge students to develop skills of listening and reading academic material, and to be able to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize into speaking and writing production. The content of language learning classes will address tasks required of seminary students. An array of topics will be covered during the two semesters: Old Testament / archaeology, New Testament, theology, Christian thought / apologetics, missions / anthropology, pastoral topics / counseling / leadership, and Christian education. Assignments should be designed to actively engage students in applying, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing. Strategies, not just facts and rules should be explained and demonstrated by the teacher. In addition to theological specific words, an intensive study of words that are used in all areas of academics is imperative.

## **Course Framework**

A daily class (Monday-Friday) focusing on productive and receptive communication skills should be offered. If a student must take a third semester, the classes may be repeated. If the student's proficiency level was low in the beginning, the student would not have been able to comprehend and master the material during the first semester; therefore repetition of the material is beneficial to the student. The classroom atmosphere must be a safe and relaxed environment that challenges the students cognitively. Students need to understand the importance of consistent class attendance and involvement in the assignments as part of the process of language learning.

## **Teaching Methodology**

A communicative language methodology should be used. Language is acquired through meaningful activities in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Cognitive strategies will be taught and practiced to help students be successful in their graduate studies. A methodology should be used to guide the student to develop communicative competence, not just enough skills to earn a proficiency exam score of 500.

## **Conclusion**

The English Department has the responsibility to provide language learning courses that will provide opportunity for students to develop communication competence in a reasonable length of time to fully utilize the scholarship funds and the resources of the student to maximum efficiency. The proposed educational model will help students recognize strategies that they need to learn, the academic institution will recognize problems and seek solutions, and the distribution of the scholarship funds to students learning English will be based on active student participation in the language learning classes.

Recommendations for further research and curriculum development include 1) follow-up action research to evaluate the effectiveness of this educational model on the amount of increase in the proficiency scores over a semester, 2) development of an assessment for communicative competency in all areas needed in the EFL seminary setting, and 3) an academic solution for students in remote areas to improve their communicative competency before they arrive at the seminary.

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*The Mediator* provides a forum for dialogue about theological issues related to ministry in Asian and Pacific contexts. In keeping with this purpose, the editorial committee seeks quality papers related to Bible, theology, missions, evangelism, and church growth. Also welcome are reviews of publications, including books and music. Contact the editor for more information.

### Guidelines for Submission

1. Please submit all proposed articles to the editor in electronic form (Microsoft Word is preferable). Please put “Mediator Submission” in the subject line.
2. Articles must be written in standard international English.
3. Authors must provide complete bibliographical information either in citations or in a bibliography at the end. Use footnotes rather than endnotes.
4. Articles must conform to the latest edition of Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*. Exceptions
5. Papers may be of any length, although authors may be asked to condense longer papers.
6. A list of non-standard abbreviations should be provided.

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### Vision

Bridging cultures for Christ, APNTS equips each new generation of leaders to disseminate the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout Asia, the Pacific, and the world.

### Strategic Objectives

1. Provide solid biblical, historical, and theological foundations and encourage lifelong learning.
2. Demonstrate the power, spiritual formation, and transformation possible within a multi-cultural community of committed believers.
3. Create a dynamic environment that reinforces spiritual gifts and graces, and the call to ministry.
4. Challenge to reach across ethnicity, culture, gender, class and geographical region for the sake of the Gospel.

The seminary exists to prepare men and women for ministry in the Asia-Pacific region and throughout the world by developing personal and professional attitudes and skills for analytical reflection upon Christian faith and life, and competencies in the practice of ministry. Since its founding in 1983, APNTS has trained men and women for a wide range of vocations. Today, over 350 graduates serve as pastors, teachers, Bible college presidents, missionaries, and various other church and para-church workers.

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