

## CHAPTER VII THE MODEL OF ADRIAN VAN KAAM - SUPPORTING AN EXTRAVERT PERSPECTIVE

Adrian Van Kaam is a priest/psychologist who taught spirituality to lay persons in Holland before coming to this country, received a doctoral degree from Case Western University and whose order, the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritians) has had a strong interest in spirituality. In 1963 he became the founder of what later came to be called the Institute of Formative Spirituality at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh. Associated with him and supportive of his perspectives has been Susan Muto who has written a great deal on devotional reading, edited the Institutes' publications and directed its graduate programs. His psychological/spiritual model is oriented in a direction which explores the meaning of living into the concrete situations of life and provides a model for a person with extravert preferences.

### Formative Spirituality

The earlier books by Father Van Kaam that deal most directly with his understanding of human personality and "Formative Spirituality" are:

*Religion and Personality*, Image Book, Doubleday, 1968, (new edition, Dimension Press, 1975).

*In Search of Spiritual Identity*, Dimension, 1975.

*The Dynamics of Spiritual Self Direction*, Dimension, 1976.

*The Transcendent Self: The Formative Spirituality of Middle, Early and Later Years of Life*, Dimension, 1979.

In all fairness it must be said that he would not consider his approach extravert or a special perspective among others, but foundational or fundamental. What I have described as introvert, that of Carl Jung, he would consider as a special perspective and as the basis for a special spirituality. Even in the case of Jung it must be remembered that he saw the first half of the individuation process as essentially extravert. Each model must to some extent include both. However, each has a special perspective which, it seems to me, has a special appeal to certain persons. Thus in working with persons in therapy or in spiritual direction it may be helpful to begin with a model most naturally suited to their personality and then to broaden our models to encourage personal growth.

First, Van Kaam's model as set forth in his earlier literature will be presented as this deals more with individual life and experience. The reader may wish to focus especially on this. Then we will explore his attempt to formulate a new science of formative spirituality with a more comprehensive and cosmic perspective. The reader may find this more difficult to follow because of his use of special terminology and its abbreviated presentation here. However, what he is doing is significant enough to necessitate some treatment and so that the present context of his earlier theory is understood.

His personality theory is set forth particularly in *Religion and Personality* and *In Search of Spiritual Identity*. In *Religion and Personality* he expressed his understanding of human existence as "historical presence", which is also foundational for his understanding of spiritual formation:

In order to know how the religious personality grows, it is necessary to consider certain fundamental ideas about the development of human existence. *Existence* in the etymological sense is derived from *ex*, meaning *out*, and *sistere*, meaning *to stand*. Thus *existence* in this context means that it is man's nature to stand out into reality, to participate in being, to be present to all that is. With reference to religious personality, it means to stand out more and more towards God, to participate increasingly in His life, to be present to Him in and beyond all things. When we speak of the development of existence, we must emphasize that this standing out, this participation in God's presence, has a history. In other words, there is no

moment in man's life in which his presence to God, to people, and to the world is not changing. Man's presence is always, as it were, in a state of flux.<sup>114</sup>

Presence to reality is constituted by five dimensions: the Infraconscious ("infra" means "below" or "under"), the Supraconscious which is our spiritual self and our openness to the transcendent, the Preconscious which is the bridge between the Conscious and the Infraconscious, the Conscious which is the center of rational control and management.<sup>115</sup> At the core of this complex self there is an identity which is God's gift, a unique call which must become incarnated in the concrete modes of life. Thus the unfolding formation of life can never be merely understood in terms of spontaneous or natural process within human life, but depends on its transcendent dimension.

As one goes through the life process one's self is incarnated in various concrete modes of life, some more and some less congenial to one's unique spiritual identity. Since this identity is not something that can only be discovered by living and reflecting, it takes time in the living process to sort out the more congenial modes of incarnation and in turn to make the commitments which deepen self understanding.<sup>116</sup> There are three "fundamental modes of incarnation of our spiritual identity":

1. Life call and life style - one's general approach to life in responsibility to God
2. Life form and "vocational style" - married life, celibate life in the priesthood or religious community, and celibate life in the world.
3. Profession and professional style - way of earning a living.

The discovery and incarnation of one's spiritual identity is facilitated by recollection, by reflecting on one's life. Van Kaam here is careful to distinguish between "introspection" and "transcendent reflection" or "transcendent self-presence." Introspection is "looking anxiously into myself." But "I can also be present to myself in a different way. .... Introspective reflection tends to be analytical and aggressive; transcendent reflection tends to be integrated and gentle. In introspective reflection, we isolate the 'reflected upon,' such as guilt and shame, from the larger backdrop of reality." Transcendent reflection

is meditative and gentle, a gentle preservation of all things as given and as tenderly held in the splendor of a Divine Presence. .... Transcendent self presence is called transcendent because it enables us to transcend, that is, to go beyond, the practical and sentimental meanings things may have for us in terms of our own private needs, ambitions, drives, and expectations. Transcendent self-presence pushes us beyond the limited here and now meanings of our own particular problems, childhood traumas, sensitivities, faults, and projects. In and beyond all of these, it integrates our lives contextually, that is, it helps us live in the context of the whole of reality, of which we are part, and with its divine all-pervading source. We begin to see ourselves in the loving and redeeming perspective of Divine Presence.<sup>117</sup>

The healthy life maintains in proper tension differentiation of the modes of life and integration of them. Differentiation alone would fragment a person and involve him/her in more modes of life than can be managed and some that are incongruent with one's life direction. Integration causes one to incorporate any individual mode into the totality of one's life and to subordinate it to one's life direction. Without differentiation there is little growth and discovery of the possibilities of life, without integration there is no organization of human existence which subordinates various modes to life direction and establishes an appropriate hierarchy of the modes.<sup>118</sup>

In a rather brief discussion of the will Van Kaam makes a helpful distinction between "a primary transcendent willing or receptive volition" and "a secondary or ego-willing". The latter he calls "executive

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<sup>114</sup>. Adrian Van Kaam, *Religion and Personality*, Image Book, Doubleday, 1968, pp. 12-13.

<sup>115</sup>. Adrian Van Kaam, *In Search of Spiritual Identity*, Dimension, 1975, pp. 112ff.

<sup>116</sup>. Ibid. pp. 138ff.

<sup>117</sup>. Ibid. pp. 172-6.

<sup>118</sup>. Van Kaam, *Religion and Personality*, pp. 13ff.

or managing willing," indicating that persons frequently try this when the other receptive willing is called for. One can will to write a poem and manage the necessary preparation, but one can't will the poem itself. One can organize space in life for prayer, but one cannot will religious experience. <sup>119</sup>

He sees the "self" as "essentially an emergent self; it belongs to the nature of the self to be emerging, becoming, transcending, or going beyond what it already has become." <sup>120</sup> The dynamic force of this self emergence is the human spiritual nature, the Supraconscious, which causes one to engage in the search for the transcendent dimension of life. Also productive of this emergence are the concrete life-situations which confront one with possibilities and limitations. One's search for the transcendent, the contexts of one's life experience, and what this all calls for in the person's development of modes of incarnation and growth -- all of this produces change. The change happens in the person as growth occurs and a self emerges that partially carries with it the self-as-it-was-before, but also contains new elements. Beyond the experience of personal growth, the person is confronted with biological change and a world that experiences rapid change. All of these changes confront the emerging self with an experience of "alienation" from the old self. There is nothing abnormal about this, but it may be frightening and produces anxiety about the rightness of becoming the new and feelings of guilt about the incompleteness of the old. Growth cannot occur without the willingness to face alienation.

When these changes and experiences of alienation relate directly to the spiritual formation process of a person, Van Kaam labels it a "transcendence crisis". When a culture provides a favorable climate for spiritual formation, "crises of transition begin earlier in life, are less striking, and succeed one another gradually and smoothly. Such gradual succession is unlikely in cultures that neglect spiritual formation." <sup>121</sup> In a culture that does not support spiritual reflection, the diminishing of life possibilities in the mid-life crisis raises questions of transcendence. The nature of this mid-life crisis does help us to understand other crises of transcendence. In his book, *The Transcendent Self*, Van Kaam discusses the ways in which the biblical use of the imagery of Christ's death and resurrection becomes relevant for understanding the life process:

Formative death and transcendence is thus a dynamic process. First of all, the outward flow of life becomes stagnant. Enthusiasm is gone: I feel bored, disinterested, frustrated, not at home any longer in familiar routines. Gradually, the outward movement of my life is replaced by an inward movement, by recollection and self-presence. In recollection I become aware of possible forms my life could take on. Emotional distance enables me to see life in a different perspective. This vision is the condition for transcendence. In meditating on my own potentialities and aspirations, my energies gather strength for resurrection.

This period of death and withdrawal is in effect a preparation for deeper life. I am suspended between the two poles of return to my former life form and progress to a wider, transcendent life orientation. Formative renewal is thus a spiritual sequence of frustration, withdrawal, new life orientation, and finally resurrection to a wider, transcendent form of life. If I did not die repeatedly, I should become encapsulated in past forms of life I have already realized. ....

We may conclude that formative crises have three phases" death, decision, resurrection. The death phase is one of frustration, anxiety, conflict. The phase of decision binds death to resurrection in the turning point of choice which implies transition to deeper living. The final phase of resurrection is one of transcendence, transformation and reintegration. These three aspects are so intertwined that it is often difficult to perceive them as distinct in the actual life situation. ....

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<sup>119</sup>. Van Kaam, *In Search of Spiritual Identity*, pp. 187ff.

<sup>120</sup>. Van Kaam, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Self Direction*, Dimension, 1976, p. 13.

<sup>121</sup>. Adrian Van Kaam, *The Transcendent Self: The Formative Spirituality of Middle, Early and Later Years of Life*, Dimension, 1979, p. 7.

Here is the old story, the recurrent ritual of death and resurrection. If I desire to live and grow, I must suffer; I must renew the formative thrust of my life in an act of sacrifice. I may have to renounce primitive impulses, status seeking, and egocentrism, but such an offering symbolizes my willingness to renounce a fixated past identity as a condition for rising anew as a more transcendent self.<sup>122</sup>

Van Kaam gives little space to what has traditionally been called "consolations" in spirituality, i.e. good feelings, reassuring experiences. The danger is that a concern for consolations can lead us away from facing our alienations and the emergence of our new selves.

...we cannot solve our alienation on the basis of consolation. When we look for consolations in excess or make them central in our lives, they become means of escape and evasion. When we evade new emergence, we only prolong our self alienation. It will be tougher to deal with and a higher price will have to be paid. Consolation, spiritual or otherwise, has a cushioning function; it relieves us when we sorely need reassurance and encouragement. Consolations are not meant to be escape hatches from reality. They "massage" us for the head on approach with our problems like the athlete is massaged with soothing oil to relax and be better ready to face his muscular opponent.<sup>123</sup>

As part of the transcendence crisis, and particularly true of the mid-life crisis, Van Kaam sees us moved to a new appreciation of the world as the *Domus Dei*, the *House of God*. The world no longer only frustrates, tempts and distracts, but heals, illumines and forms ... it becomes a place to dwell reverently as in the House of God.

Insofar as the world reveals itself as *Domus Dei*, the House of God, a transcendent home, we will live a more responsive and reflective presence to its nature, people and happenings. The turn to transcendence, far from taking us out of the world, brings us back to it in a whole new way. To be sure, we may slip back into a life of forgetfulness, but an inner restlessness calls us to return to the Transcendent. Sufferings and disappointments, detachments and deprivation will not cease, but now we allow them to speak their truth to us. They become opportunities to make a home for ourselves and others in the world as the House of God.<sup>124</sup>

### **Formative Spirituality As A New Science**

Van Kaam has now gone beyond his earlier discussion to produce a four volume series setting forth Formative Spirituality as a new science. His first volume, *Fundamental Formation*,<sup>125</sup> seeks to provide a universally valid theory of human life formation, drawing upon Eastern and Western form traditions with their prescientific suggestions about formation and also drawing upon insights regarding human formation in the arts and sciences. "To approximate a universally valid theory of human life formation, we should ask ourselves about the very foundation of this formation common to all people of all times and all places."<sup>126</sup>

Van Kaam states:

Many of us are convinced that Christianity and humanity are in need of a foundational theory of formation. Such a theory should keep central the spiritual characteristics of human life, their consonant unfolding and incarnation in all dimensions of one's world. What is needed is a view of "formation as spiritual" that integrates harmoniously the fundamental insights and data

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<sup>122</sup>. Van Kaam, *The Transcendent Self*, pp. 169-170, 172, 175.

<sup>123</sup>. Van Kaam, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Self Direction*, p. 233.

<sup>124</sup>. Van Kaam, *The Transcendent Self*, p. 121.

<sup>125</sup>. Adrian Van Kaam, *Fundamental Formation, Formative Spirituality* vol. 1, Crossroad, 1983.

<sup>126</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. xx.

relevant to spiritual unfolding. It should take into account important findings of the arts and sciences.<sup>127</sup>

In the Appendix which describes "The Position of the Science of Formation within a Classification of the Sciences", he describes the importance of the word "spirituality" in "foundational formative spirituality" as:

The reason for the latter title is based on the central presupposition of this science: human formation should be based on what is distinctively human. This distinctive mark is to be found in the transcendent nature of our existence.

Accordingly, formative spirituality is the art and discipline of receiving distinctively human formation and of humanly giving form to life and world. It is the art of penetration by the spirit of all powers, dimension, articulations, awareness states, and phases of human life and its corresponding formation fields. This process and its conditions must be researched and verified scientifically or intersubjectively.<sup>128</sup>

Whereas the work of the depth psychologist Ira Progoff is largely based on biological evolutionary theory, Van Kaam's perspective is rooted in quantum physics:

Modern physics has developed the concept of a quantum field. This is a formation field which can assume two forms: the form of quanta or the form of particles. It is a new scientific vision of what we call the physical epiphany of the formation mystery. This view has led to a description of subatomic particles and their interformative interactions - a description which posits each type of particle as compatible with a specific field. Within this field the particle can emerge and vanish. In this sense it could be called a potential, or virtual, form within a specific compatible formation field.

There is thus no longer any validity to the concept of a separation or an absolute contrast between a field and the solid forms or particles that emerge within the field. The quantum field itself functions as the fundamental physical entity that is a manifestation of the epiphany of the formation mystery. The mystery discloses itself in its cosmic epiphany as an energy field, a continuous medium or matrix of formation and reformation, which manifests itself everywhere in space. Forms are local condensations of their formation field. They are momentary or periodic concentrations of form energy. When such forms vanish, they lose their uniqueness. They are absorbed again into the underlying field.

The primal epiphany of the formation mystery in the energy field is the only enduring reality of the universe. When the mystery in a region of space allows the field to become extremely intense, forms flow forth. All forms are transient manifestations of a foundational formation field out of which they emerge. In the course of time they will be reabsorbed in their field. Hence, a spirit of poverty and a purity of heart deepen our awareness that all of the forms to which we are so attached are transitory. Ascribing to them an ultimate solidity and endurance is wishful thinking, an illusion of the pride-form.

The formation field about which the science of formative spirituality speaks cannot be identified with the quantum field of the physicist. For the field of human formation embraces not only the cosmic but also the distinctively human and transhuman epiphanies of the formation mystery. Consequently, it is ultimately beyond all concepts, images, and symbols. It touches on the essence of the mystery itself. ....

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<sup>127</sup>. Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>128</sup>. Ibid., p. 276.

The primordial cosmic manifestation of the mystery is beyond observable forms. It defies description and specification. One could call it formless. The word formless emphasizes that this manifestation has no form comparable to the numerous observable forms that emerge and vanish in the macro- and microcosmos. In a stricter sense, however, this primordial manifestation is not really formless. It has the elusive form of an energy flow in constant motion. Similarly, one could call this underlying formative power *emptiness*, or void. Such metaphors, while helpful, would become deceptive if absolutized. This so-called emptiness should not be misunderstood as mere nothingness, or absence of something.

We must conceive of this emptiness as a vibrant, alive emptiness, a void filled with mysterious power, the hidden, sacred spring of all material formation, the source of all cosmic life. This primordial cosmic manifestation is the living womb, the creative matrix of all material forms, like a holy grail filled with form potential. It can be likened to the quantum field of which contemporary physics speaks. For this field is also conceived as a matrix of formation. It, too, gives rise to countless forms. It keeps sustaining them during their limited life spans. Eventually, the field reabsorbs them in its undifferentiated ground-form of endlessly moving cosmic formation energy. The void is not a real void but a ceaseless dance of formation and reformation. It is the cosmic source of the continuous death and birth of dynamic and transitory sensible forms.<sup>129</sup>

The second volume deals with the dispositions emphasized by different form traditions. The third shows how the Christian form tradition can be articulated in the light of this science. The fourth suggests a "*Christian formation theory of personality* that goes beyond a mere Christian anthropology and complements and integrates secular theories of personality."

In developing his science Van Kaam also develops his own terminology. At first this seems unnecessarily cumbersome, but he argues from the theories of linguistic analysis that though a common language is used, in different situations people use different "language games". Thus if a science does not establish its own terminology, it is not a reliable and identifiable science. Though scientific terminology is important, a secondary popular language may be used to communicate with the non-specialist.

Van Kaam lists six basic assumptions of the science of Foundational Human Formation:

1. "...human formation, by necessity, participates in the laws of formation of the micro- and macrocosmic universe of mineral, plant, and animal formation studies in the physical and biological sciences."
2. "... our formation bears a distinctively human quality. This distinctive mark manifests itself in formation abilities, demands, and desires that transcend the cosmic formation processes in which human life also shares. This distinctively human quality of formation has been acknowledged by most great cultural traditions. They have given it various names, one of which is spirit, or *spiritual formation power*."
3. "... the sociohistorical, vital, and functional formation of life and culture should be directed and pervaded by the spirit power, or *transcendence dynamic*, of human life. The art and discipline of fostering such direction and pervasion of all form dimensions by the human spirit has been given various name in diverse cultures. One of these is spirituality."
4. "The fourth leading assumption of the science deals with the social radius of this spiritualization. It holds that local and international concern for social justice and its facilitating conditions in the realm of formation is an essential and integral element of foundational human spirituality itself. The latter can never be reduced to concern for one's

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<sup>129</sup>. Ibid., pp. 200-202.

inner life alone. A consonant life formation for the maximum number of people is impossible to pursue in an unjust or merciless society."

5. "...the formation wisdom of humanity tends to be articulated in specific cultural form traditions of a religious or ideological nature. Such traditions may contain less or more than the original formation wisdom of humanity. The symbols and records of these form traditions are among the main sources of study of humanity's formation experience. Moreover, one of the conditions of consonant formation is participation in one or more of these form traditions."

6. The sixth assumption "by which this science operates is that its research should be relevant to the praxis of formation. Like the sciences of medicine, law, education, business administration, or music, this science, too, prepares not only academicians but also professional practitioners." <sup>130</sup>

Van Kaam answers the question as to why Christians should be interested in the formative insights of those who do not share the Christian revelation. Besides the traditional argument that grace builds upon nature, he states:

The answer resides in our remembering that as Christians we are called to love all people. In a spirit of justice and mercy, we should foster anything that can facilitate human goodness and happiness everywhere. Spiritual formation will make the lives of people more appreciative, joyful, whole, and effective. Human formation may be complemented and perfected by the graced formation that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. How could we in justice withhold loving interest in the formation of others and still believe ourselves to be channels of care for the mystery of formation for all people? (pp. 20-21)

In the chapter in *Fundamental Formation* which provides an overview of his "foundational theory of human formation", using the terminology that he has developed, he indicates that "Formation is an evolutionary process characteristic of the universe known to us as a formative energy field. .... Human formation shares in this universal process even while transcending it. .... All forms in the cosmos emerge and attain their proper form because of their *foundational form potency*." <sup>131</sup> This potency maintains a *form direction* which enables specific forms to develop appropriately. The human life-form, indicates Van Kaam, has almost no instinctual form directives, and thus it has to "stake out its own formation field." <sup>132</sup> Thus humans highlight certain form appearances in the cosmos and indicate them as formationally relevant. "Our formation is both a continuous and a discontinuous process of disclosure and implementation of receptive and creative form directives and their formation fields. In this process human societies develop universes of symbols pointing to traditionally shared formation fields." <sup>133</sup> The symbols are the treasures by which the formation field is maintained and, when they are interiorized, "Human life is inwardly formed in part by the countless experiences we can draw from that symbolic universe." <sup>134</sup>

The formation field of humans is made up of five *poles*:

- Preformation* - organismic, vital, and unconscious aspects of formation
- Intraformation* - inner formation dynamics
- Interformation* - influences of people on each other
- Situational* - immediate formative situations
- World* - the cosmic and cultural world situation mediated through one's environment

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<sup>130</sup>. Adrian Van Kaam, *Fundamental Formation*, Crossroad, 1983.

<sup>131</sup>. Ibid., pp. 243-244.

<sup>132</sup>. Note on p. 247, *Fundamental Formation*, his discussion that whereas subhuman forms are influenced by form genetics *only*, human forms are influenced by both form genetics and form tradition.

<sup>133</sup>. Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>134</sup>. Ibid., p. 245.

The processes involved with these poles are not usually the object of prolonged *focal consciousness*. Some are *infraconscious*, often they are preconscious, and others are *transconscious*.<sup>135</sup> The *foundational form* of the human exists prior to experience, is embodied in one's biology, but has a transcendent quality. This is like a road sign, gradually disclosing to us the direction of our unfolding life. The *empirical life-form* is the way we give concrete form to our life in its concrete circumstances. "The empirical life-form develops by a kind of implicit dialogue between the foundational form and the formative communities, situations, and formative events that emerge in our formation field."<sup>136</sup>

The sources of empirical life-formation are transcendent (*formative transcendent mind* with its powers of higher reason and of transcendent and intuitive imagination, memory, and anticipation - and *formative transcendent will* which decides directions in the light of the appraisals of the transcendent mind) and incarnational or functional (intelligence, will, memory, imagination, and anticipation working in the concrete situations of life). The result of these sources is the expression of forms of life congenial with the foundational life-form, compatible with our life contexts and the fourfold dimensions of human life: sociohistorical, vital, functional, and transcendent. The heart of this process is the *core form*, while the "bridges" to the various dimensions of the form field are *current and apparent life-forms*. These "concretize the basic inclinations of the heart into everyday life as lived here and now within one's concrete formation field."<sup>137</sup> They are also the response to the real or imagined expectations of others, sensitive accommodations which still allow our core form to shine through. In contradistinction to the core form, these current and apparent forms are only *periodically* permanent and are adaptive. The integration of all this, termed *intermediate* because it is only an approximation of full integration, is termed the *actual life-form*.

Human formation is *phasic*, i.e., it progresses through various discontinuous phases due to biological changes and gives rise to various moments of transition. *Formative transcendence* applies to phasic and other decisive changes, indicating a going beyond a current life-form. In the transition one needs both to mourn for what was and search for a new mode of presence, compatible with the new situation and faithful to the emergent uniqueness of the person. In this a *transcendence crisis* is often evoked.

The form traditions available in one's formation field provide *form directives* which may initially be participated in preconsciously but later affirmed by one's emergent life and consciously chosen. Under the impact of certain sociohistorical influences, one may form a counterfeit form structure that is uncongenial and blocks the free flow of ongoing formation. This may turn the formation power into a *power of erratic deformation*, becoming fixated "in a proudly absolutized core or in a current or apparent life-form."<sup>138</sup>

"The human life-form is always situated. From conception on, people are located somewhere in time and space. They are inserted formatively in human history. .... Ongoing formation is in part a critical and creative lifelong dialogue with the key situations of one's initial formation." Consequently persons may and should "either ratify or contest the foundations of their form tradition."<sup>139</sup> Two types of formation situations are distinguished: *current formation situations*, those people face in various immediate environments, and *persistent situations*, the partially interiorized life situations that form one's life more lastingly.

Five types of responses to formation situations are identified: blind identification, ratification, contestation, consonant ratification-contestation, and consonance. Perhaps only the last two need

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<sup>135</sup>. See previous discussion for Van Kaam's use of this terminology. Transconscious, not previously mentioned, refers to transcendent processes.

<sup>136</sup>. Van Kaam, *Fundamental Formation*, p. 252.

<sup>137</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>138</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 266. Van Kaam also calls this the pride-form which in his glossary he defines as: "the counterfeit form of life" which is "always secretly and subtly seducing us to push ourselves beyond the limited gifts of grace and nature granted to us in regard to our limited possibilities of gentle and firm participation in the reformation and transformation of the world. It pushes us beyond our providential life situation." p. 305.

<sup>139</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

comment. Consonant ratification-contestation transcends blind identification. It "critically and creatively contests in its ongoing process of appraisal all current and persistent formation situations. It firmly and gently ratifies what seems consonant with objective form directives, congenial with one's foundational life-form, compatible with the foundationally and accretionally consonant elements of the life situation, and compassionate with oneself and with those with whom one must live the life of interformation." Full consonance with one's life-form is likely ours "only at privileged peak moments of life or at its peaceful end."<sup>140</sup>

Van Kaam devotes a chapter to the *mystery of formation*. Formation is an inescapable experience, but does it have meaning and is it beneficial? The formation mystery discloses itself in three ways: the cosmic, the human, and the transhuman. Contemporary physics points "to the atomic and subatomic cosmic dance of the ongoing formation and reformation occurring at every moment in the universe .... the cosmos is an all-embracing energy process of continuous interformation. .... No psychophysical or physical form can survive, or keep forming itself, outside this web." <sup>141</sup>

A central presupposition of the science of formation is the unity and interformation of all people, things, and events, which share in some measure in the cosmic epiphany of the formation mystery. This science, insofar as it offers a universal synthesis of all foundational factors of human formation, draws much of its inspiration from the world view of modern physics, wherein new models and theories support a vision of a universe that is a web of interformative interactions. .... The more people are able to form their lives in consonance with the flow of universal cosmic interformation, the easier it becomes for them to relate effectively to life and world. .... Awareness of the formation mystery does not limit itself to awareness of its presence in our field of daily formation. It expands itself to an awareness of the unity and mutual interformation of all things and events. <sup>142</sup>

The forms that emerge are marked by differences and contrasts on the vital and functional level: e.g. male-female, light-darkness, success-failure. But the transcendent involves a higher dimensionality. "The transcendent life gathers and integrates the formative experience of the other dimensions. .... In this self-disclosure of the formation mystery, the opposites in life and nature are experienced as mutually complementary. Their forming interplay is characteristic of the manifestation of the formation mystery in the universe of matter." <sup>143</sup>

Ultimately we are brought to the question of whether this mystery of formation is meaningful or beneficial.

Can we abandon our lives to this mysterious process in a movement of seminal faith, hope and consonance?

The mystery of formation seems to invite us to respond to its presence in some positive or negative fashion. We feel called to take a position. .... Most of the time, the response is given in the act of trusting life itself. Every person decides whether to believe and trust in the

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<sup>140</sup>. Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>141</sup>. Ibid., pp. 187-188.

<sup>142</sup>. Ibid., p. 190 - 193.

<sup>143</sup>. Ibid., p. 197.

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meaningfulness of the ongoing formation of life and world. No matter what we decide, this primordial option and subsequent disposition will profoundly color our formation history.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>. Ibid, p. 221.

## CHAPTER VIII CONTEMPLATIVE PSYCHOLOGIES

Contemplative psychologies are partially a consequence of the influence of Eastern thought on the Western world and partially a result of frustration with analyses of the human being which separate one from the broader vistas of life and meaning. In some ways Jung's approach might be considered contemplative, though its significance and influence demanded individual attention. In contemplative psychologies the human experience is approached in a direct fashion without primary emphasis on analysis, definition and the removal of ambiguities. There is also a recognition that human transformation occurs by relating to the human reality in attentive and integrative ways rather than willfully seeking control.

### **Ego at the Threshold, Edward Sampson**

Edward Sampson, professor of sociology and psychology at Clark University in Canada, explains the purpose of his book *Ego at the Threshold*:

The essay that follows reflects this growing search in the West for a perspective on human life that has been profoundly eroded elsewhere but has been nurtured within the East. We search for the bases of human freedom and transcendence in a world that is now, and for all practical purposes will remain, intensely governed by Western consciousness-shaping forces. Our search is for that point of balance between the Westernized pursuit of mechanization, stability, and order and the Easternized pursuit of subjective enlightenment and personal freedom.<sup>145</sup>

Sampson points out that the ego world that we are commonly aware of is a reconstituted world, the result of our reflection on what has already happened to us. However, before this reconstituted ego world there is "our emerging self," "our transcendent experiential stream," our "I" (in distinction from the objectified "me"). "We are never directly in the presence of our emerging I, this experiential stream of our becoming. We are aware only of the *me*, the reflected object derived through the role-taking possibilities that language permits. We are aware of I only after it has emerged and returned, so to speak, in the form of a mirrored reflection, a *me*."<sup>146</sup>

I view the roots of our person to lie within the experiential stream, a pre-verbal, pre-logical realm that is truly primary and fundamental. Out of this beginning, the ego's apparent primary and secondary processes are later differentiated. In this view, the unconscious processes of which the Freudians speak are essentially part of the ego's world, rather than a part of the transcendent perspective. It should be clear by now that in my usage of the term, the *ego's world* includes the id-ego-supergo functions that psychoanalytic theory outlines; this world, in turn, is distinguished from the world of the transcendent perspective.

The ego's world is, with its conscious and its dynamically unconscious aspects, developed out of the initial world of the transcendent stream. These later aspects develop within the stream's continuing presence. Our ego's world, which comes to occupy our life's everyday center-stage, sits as an island within the middle of a continuously unfolding experiential stream. Our ego's world is a narrowing of this stream, and imposition of its perspective on aspects of that stream.<sup>147</sup>

Borrowing a term from Alfred Schutz's studies in phenomenology he describes the ego world as embodying the perspective of the *natural standpoint* which suspends doubt concerning the reality of the

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<sup>145</sup>. Edward Sampson, *Ego At the Threshold*, NY: a Delta Book, Dell Pub. Co., 1975, p. 5.

<sup>146</sup>. Ibid., pp. 120ff.

<sup>147</sup>. Ibid., pp. 155-156.

everyday world as constructed through development and socialization.<sup>148</sup> Besides this there is the *transcendent standpoint*: the world of pure experience where the ego is spectator and by which it may be reconstituted. It is not in the discovery of the unconscious that freedom lies,

But the limits of our freedom are not to be approached until those moments in which our actions are under the guidance of the unfolding spontaneous flow of our transcendent stream. As long as we remain influenced by those parts of us that have been culturally determined, we remain within the natural perspective, known and predictable. It is only when we become fully the author of our destiny by letting be that part of ourselves that simply is always becoming that we reach beyond, transcend the limits of the everyday, and move into the realm of absolute freedom. In those moments and in those domains, we may indeed be said to have a discontinuity in our existence; where the past no longer speaks adequately for the future; where conceptual rules that applied no longer hold; where we emerge and reveal our fundamental humanity.<sup>149</sup>

### Will and Spirit, Gerald May

Gerald May, a psychiatrist associated with the Shalem Institute in Washington, DC, and author of *Pilgrimage Home*,<sup>150</sup> the story of the Shalem Institute and its approach, deserves extended treatment here. Besides affirming the role of contemplation in spiritual formation, in *Care of Mind Care of Spirit*<sup>151</sup> he brings together in a finely balanced way spirituality and psychology, providing clarity about their different foci and "a concise and practical discussion of a variety of psychiatric considerations encountered in spiritual direction."<sup>152</sup> He also provides a significant psychological model in *Will and Spirit*.<sup>153</sup> In recent years he has been exploring the relationship of spiritual experience to the human neurological system.

May speaks of spirit and the transcendent as more than Sampson's stream of human existence and becoming, though he also proposes "an illumination of our psychological experience in the light of spiritual insight," an insight that has captured his heart.<sup>154</sup> He confesses being inspired by the call to surrender to the ultimate mystery of life, something that becomes integral to his psychology.<sup>155</sup> He sees full integration of psychology and spirituality as an impossibility because of Western psychology's ultimate willfulness: its desire to understand and control.

As long as science is a servant of willfulness it can lead only to the gateway of meaning. To move through this gateway, willfulness must give way to willingness and surrender. Mastery must yield to mystery.<sup>156</sup>

Willfulness sets oneself "apart from the fundamental essence of life in an attempt to master, direct, control, or otherwise manipulate existence." Willingness "implies a surrendering of one's self-separateness, an entering-into, and immersion in the deepest process of life itself. It is a realization that one already is a part of some ultimate cosmic process and it is a commitment to participation in that process,"<sup>157</sup> and an openness to a mystery which "can be experienced, sensed, felt, appreciated, even

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<sup>148</sup>. Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>149</sup>. Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>150</sup>. May, Gerald, *Pilgrimage Home: The Conduct of Contemplative Practice in Groups*, NY: Paulist Press, 1979.

<sup>151</sup>. Gerald G. May, *Care of Mind Care of Spirit: Psychiatric Dimensions of Spiritual Direction*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982.

<sup>152</sup>. Ibid., p. x.

<sup>153</sup>. Gerald G. May, *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982.

<sup>154</sup>. May, *Will and Spirit*, p. vii.

<sup>155</sup>. Ibid., pp. 1ff.

<sup>156</sup>. Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>157</sup>. Ibid., p. 6.

loved, without being understood."<sup>158</sup> As a paradigm of this May discusses unitive spiritual experience which is the "keystone of contemplative spirituality."<sup>159</sup>

In spontaneously occurring unitive experiences, one feels suddenly "swept up" by life, "caught" in a suspended moment where time seems to stand still and awareness peaks in both of its dimensions, becoming at once totally wide-awake and open. Everything in the immediate environment is experienced with awesome clarity, and the vast panorama of consciousness lies open. For the duration of the experience -- which is usually not long -- mental activity seems to be suspended. Preoccupations, misgivings, worries, and desires all seem to evaporate, leaving everything "perfect, just as it is." Usually there are some reactive feelings that occur toward the end of the experience, feelings such as awe, wonder, expansiveness, freedom, warmth, love, and a sense of total truth or "rightness" After the experience is over, there is an almost invariable recollection of having been *at one*.<sup>160</sup>

Contemplative experience, as May discusses it, both provides a window for the observation of our inner processes,<sup>161</sup> and "a window upon the eternal reality that undergirds and infuses our being."<sup>162</sup> Both of these are important insights into human existence.

May's discussion of contemplation as a window upon the human inner processes is to be found in his chapter on "Energy: The Unifying Force".<sup>163</sup> Whereas Freud saw energy primarily in relationship to the *id*, ego psychologies often see energy in relationship to the *ego*, and others see it in relationship to physiological processes, Eastern thought has usually understood energy as synonymous with basic life-force. This means that behind the manifestations of psychic energy in all of its differentiated forms there is a uniform source and that this source is related to cosmic energy beyond our individual existence. As this energy appears within the psyche it associates with idea-thought-concept complexes and memories and differentiates into identifiable emotions, stimulating further associations in the process. To illustrate the observation of this in contemplative practice, May cites the experience of a Roman Catholic nun in contemplative prayer during a retreat:

I went into the retreat with my mind filled with busy-ness. I was depressed and angry about some of my relationships at work, and I was even more distressed by some sexual feelings which had begun to stir within me in relation to a man I had to work closely with. I have had such feelings before, and I can usually handle them without difficulty. But this time they seemed stronger and more tenacious, and they were proving to be quite a distraction. My daily prayer time had been filled with thoughts about work and images of this man, and it seemed I couldn't get beyond those superficialities to any true sense of quiet. I had lost touch with the quiet center of spirit which is such an important "home" for me. I was indeed feeling ready for a retreat.

During the first part of the retreat my mind remained highly turbulent, but after many hours of just sitting with all the mental noise, things began to quiet down. The multiplicity of thoughts and images which had preoccupied my attention began to disappear. As they left, I became aware of another layer of turbulence beneath them, this consisting of emotions.

Watching this very quietly, I experienced the whole gamut of emotions coming through my mind one after another as if on parade. Sadness, anger, frustration, sexual desire, guilt, fear, hope, and now and then some peace, lightness, and humor. First I recognized all of these as feelings, much like body sensations but coming from deep within my awareness. They seemed

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<sup>158</sup>. Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>159</sup>. Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>160</sup>. Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>161</sup>. Ibid., pp. 172ff.

<sup>162</sup>. Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>163</sup>. Ibid., pp. 172ff.

to originate very deeply, and for a while I became fascinated with seeing how they came into being. It appeared that something lay behind these feelings -- some origin or source -- and that my usual experience of them had been very superficial. As I moved more intimately towards that point of origin, it seemed as if there was a level at which a kind of diffuse dynamic "percolation" was taking place. Indeed, this appeared to be at a very primeval point, perhaps at that place where the mind and body truly meet. I know I lost all ability to discriminate between what was mental and what physical.

Out of this level of "percolation" there seemed to come spurts of activity which became attached to certain mental concepts or words or memories or images. When this attachment took place, I could immediately identify that "spurt" or "spark" as a feeling; an emotion. And with just a little more discrimination I could label the feeling as anger or sadness or whatever. I was left with the conviction that what I experience as emotions on a day-to-day basis is really just a superficial interpretation of a much larger and more generalized process. More importantly I was deeply impressed by the fact that while all this activity takes place it is possible for some kind of awareness to be present, totally unruffled, watching it all with complete serenity. There is something deeply reassuring about that.<sup>164</sup>

May's description of "the birth of an emotion" is too important not to quote in full:

#### Step 1: Triggering of Energy

A stimulus in the environment or within the body itself triggers a surge of raw energy. For the purposes of this discussion we will say that the stimulus is sexual, such as a close contact with a potential sexual partner, or the thought or memory of such a contact. The stimulus, however, could just as well be one that would result in anger, fear, or some other emotion.

#### Step 2: Primary (Physiological) Responses

The brain quickly associates this energy surge *with* the stimulus, unconsciously inferring a cause-and-effect relationship. The brain also begins to mediate certain as yet unconscious physical reactions to the stimulus. Many of these are purely reflexive, having nothing to do with "higher" brain function. At first there is a general alerting of the somatic and/or autonomic nervous systems, which rapidly become focused on specific organs of response. A state of "arousal" of the central nervous system now exists, and this is beginning to affect the rest of the body. Pulse rate and respiration may increase slightly, and the somatic musculature may begin to tense.

#### Step 3: Formation of Emotion

The energy becomes more differentiated, taking on feeling-tone qualities that are increasingly characteristic of sexuality as compared to anger, fear, and so on. In part, this is a function of which areas of the central nervous system are responding to the energy and the nature of those responses.

#### Step 4: Psychodynamic Alterations

Some of these feeling-tones become associated with memories and conditioned responses, both pleasant and unpleasant, that are related to similar sensations. This may add different feelings and physiological responses to the original energy, subtly changing and complicating its overall quality.

#### Step 5: Identification of the Emotion

The energy, with its attached feeling-tones, becomes associated with conscious ideation (thinking). One of these thoughts will take the form of labeling the energy, first as a physical or emotional sensation, and then as a definite sexual feeling. Other thoughts will relate to

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<sup>164</sup>. Ibid., pp. 175-176.

memories again, forming complicated associations of thoughts, feelings, and physical responses.

#### Step 6: Secondary Behavioral and Psychological Responses

This combination of thoughts and feelings now stimulates more extensive physical and mental activity relating to possible behavior. This could involve pursuit of sexual encounter, repression of the entire process, or anything in between. Here additional physiological responses may be added to those that were initiated in Step 2.

#### Step 7: Practical Evaluation

The raising of behavioral possibilities into awareness calls forth conscious and/or preconscious processes of evaluation and judgement. Some of these judgements are expedient and reality-oriented and would be seen as ego functions in psychoanalytic theory. Others involve issues of morality, "shoulds" and "oughts," and would be called superego functions. Still other ego functions, such as simple observation or appreciation of the process, may also occur.

#### Step 8: Prolongation

Regardless of the nature of the action chosen, the various behaviors, thoughts, and feelings now occurring tend to keep the whole process alive for a certain period of time. One might say that at this point the energy is being "held on it"; one has become "attached" to it. The process becomes self-perpetuating. The initial energy stimulated feelings, which stimulated thoughts, which in turn now restimulate energy. This creates a *state* of being sexually preoccupied (or of being angry or afraid in the case of other emotions) rather than simply experiencing a passing emotional arousal.

#### Step 9: Self-Image Evaluation

In response to the complex of feelings, thoughts, and body sensations combined with the awareness of actions taken or not taken, the entire process is interpreted in relation to self-image. A kind of parental evaluation usually takes place, not so much of the feelings themselves as of the "self" that experienced and responded to them. Some people may feel good or bad about themselves simply because they *had* the feeling. Others make their judgements in terms of behavior only. Depending on how self-concerned an individual is, this step may pass quickly or turn into an extensive preoccupation.

#### Step 10: Ending

At some point, either because of depletion of energy through mental and physical activity or because of the appearance of a new and different stimulus, the process ends. The energy itself has been expended, transferred to something new, or locked-off and "frozen" by some psychological blockage. The experience is relegated to preconscious or unconscious memory (forgotten or repressed).<sup>165</sup>

As a window upon eternal reality, contemplation teaches us

... that life is infinitely vast and mysterious, and that it is a process so rich and dynamic that the more we understand of it, the more mysterious it must become. It is not a matter of willfully believing that we are fundamentally separate or at one. Instead, it is that we are absolutely and energetically *both*, as only willingness can permit us to realize. The spiritual masters of East and West have been proclaiming this for millennia, but it is not for willful hearts to hear. *Nirvana* and *samsara* are one. God is both manifest in us and at the same time eternally transcendent, absolutely beyond us. Jesus Christ is at once human and divine. The One is the All, and the Ten Thousand Things are the One. The *Tonal* is one aspect of the *Nagual*. The

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<sup>165</sup>. Ibid., pp. 179-181. Under normal conditions the process does not enter awareness until Step 5, where some thinking occurs, even though May sees the whole process taking place within consciousness, as he defines it.

little mind of daily life is the Big Mind of enlightenment. As the *Theologica Germanica* says, "This world is an outer court of Eternity."<sup>166</sup>

The methods for approaching the psyche and what it expresses are then the methods of contemplation rather than scientific analysis and objectification. Though unitive experiences appear without preparation or intent, as a part of daily life, the contemplative methods assist in creating an openness to the experience of the psyche and the mystery of human existence. Primary is *awareness* which may be broad and lethargic or focused and alert (the latter being called *attention*). All of the contemplative methods seek to develop focused awareness. May uses the well-known Zen image of the moon reflected in the water in a bowl to describe awareness and the affect upon it of preoccupation and will and physical fatigue and dullness. Silent attentiveness allows the reflection of reality (the moon) to be clear.

Two things can alter the moon's reflection in a bowl of water. The first is turbulence. If awareness becomes preoccupied with some certain content, it tends to become restless and agitated in the attempt to focus on this thing to the exclusion of others. It is as if the water in the bowl were shaken about. Its reflections become distorted and fragmented. This is what happens to awareness when one becomes preoccupied or distracted or works very hard to pay attention. It is as if an external force (in this case will) is applied to the surface of the water, causing disruptions that interfere with, rather than improve, perception.

The second thing that can alter the moon's reflection is that the water can become muddied, cloudy, or dulled. In awareness this happens when wakefulness and alertness diminish and one slips into a dulled, lethargic, or somnolent state. In this case, even though the surface of the water may be smooth, it is so dulled that only vague, hazy reflections are possible. More often than not in normal daily life, the water is both muddied and turbulent. Most of the time we live with awareness that is to some extent dulled as well as restricted.<sup>167</sup>

Though willingness is central to a concern for the human psyche, when it comes to helping persons on their spiritual journey it is imperative.

In my opinion, this willingness-to-surrender-into-simplicity should lie at the core of offering any kind of help to others, but it is imperative when it comes to offering spiritual help.<sup>168</sup>

Though one must be careful what one surrenders to, to surrender to the mystery of existence is to come home to the ground of our existence. It has to do with the "full and ultimate God constantly existing within, through, and immeasurably beyond all images," it is the beginning of the "appreciation of our true nature" and a "most profound openness to love." And it is where we find "the courage and the fundamental human competence to taste the full flavor of every particle of life and to respond with absolutely fierce risking-trust to what is needed in every moment."<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup>. Ibid., p. 67.

*Samsara*, in Hinduism, is the worldly cycle of birth and death that occurs in the atmosphere of *maya*, "delusion". *Nirvana*, essentially a Buddhist term used in Hinduism more recently, is the ideal liberation from *samsara*. The "One and The Ten Thousand Things" are Taoist terms, also used much in Buddhism. *Tonal* and *nagual* are terms found in Carols Castaneda's stories of his encounters with the Yaqui Indian sorcerer, Don Juan Matus. (See Castaneda's *Tales of Power* [New York: Pocket Books, 1976], pp. 119-128.) The *tonal* is seen as an island of dualistic, causal reality in the great spiritual sea of the *nagual*. Little mind and Big Mind are Zen terms. The *Theologica Germanica* is a fourteenth-century classic of Christian mysticism. Its author is unknown, but it is thought that he was a priest and a Teutonic knight and lived in Frankfurt. Ibid., chpt. 4, footnote 22, pp. 331-332.

<sup>167</sup>. Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>168</sup>. Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>169</sup>. Ibid., pp. 309-310.

## Riding the Ox Home, Willard Johnson

Willard Johnson's book, *Riding the Ox Home: A History of Meditation from Shamanism to Science*, is primarily intended to "reinterpret meditation for our present day and its needs." Human spirituality is seen as a change and evolution in consciousness which goes beyond sensory and adaptive forms of awareness and survival modes of behaviour. It is also seen as essential to human maturing.

To mature, to become full adult, means to be able to stand outside these patterns (the fight-flight and primeval adaptive patterns), thus to learn who we really can be. In this lies the promise of spirituality, of love, and our flowering as *Homo sapiens*, the last surviving hominid form.<sup>170</sup>

Johnson's discussion of meditation leads naturally to a treatment of human maturity and development. This is expressed primarily through the meaning of the Ox Herding pictures which appear at the end of each of the chapters. According to Chinese Buddhism, Po-chang Huai-hai (CE 720-814) when asked what the Buddha is, presented his followers with the *koan*: "It is like seeking for an ox while you are yourself on it." When asked what good knowing the ox would be, he replied, "It is like going home riding on it."<sup>171</sup> From this koan sets of from six to ten scenes were developed to assist students in meditation. Each scene is done within a circle or *mandala*.

In the first picture, "In the Beginning, Struggling to Emerge From Confusion", the boy ox tamer, holding a rope in his hand, looks for the ox. He appears about to cross a bridge, but looks back, troubled. The second, "Sighting the Tracks, Finding the Ox's Traces", shows the boy who has seen the tracks of the ox on the ground and looks into the distance, shielding his eyes, where he now sees the ox. He knows the direction he must go. The ox is perhaps one's *karma*, the consequences of one's past actions and inheritance of biology and experience. The boy is the young and inexperienced human while the ox is the human animal nature, out of control and seeking its ends, instinctual. Picture Three, "Glimpsing the Ox", has the boy, with rope in hand, pursuing the ox whose hind quarters appear behind a tree. The boy has "entered the gate" of meditative quiet. However, the ox and the boy are still separate and the ox does not work for the boy. Can he keep the ox in sight?

The Fourth, "Catching the Ox To Turn It Round", shows the boy having roped the ox, trying to change the direction of the struggling ox. Traditional commentaries note that "the ox nature must be subdued with unbending heart". The ox resists, but its power and preoccupations must be changed. In the Fifth, "Leading the Ox On the Path", the boy now leads the ox rather than the other way around. This represents a radical reshaping of personality, though the ox must still be lead. There is the promise of the power of the ox, but the boy and ox are still separate. The Sixth, "Riding the Ox Home", shows the boy riding the ox untethered, playing the flute -- for the boy can now turn his attention to other things once the ox's full force is at his disposal.

Picture Seven, "The Ox Forgotten, Leaving The Boy To Meditate Deeply", shows that discipline "has so integrated the ox back into the boy's consciousness that it no longer needs special attention." He has reached home and all the beauties of nature are around him while he, in peace, is in deep meditation. There is a first stage of self-forgetfulness and selflessness in the disappearance of the ox.

The Eighth, "Both Boy and Ox Forgotten!", represents enlightenment, a unitive mystical experience in which self-hood is temporarily lost. There is the circle which embraces reality, but nothing appears within it, yet all is in it. The Ninth, "Return To The Source", is still without the ox and the person, but within the circle appear plum blossom, rock and squat bamboo (the three pure ones), beside a gently flowing stream (the waters of universal change), representing a oneness with the cosmos. The Tenth portrays "Meeting Pu-Tai on Life's Playful Road". Here the matured person is again seen, without any separate representation of the ox. Pu-tai, a legendary religious figure, carries his hemp-bag full of everything and

<sup>170</sup>. Willard Johnson, *Riding the Ox Home: A History of Meditation from Shamanism to Science*, London: Rider, 1982, p. 8.

<sup>171</sup>. Ibid., comments opposite first illustration.

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in his other hand a gourd, full of nothing. Both figures are smiling and playful. Their smiles recognize in each other enlightenment and their playfulness is a sign of maturity, not immaturity. That they can communicate only with a smile means that they both live in the same reality. They still live in the world, symbolized by tree and landscape, and the boy carries a pole from which dangles a fish.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>. Ibid., The pictures and Johnson's commentary on them are located at the end of each chapter. Some of the above is derived from this commentary. To fully appreciate them the pictures should be used for meditation and the commentaries read. I have found a number of students who responded to this presentation of human development.

## CHAPTER IX TWO BIBLICAL MODELS - MATTHEW AND PAUL 173

**Finding Personal Growth Models in the New Testament**

To speak of personal growth models in the New Testament may at first seem strange to those who have been accustomed to approach the New Testament in terms of beliefs and truths. However, much of the early church had as its primary concern the way that life might be lived in responsibility to God: i.e., usually ethical issues took priority and the primary theological issues were those related to ethical issues. A good example of this is Paul's letter to the Romans where the theological discussion of chapters one to eleven lay the basis for the appeal to ethical responsibility in chapter twelve following. The ethical section is linked to the theological by "therefore". In such writers as Paul there is also a humility about what can be known about God. In I Cor. 13 it is pointed out that our knowledge is partial and adolescent and that only in the end time will we know God as God now knows us. The primary and enduring gift of God's Spirit is love, i.e., behavior which is able to go beyond self-interest, and this is clearly supported by I John, a writing from a non-Pauline tradition. This ethical, life-centered focus stands in continuity with Judaism whose primary use of the Law was to shape life and practice.

The possibility of discovering personal growth models in the New Testament is also enhanced by the finding that a fair amount of New Testament literature was either produced out of the life of a particular Christian community or is highly reflective of the church life of the time. The material in the Gospel of Matthew, especially the organization of Jesus' sayings into topically focused discourses, presents fairly clearly the structure, discipline and concerns of this Christian community's life. Paul did not function merely as an individual in mission or theology, but was aware of the traditions of the early church and responsible to such Christian communities as Jerusalem and Antioch. There are indications that others, such as I Peter and Ephesians, though providing their own expression, were in basic harmony with Paul's understanding of the Gospel. Moreover, there are clear indications that some of Paul's letters were reworked by the a later church which followed in his train but also moved in a more conservative social direction (such as the materials in I Cor. 11:3-16, 14:33b-36; and I Tim. 2:8-15), thus reflecting churchly concerns of a later period. In examining the communal, ethical and religious life reflected in this literature we become conscious of the explicit or implicit growth models in their thought and practice.

The components of a personal growth model, from the literature of the early church, should include:

1. Its view(s) of the human being including:

What the creation stories and their interpretation in Judaism and early Christianity say about human condition, potential and limitation. It is important to note that there are several traditions about creation in the Old Testament which were reinterpreted both in the Old Testament and in Judaism, and that Christianity continued this process of reinterpretation, including the introduction of Christ into creation in John 1, Col. 1, and Heb. 1.

The significance of the monism in the Old Testament (the world functions according to the power of Yahweh, the human being as a unity) and dualism in the Intertestamental and New Testament Periods (history and world influenced by a complex of powers, Satan is the ruler of this world, and human flesh is separated from soul/spirit and seen as inadequate vehicle for the spiritual).

Psychological views -- for example, the Jewish assertion, seemingly reflected in Rom. 7, that human life was driven by a good and an evil impulse, the evil impulse seemingly identified with biological drives to fulfill one's needs, necessary for life but the source of constant

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<sup>173</sup>. Much of this was published in *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne U., Institute of Formative Spirituality, Vol. V, No. 2, May, 1984, pp. 171ff. as "Styles of Discipleship: Personal Growth Models in the New Testament".

problems; any view of life stages or human development; any understanding of the limits and possibilities of growth.

The dynamics of human existence, particularly as affected by the Christ/Spirit events. The death and resurrection of Christ was understood to shape human identity and the coming of the Spirit allowed one to live out of the presence of the Transcendent and to become engaged in a process of "spiritualization". The relationship of justification by grace/faith to self-understanding.

2. Its view(s) of the social, political and cultural context which both shape the nature of human life and provide a "space" in which to live out and experiment with life:

social -- the household (family), the Christian community

political/cultural -- some N.T. communities felt it necessary to live redemptively within society and others felt it necessary to sever all relationships with society and the state. The powers and structures of society, though seen sometimes as neutral and sometimes as evil, limited as well as occasioned the expression of Christian faith and life.

3. Its view(s) of the Transcendent:

God's involvement in human life which could introduce positive potentials beyond ordinary human resources

Satan and the demonic which could introduce negative and limiting factors

Neutral powers, such as the "principalities" of Gal. 4, which ancients understood inhabited the natural and political structures of their world

Eschatological process which relativised the present and saw a possibility of separation from the limitations of the past and present through an act of God's forgiveness and the dawning potentials of a new future -- a process which broke into history from the Transcendent, from beyond human and historical potential.

The significance of the Transcendent means that life has to be dealt with on more than a level of human consciousness and resources. There were mysterious dynamics not within human control which blessed and afflicted human existence. These dynamics hold real potential for human transformation. They were seen as especially operative within the inner life of human beings and so it has been easy for psychology to relate them to the dynamics of the unconscious. If one's inner dynamics were only seen as negative (i.e., the evil impulse and the influence of the demonic) then the growth model would have to be external restriction to control the troublesome inner dynamics. If the inner dynamics had as a primary component the Spirit of God, then by surrendering to the right inner dynamic, life could be transformed from within.

### **The Models of Matthew and Paul**

Now let us focus on two personal growth models in the New Testament: one represented in the Gospel of Matthew which primarily reflects a community tradition and model, and the other reflected in the authentic materials from the Apostle Paul. These two models are quite different.

The Gospel of Matthew comes from a Christian community strongly influenced by Pharisaic Judaism. It also reflects a great deal of hostility to the Pharisees (e.g., Matthew 23), which is natural if many of its converts were from a Judaism influenced by the Pharisees but now regarded as heretical by the Pharisees. The religious position, and ethical stance, which it advocates is really that of an ultra or interiorized Pharisaism: supporting the general position of the Pharisees (23:3), but condemning their practice as merely external obedience to the Law. One's inner life must also come under the Law. Thus, "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"

(5:20). Murder and adultery are matters of the heart (5:21-32). "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48).

Jesus then did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets. None of the Law will pass away. But it is not the case that only a heightened and interiorized version of the Mosaic Law will be continued. Jesus came to fulfill the Law (5:17-18). His "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, .... But I say to you....", make it clear that it is Jesus' Law, his fulfillment of the old Law, that is to be obeyed (5:21ff). Thus Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount, has Jesus as a new Moses delivering a new Law from a new Sinai, drawing together into a topical arrangement material that is scattered in Luke. Jesus in Matt. 11:29 calls upon persons to take upon themselves the yoke (of his Law) and to learn of him, and in the Great Commission commands his disciples to go, make disciples, baptize, and to teach "them to observe all that I have commanded you" (28:18-20).

Interestingly enough, the possibility of total obedience, inner and outer, does not seem to worry the Matthaean community. Perhaps this is because it bears strong signs of being a close religious community in which a unique ethical life might be maintained, in contrast to the Pauline churches whose members were always very much a part of their urban society, though also seeking to be ethical. An analysis of the Gospel of Matthew indicates that the community life which gave birth to Matthew was strikingly like that of the Jerusalem Christian church with its common life. Such terms have been given to the Sermon on the Mount as "an interim ethic", "an impossible ethic", "an ethic only for the Kingdom", and yet within Matthew itself one finds no trace that the community felt that this was an impossible ethic. Like Psalm 119 joyously celebrates the blessings of the Law, so the Beatitudes pronounce blessings upon the humble and obedient and Jesus indicates that his yoke is easy and his burden is light (11:30).

In the community's view of the human being, it is recognized that the inner life is the real problem and that outward behavior is an outgrowth of inner attitude. And yet its view of the human seems to be that it is possible to transform the inner person by knowing commandments to obey. It does not seem to have imbibed the extreme pessimism about human nature that was so much a part of Jewish Apocalyptic.

Its understanding of the social context in which Christian life is lived is that it is primarily the Christian community. This is a loving community in which God is equally generous with all (20:1-16), and in which no one is father but God and no one is master but Christ. "He who is greatest among you shall be your servant..." (23:9-11). There is even a loving process of discipline (18:15-20) and forgiveness should be unending, as God forgives (18:21-35). In such a community purity and righteousness could at least be attempted. Piety, seen primarily as a matter between oneself and God, also nourished the inner life (Matt. 6:1-18) and the loving care of God was consciously affirmed (6:25-33, 7:7-12). The attempt to seek moral purity through obedience and the support of a strong community life sounds very much like what was later to be attempted in monasticism.

In terms of the transcendent powers impinging upon one's life, God is primary. Though there is mention of demons and of the devil in the Temptation of Jesus (4), there does not seem to be any unusual stress upon the demonic. The relationship with God is continuously affirmed through the use of the term "father" and emphasizes upon the Father's care and generosity. And yet the Father seems to be in heaven and Matthew's phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" may be more than a Semitism. As in Pharisaic Judaism, the primary relationship with God in this age is through his Law and through those who teach it. In that sense, his Kingdom comes when his will is done on earth as it is in heaven -- as the Matthaean version of the Lord's Prayer says (6:10). Eventually God's sovereignty will come on earth as it is in heaven, but until then they must be faithful and wise servants, with enough oil to light their lamps while they wait, using faithfully what the absent master has given them in trust, and caring for the needy -- as the parables in Matt. 24:45-25:46 express. There is really no role for the Spirit which is mentioned only in such traditional locations as Jesus' Baptism, the mission of the Twelve, the blasphemy against the Spirit, and the Baptismal formula of the Great Commission. Thus whatever transformation God works God does so by relationship and the gift of his commandments, and not by presence and the bestowal of a new inner resource. The commandments, this new Law, then becomes a discipline, styling both external behavior and inner attitude, transforming the person with the support of the community.

Though one may speak of human change with the Matthaean model, there may be some question as to whether one can really speak of growth as we think of it in some of the psychological and faith development models. There is growth toward a common ideal, but it is more of a conformation than a formation, and it does not take a person on a journey of growth which may be in some way uniquely personal. Moreover, the inner dynamics of life are dealt with in terms of control rather than really becoming a resource, by discovery and integration, for the life of the Christian. Thus it is really an "outside-in" model, hoping to produce inner confirmation by law and discipline. As will be indicated in the Pauline model, Paul seemed to feel that there was a place for the Matthaean model, but that its role was superseded when the possibility of dealing with the inner life was offered in Christ and the experience of the Spirit. For Paul the role of the Law was in the conformation of persons until their maturity in Christ provided them with responsible freedom.

One can only admire the seriousness with which the Matthaean community took its life before God, and yet the question must be raised as to whether this model finds support in the actual life and teachings of Jesus. It is the conviction of the author that this model does not find support in the remembrance of Jesus in other New Testament traditions and that the presentation of Jesus in Matthew is a selective and interpretive presentation. Luke presents quite a different tradition about Jesus' comments on the Law (Luke 16:16-17), similar enough to Matthew 5:17ff to indicate that both may be variant translations of the same Aramaic saying of Jesus on the Law. In the saying in Luke the Law has passed away, though it is hard for one dot of it to become void. The Law was only valid until John the Baptist. Now something new is here, the good news of the Kingdom. People enter the kingdom "violently" or "with difficulty" because it is hard to adjust to the new, ideas similar to what is expressed in Mark 2:21-22 about new wine and new cloth. In Paul Jesus is presented as the "end of the Law" (Rom. 10:4). Though scholars have frequently thought that Paul departed from the message of the historical Jesus, he affirms the importance of the historical Jesus over against getting absorbed in spiritual experience without historical roots (I Cor. 12:1-3), he argues that he is in continuity with the faith of the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:1-21), and he indicates that he spent fifteen days with Cephas (Peter) three years after his conversion; Peter, the most important source of the Jesus tradition. Thus at least from his own point of view Paul feels that he stands in continuity with the faith of Jesus and the apostles. Actually, Paul is our earliest witness to Jesus.

The model of personal growth that Paul provides is from the inside-out. This seems to have been because of the crucial nature that religious experience played in his life. Before his conversion experience, as a Pharisee, Paul seems to have held a view that the Law primarily governed external behavior and felt that "as to righteousness under the Law" he was blameless (Phil. 3:6). His encounter with Christ not only convinced him that his persecution of the church invalidated his righteousness in terms of external behavior, but his awareness as a Christian of the emphasis that Jesus put on the internal life made him aware that the Law could never solve the problems of the internal life (Romans 7). The one commandment dealing specifically with the internal life, "Thou shalt not covet", became a clue to the fact that, with the internal life, to say "thou shalt not" only aggravates the problem, feeding the feeling. Thus not only did the reality of inner experience dawn on Paul, but he became aware of the importance of inner dynamics in ethical behavior.

In Galatians 1 Paul argues as to the crucial place of his experience of the "revelation of Christ" in his understanding of the nature of the Gospel. However, this was not his only religious experience. According to Luke in Acts Paul had a vision in the Temple (Acts 22). Paul also says that he prophesied and spoke in tongues (I Cor. 14), had an ecstatic experience and an "abundance of revelations" (II Cor. 12:1-10), and affirmed a variety of spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12). His emphasis on the Spirit assumes an inner transcendent dynamic in all aspects of the Christian life.

Thus what characterizes Paul is a rich awareness of the inner life and the relationship of God to this. His understanding of the Christian life is developmental, well described in II Cor. 3-5. Living in the sovereignty of the Spirit, where there is freedom, we "are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" -- using the theme of the restoration in humans of the glory of God lost in the Fall (II Cor. 3:18). That this spiritual development is not merely conformity is clear in his emphasis on spiritual gifts where the dynamics within the lives of persons move them in different lines of

development, though these differences are given by the same Spirit, inspired by the same God, and serve the same Lord for the common good (I Cor. 12:4-7).

How long it took Paul to come to his conclusions, to define and affirm the nature of his inner experience and growth, is unclear. It must be remembered that the earliest material we have from Paul is to be dated about 49 A.D., and thus, except for autobiographical reminiscence in Gal. 1-2, we have no literary production from the first seventeen years of his Christian life and ministry. When we hear from Paul, we hear from a person who has matured and who has undoubtedly done a great deal of reflection. According to Acts Paul needed the help of the Damascus Christian community in understanding what happened to him on the Damascus Road (Acts 9) and in Galatians Paul speaks of laying his Gospel before the Jerusalem community "lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain" (Gal. 2:2). This may mean that it took Paul a while to affirm the validity of what came to be his model for personal growth. By the time we encounter him in his letters we meet one who has extensively tested in his own life this model.

In his model Paul views human existence, flesh, as being more limited and problematic than does the community of Matthew. Paul, as we encounter him in his literature, has pretty well bought into the Apocalyptic view of human existence: the affect of the evil impulse, a world dominated by Satan, and human flesh as an inadequate vehicle for the life that God intends. Flesh and Spirit are opposed to each other (Gal. 5:17). The works of the flesh, immorality, jealousy, anger, etc., are expressions of the natural drives and needs unbridled while idolatry and sorcery, also mentioned, are attempts to create gods out of one's needs (see also Rom. 1:24ff). While the works of the flesh are egocentric, the fruits of the Spirit are excentric, having to do with self-control and meeting the needs of others. To provide a Law cannot solve the problem of human existence for "the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14).

The problem of sin for human existence is well outlined in Rom. 5:12ff. We do not bear the guilt of Adam's sin: neither Paul or Judaism believed this later Christian development. Adam sinned and through him both sin and death, its consequence, came into the world. All humans now came under the power of sin, and all sinning now became liable to death...even before there was a Law to count sin wrong. Consequently the true man, Christ, bore the curse pronounced on those disobedient to the Law (Gal. 3:13). Being in the image of God (Phil. 2:6) he came to restore that image in humans and to restore the glory of God in man lost in the Fall (II Cor. 3:18). Paul thus believed that sin introduced terrible consequences for humanity into the world where human existence became distorted and divine resources were lost. How could one be what God intended under such circumstances?

The social context in which the Christian life was to be lived was primarily that of the church. Paul was less anti-society than some other early Christians, though he recognized some of the distortions which existed in the Greco-Roman world. In Romans 13 he gives a great deal of positive affirmation to the state. In I Cor. 8-10, a discussion of meat offered to idols, he allows Christians to eat this meat (unless significant issues were raised), for otherwise they would have been completely cut off from all socializing with their neighbors in public festivals. And yet the church was the primary social context.

It is important to note that Paul does not regard the church as did Matthew, a society bound together by obedience to Christ and a common life and discipline. For Paul the church is bound together by the common experience of the Transcendent, not by anything its members do. It is the church of God (I Cor. 1:2), not claiming ultimate allegiance to Paul, Apollos, Cephas or even Christ. God chose them and he is the source of their life in Christ Jesus (I Cor. 1:26-31). Therefore, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord" (I Cor. 1:31). Thus the church is the place where the Transcendent functions for the common good (I Cor. 12:7), the place where the inner life is supported in love and encouraged.

The clue to Paul's model is then his understanding of the way God, through his Spirit, resources personal and corporate life. And yet Paul is not naive about what this makes possible in human existence. The experience of the Spirit is only a guarantee, a down-payment of the future eschatological transformation of humanity (II Cor. 5:5). Consequently, we now "have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us." We always carry in our human body not only the life of Jesus, but also his dying (II Cor. 4:7-12). Paul argues then that the cross is essential for the paradigm of Christian experience, and not only the Spirit and resurrection (in I Corinthians).

We only gain hints at what was happening in the changes in Paul's inner life. II Cor. 12:1-10 speaks of an abundance of inner experiences and links this inner experience of God with the harassment of Satan. Paul never speaks about these experiences which he seems to regard as private, just as he regards speaking in tongues (I Cor. 14). And yet one gains a glimpse of the struggle between God and Satan within Paul (which is a way of understanding the "thorn in the flesh").

Paul's world is populated by a diversity of spiritual powers, some of whom are listed at the end of Romans 8. One intriguing group are in Gal. 4 called "elements" and in Col. 2:15 and Ephes. 3:10 are named "principalities and powers". These are the spiritual powers which ancients understood were behind the natural world, the stars, and political entities. Though they are frequently regarded as ignorant of and needing to be informed about the meaning of Christ, they are not evil. In fact in Gal. 4 the "elementals" were custodians of humanity, along with the Law, until the arrival of humanity at the age of maturity in Christ. Now in Christ humanity is freed from them as it is freed from the Law. That these powers needed to be informed and subjected to Christ in Jungian terms would sound like a process of integration. This is significant when one realizes that there is a similarity between the way ancient humanity viewed the cosmos and modern humanity views the subconscious. In fact the ancient mythologies which identified the forces of the cosmos were likely projections from the subconscious so that the external world was populated with what inhabited the internal world. These myths then served a real purpose in helping persons deal with their inner dynamics. The reconciliation and integration of the cosmos by Christ (Col. 1:15ff) could also participate in the integration of the psyche.

Most telling in Paul's model is his portrayal of "salvation history", from Abraham to Christ, in Galatians 3-5. Here he speaks of the maturing of humanity to a new stage of freedom. In summary, he states: Abraham was blessed because he was a man of faith, an early anticipation of what the Gospel was to later say. God gave a promise to Abraham and to his seed (Christ), a promise that had to do with the blessing of the nations. That which was promised was God's Spirit, i.e., God's presence in relationship, so that humanity might be truly God's children ("sons"). Until this could happen the Law was given as a way of keeping humanity under constraint, the elemental spirits (structures of the world) also fulfilling this role. Though destined for an inheritance at the time of maturity, humanity was kept under guardians and trustees until the date set by the Father, the coming of Christ. Having put on Christ, persons may now receive their inheritance. God even sends the Spirit of the Son into our hearts to help us give utterance to this new relationship, "Abba! Father!" This new relationship, called "Spirit", provides freedom from the Law and the elemental spirits, but this is not freedom from responsibility. Rather it is freedom for responsibility. Moreover, it provides a new inner dynamic out of which one may live: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." Spirit has its own dynamics ("fruit of the Spirit") as does the flesh ("works of the flesh"). In 6:15 he adds in his own handwriting that what really matters is not how you describe this or how you get it, but the "new creation" which comes into being in the lives of persons.

This extended analogy is really about the history of humanity, but in this highly autobiographical letter one must be suspicious that he got this analogy from his own experience. If so, it would at least describe his personal growth if not that of others. The custodial function of the Law and elemental spirits would describe how he came to understand his life before his experience in Christ and the Spirit. This would be similar to Jung's first stage of the individuation process. His second stage began when his old identity (persona) broke down in encounter with what transcended his consciousness. This came in the form of Christ and the Spirit, but it also opened up the depth dimension of his life so that he discovered the forces within him, the problems and struggles of the inner life, and this moved toward integration in the Christ who was Lord of all forces in heaven and on earth. His inner life now became a resource for him and he could advocate living, not by constraint, but by the Spirit. This was not without difficulty for the same inner life which gave him "an abundance of revelations" also produced a thorn in the flesh "to harass me, to keep me from being too elated" (II Cor. 12:7). Awareness of the inner life meant awareness of *all* of its dynamics. The amazing thing was that the greatest gift of this interior spiritual dimension was "love", i.e., the inner life moved beyond its own self-interest. For both Paul and John this was the primary sign that what one was experiencing was not merely one's own inner dynamics, but the presence of the Spirit of God (I Cor. 13, I John 4:7-12).

Paul may not have discussed the implications of this for understanding personal growth because he was not thinking primarily in individual terms even though he may have used a personal analogy. His eschatological expectations of a near end to history also militated against developing a model of personal growth. The urgency was to confront adults with the nature of life under God, not to describe how persons would develop from childhood to maturity. He addresses persons with the possibilities of the new stage made possible in Christ. What would he say, if we could ask him, about children before they could appropriate the maturity and freedom offered in Christ? What would he say about adolescence? His model presupposes that there was a time in history when more structure was necessary. Would this also be true of the individual? Perhaps he would only say, as he advocates for adults, that the development of the inner life needs external structures and principles to guide its development. He never hesitated to give moral advice as to what the Spirit would lead to. And yet his ethics are not what ultimately shapes life, but the channel in which life may flow in its unique, individual and varied directions. Perhaps he would also have affirmed this for the first stage of life where structure is much more important.

There is indeed a danger in reading twentieth century models of personal growth into Paul, and yet there are striking similarities, especially with Jung's model. One of the difficulties with Jung's model is the leisured introspection which it presupposes, a process which Jung himself went through. Neither Paul nor many of his converts would have had time for this. And yet their pre-scientific world view which did not have to rediscover mythology, symbol, and the spiritual dynamics of the inner life would have predisposed them to a readiness we have had to relearn. Paul believes in this model, calling upon Galatian Christians to "stand fast" and "not submit again to a yoke of slavery". If they return again to the Law, "Christ will be of no advantage" (Gal. 5:1-2).

If space allowed, I Peter would provide an interesting variant of the Pauline model. It speaks of new birth (1:3, 23; 2:2), growing up to salvation (2:2), the variety of God's gifts productive of individual development (f:10ff), transformation of the human passions (4:2), and yet does not use the term "Spirit" except in the opening salutation and when speaking of the inspiration of Old Testament prophets (1:2, 11). The emphasis on inner process is not as strong as in Paul, but new inner realities are affirmed as originating in "the living and abiding word of God" (1:23).

To be concerned about the shaping and forming of life, its possibilities under God, did not mean a neglect of responsibility within the world. The community of Matthew stated the purpose of its life in the Great Commission of Matt. 28:18ff. Paul spent many of the years after his conversion dashing around the ancient world, participating in a grand mission strategy he formulated in Rom. 9-11. I Peter speaks of the servant life of the Christian community towards the non-Christian world. Human maturity, spirituality and mission walk together.