

# **A RELATIONAL PARADIGM FOR PASTORAL CARE**

A dissertation submitted by

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*Dedicated to my parents  
Enasu Varkey and Mariamkutty Enasu  
and  
all who molded my relational world*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Experience is the best teacher. Each experience shows us different aspects of life which enriches and complements our relational world. I first thought of such a study because of my relationship with my students in the Mary Matha Schoenstatt College. Each student opened a new world for me. They allowed me to accompany them and to be part of their stories, and their life stories became the triggering factors for this research. The relationships I was able to build with them led me to a new world of insights and inspirations. I am most indebted to the students who studied in the years 2004-2007. The parents of the students who showed their full confidence in the new system of education deserve my thankfulness. The cooperation and teamwork of the college staff contributed to the efficiency of this pastoral concept.

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Vallendar

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# **I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Every person and everything in this world experience relationships of one kind or another. In every era, people have searched for the meaning of their lives and relationships. You may go into any book store anywhere in the world and find many books dealing with different kinds of relationships; and with the development of technology, it is far easier now than ever before for people to become connected. The culture of the web and the age of smartphone applications have also contributed their part towards instant relationships. We cannot think of any kind of pastoral care where relationships do not play a key role.

This scientific research is an attempt to unfold the relational footprints in the pastoral care field from a pastoral-theological point of view. Today more than ever, India is faced with finding pedagogical ways which are typically Indian and do justice to the international web culture. The policies of different political parties, changes from joint to nuclear families, and new trends in the lives of the youth have had a deep influence on education. In this thesis, I propose a view that has both humane and Christian backgrounds and is based on my research and experiences.

This thesis is bound to an intercultural view and experience. I had the chance to grow up in my own country of India, to study and work in the USA, and then live for a number of years in Germany. The pedagogical problems and challenges in each country may be very different, but I profited from these different cultures, reflections and experiments. Some challenges were the same because we are living in an era of globalization.

## **1. The Context of the Research**

I was in charge of the Mary Matha Schoenstatt College<sup>1</sup> in India from 2004-2007. This college is administered by the Community of the Schoenstatt Fathers and consists of students preparing for their 11th grade and 12th grade examinations. Compared to other educational institutions, it is a small college both in number of students and in the size of the campus. Most of the students who came to the Mary Matha Schoenstatt College did not perform well in their previous studies and so suffered from low self-esteem and self-motivation. Observing this, I began to contact individual students in an effort to get to know them better and to support them in their circumstances. The information I

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed study on my experience and more information about the college are discussed in Chapter V.

received from them gave me the idea that they needed an educational system which could help them grow within their capacities and life environment. According to the biographical sketch of each student, I began to accompany them and guide them to become more comfortable with themselves and their situations. The whole guiding process supported the students and helped them establish connections within their relational world.

Personally I was not sure what kind of impact this would have on the students, but to my surprise the result was very encouraging and positive. The immediate visible outcome for the students was improvement in their academic performances. I was also able to integrate teachers as part of this new endeavor. The Mary Matha College also gained a good name in the area because of this new venture.

Another motivation of this idea was the encouragement from the teachers and my mentors which assisted me in performing well academically. Many times I was able to use some of my own experiences in encouraging and motivating the students. Because of this, I conceived the idea of presenting my experiences as a model of pastoral care in the Indian educational institutions. I was sceptical because this method is very time consuming for the pastoral caregiver and demands a great deal of energy as well as a dedicated commitment.

After many discussions and deliberations with different people in the field of education, I decided to work on this pastoral concept for use in educational institutions. I had ideas which I wanted to try, but needed models and inspirations in order to carry them out. In view of such, the thoughts and deliberations of Doris Nauer<sup>2</sup> have been a great enlightenment. My indebtedness to Schoenstatt also has to be expressed. To a great extent I have profited from the insights, reflections and teachings of Fr. Kentenich: they were for me constant companions, and I tried to what extent I could to verify his teachings within an Indian educational context.

## 2. Area of Research

When I began to work on the theme of my thesis, it was clear that there were different aspects of the relational world that had to be considered. I had to reflect on how I could develop an integrated approach to the different areas of the students' relationship. How was each dimension of a relationship related with the other dimensions of their relationships? Which elements are interrelated in

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Seelsorgekonzepte im Widerstreit*

the pastoral care of educational institutions? Since I was able to empower the students through my relationships with them, a paradigm for a relational pastoral care would be more suitable and productive. The students were in puberty which was a suitable time to develop their relational abilities since it is the time when youth form their network of relationships. What were the components to be included in the designing of this pastoral concept?

The challenges and tensions each individual faces now are far greater than at other times in history. The relational world of the individual can be strengthened if the relationship with oneself is solid. Individuals are easily affected by their own mechanism of relationships. How do they respond to all these changes within themselves? How can they integrate all their relational worlds?

The lives of the students were being influenced by the many elements of society. The changes in perspectives of values, lifestyles, thinking patterns and modes of developing relationships are entirely different in each generation. Changes and trends from other countries influence the lives of the students much faster than we realize. Since Indian culture is very religious, all the practices and traditions of each religion have their own impact in the lives of their followers, so the faith aspect also has to be considered within this framework. Nature and the social environment affect the lives of individuals more now than earlier times, and due consideration has to be given to that as well.

As of now pastoral care in Indian educational institutions has not received enough importance, though there are many different religious elements and practices in each educational institution, especially those run by various religions. The relational paradigm for pastoral care can contribute to enhancing and empowering the relational world of the students.

### **3. The Method and Outlook of the Thesis**

My experiences with the students in the Mary Matha Schoenstatt College remain as the starting point of my scientific research. The foundation for the relational pastoral care concept is drawn from the theological and anthropological foundation of relationships. From those foundations of thought, the concept of a relational paradigm is formulated. The whole theme emanates from the relationship of the individual to himself/herself. The flow of the thought process develops from the relationship of the individual to the social world, which is relationality to others. The individual's relatedness is greatly determined by the natural environment and the relationship with it. These three levels of relationships culminate in the relationship with God who is the source of all relation-

ships. These four dimensions: relationship with oneself, relationship with others, relationship with nature and relationship with God leads us to the goal of multidimensional relationships.

The whole thesis is encompassed in four main chapters. The scientific research begins with *the theological foundation of the relationship*. Through examination of the different times of intervention by God in the lives of the Israelites, the question can be asked exactly what kind of God images they experienced in their lives. All the imageries originate from the people's experiences with God. Did they accumulate only positive relational images of God? Or did they also have some frightening and disturbing images of God? When we examine the relationships of Jesus, the question arises of how Jesus related to and interacted with his family members and others during his public life. Responses for these questions are described in the first half of the first chapter. To answer the question of how we experience God today, first an analysis of the relational qualities of the Holy Spirit is helpful. What the relationship is among the Holy Trinity itself will be considered in the trinitarian dimension of relationship.

Before we begin to look for *the anthropological foundation of human beings*, we have to find in Scripture what the image of the human being is. Is the human being relational? The anthropological foundation of human beings helps us to explore their relational world from the perspective of relating to themselves, others, nature and God. How is the relational world of the individual formed? What roles do the social and natural environments play in the moulding of relationships with others? How much is the natural environment an inevitable part of the human being's relational life? How did Jesus relate with his surroundings and nature? How does the spiritual dimension of human beings make us distinct from other creatures in our relation to the Creator? Arriving at the answers to these questions serves as the anthropological foundation in formulating a relational paradigm for pastoral care.

Both theological and anthropological foundations support us in formulating the different steps of a *relational paradigm for pastoral care*. How do we empower the individual to better relate with himself/herself? Relational self-identity, relational self-esteem, relational self-acceptance and relational self-love play a vital role in this linking process. Providing opportunities to interact with others in society shapes their relationships with others, but we also need to consider how we can link the individuals with nature and the natural environment. Can awareness of environmental challenges and involvement in the ecological issues bring us closer to nature? How do we help an individual find his/her personal image of God? Do earlier religious experiences play a vital role in the

development of the individual's relationship with God? If so, how can we strengthen those religious experiences in connection with pastoral care in an educational institution?

What is *the role of the pastoral caregiver* in this process? The pastoral caregiver has an important role to play in helping the individual connect with himself, others, nature and God. The different competencies of the pastoral caregiver go hand in hand in these important roles. The pastoral caregiver as a personal, spiritual and social facilitator assists the individual in forming the different networks of relationships, and also ensures a suitable environment in which the individual can live his/her relational world.

What level of competence must the responsible pastoral caregiver achieve? *The competence of the pastoral caregiver* includes professional training, knowledge in the fields of psychology and theology, and proficiency with different pastoral concepts. How significant is the credibility of the pastoral caregiver in an educational institution? All these elements contribute to the concept of building a paradigm for a pastoral care.

Finally, is such a concept of *a relational paradigm for a pastoral care effective in an educational setting, especially in India*? How can this concept empower the students to strengthen their relational world? My experiences from the Mary Matha Schoenstatt College are unfolded in the last chapter as both an example and an answer to the above mentioned questions. The analysis of the Sitz im Leben of the students sheds light on their specific characteristics. The world of the students' relationships with themselves, others, nature and God are explained using different case studies.

## 4. Aim of the Research

The intention of this scientific work was to discover what kind of pastoral care was needed to help empower the relational world of human beings in the educational institutions in India. How should we consider relationships as a whole? Is it possible to think about a multidimensional concept for relationships? Most of the time we tend to define and interpret or evaluate relationships from one aspect alone. Pastoral care cannot be effective and productive if relationships are considered from one aspect alone since not all of the relational worlds of the human being can be included. For this thesis, I considered relationships from four distinct spheres of our lives which combine relatedness to oneself, relatedness to others, relatedness to nature and relatedness to God. How the different spheres of relationships are lived and nurtured provides an integrated approach to life, since all relational worlds are interrelated and interconnected.

This *integrated approach is defined as multidimensional relationship*. When we apply this multidimensional relationship approach in the fields of pastoral care, it can lead us to *multidimensional pastoral care*.

## II. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

### 1. God (Yahweh) Experienced as Relational

In the attempt to study how people experience God in their relationships and to know what the relational images are that they used, the best source is the Bible which depicts how the people of the Old Testament experienced God in their daily lives and struggles. The different relational images we read about in the Bible have their own unique stories of origin and development. In the Bible we read many stories of God who built relationships with his creatures and creation. Erich Zenger and Karl Löning tell that, "...the God of the Bible is profoundly a God of life who as such seeks a *living relationship* with 'heaven and earth.'"<sup>1</sup> The people experienced that the God of the Bible is alive, dynamic, personal, changing, free and relational.<sup>2</sup> All the books of both Old Testament and New Testament explain the different relational dimensions of God with human beings.

According to Johanna Van Wijk-Bos, many of the images described in the Bible about God are relational images of how people experienced him. Whether we view God as King, Teacher, Father, Mother, Redeemer, Liberator, Mender or Maker, every image depicts a certain relational element of God. Relational images of God help human beings to understand God and to come into a relationship with him.<sup>3</sup> "At the time when this account came to be written down, the God of Israel was called Yahweh, but from the distant past Israel recalls the events of the Exodus, the encounter with their unique God in the desert, and the formation of the people of God in and through that desert experience. It is through this experience that Israel discovered a God called Yahweh, and the revelation of this name has been placed within the context of that all-important moment in the history of God's people."<sup>4</sup> The covenant on Mount Sinai (cf. Ex 16), the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire (cf. Ex 13:17-22), and giving manna. (cf. Ex 16:4-32)

Story J. Lyle brings the new perspective of the relational dimension of God. He substantiates the relational dimension as an expression of God being in contact with humans "relational." And the purpose of God which people experience is

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<sup>1</sup> Löning, Karl; Zenger, Erich *To Begin With God: Biblical Theologies of Creation*, 4

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Boyd, Gregory A. *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*, 132

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Van Wijk-Bos, Johanna W.H. *Reimagining God: The Case for Scriptural Diversity*, 34-49

<sup>4</sup> Moloney, J. Francis *Disciples and Prophets: A Biblical Model for the Religious Life*, 26



through his love.<sup>5</sup> “All of the books in the Old Testament present human life in the context of its relation to God. Whether he is viewed as acting primarily in creation or history, he is conceived in personal terms.”<sup>6</sup> God’s willingness to enter into a personal relationship can never be one-sided. A genuine relationship demands mutuality: a proper answer from the partner. People experienced God as the one who takes the initiative; he does the first step, and in addressing his human partner enables and motivates him to give a free, personal response. Such an answer can be appropriate, but also inappropriate. That is why we find in the Old Testament divine uttering in which he laments or criticizes the inadequate human answer to his spoken word and wish. (cf. Gen 6:7, Ex 32, Numb 11, Deut 1:34-46) Quoting the story of the Prophet Jonah, Sheldon H. Blank points out that, “God reveals his disappointment and his personal hurt because his care is unrewarded.”<sup>7</sup>

The story of the relationship of God with human beings unfolds with creation and binds them with him through different covenants. “By creating a world of human beings God gives himself the opportunity to experience the nature of relationships. In the earliest stages this experience is beneficent. God offers and receives a loving regard. But then God discovers that relationships can be unstable; his temperament takes a violent turn and he condemns that which he himself brought into being.”<sup>8</sup> We read in the Bible that tensions and tender care are part of the relationship with God which remains as the positive and challenging features of God in relationships.

## 1.1 Creation as Relational Act

### 1.1.1 Creation as the Beginning of Relationship

The first experience of a relationship of human beings with God begins with the creation story.<sup>9</sup> “The Bible opens with the simple yet profound declaration, ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ (Gen. 1:1) This statement indicates that the Triune God does not remain forever secluded within the eternal relationships of the Divine Trinity. Rather, the eternal God extends himself beyond the Trinitarian life in order to bring into existence a uni-

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Story, J. Lyle *The Dynamic, Relational, and Loving Purpose of God*, 106-107

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, Rick *The Old Testament Demand for Faith and Obedience*, 35

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Blank, Sheldon H. *Doest Thou Well to be Angry: A Study in Self-Pity*, 30

<sup>8</sup> Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament*, 12

<sup>9</sup> The term creation is used mainly in view of human beings. Under creation we have to understand the inanimate (the stars, the sun, the mountains), animate (the plants and animals), and human beings endowed with intelligence and free will and with the capacity to enter into genuine relationships.

verse which is other than God.”<sup>10</sup> “Like all Christian doctrines it [i.e. the creation] is essentially a statement about God, and in particular about the world’s relationship to God. It asserts that this relationship is one of dependence and that every existing thing depends upon God for its existence, whereas God depends on nothing outside himself.”<sup>11</sup> Creation is an all-embracing term: it includes the bacterium and the stars, the flowers, the animals and human beings. With the creation of human beings there is a qualitative differentiation with regard to the rest of creation: we have as human beings cognition, understanding, memory and the will power of realization. We have the freedom to opt for some things and to reject other things, wishes and persons.

Bonaventura understands love of God as *relational*. “When we say that God is love, we are saying that God is personal and *relational* because by the very nature of being love, God is other-centered.”<sup>12</sup> Thomas Aquinas comprehends that creation is the reception of being from the giver of all existence. Creation is a relation to the Creator as the origin of our being and for Augustine it is the act of the Trinity. It is from the Father through the Son. Its eventual perfection is guaranteed by their Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup> Mary Hills depicts that, “As creator, God is a responsible figure; God takes care of his creation and in particular seeks intimacy with humankind. There is on God’s part a benevolent interest in what he has formed which provides a strong contrast<sup>14</sup> with the divine attitude which emerges in Genesis 3.”<sup>15</sup> Jürgen Moltmann is of the opinion that, “The logic of creation is the logic of love. Creation is not a demonstration of God’s boundless power; it is the communication of God’s love which knows neither premises nor preconditions.”<sup>16</sup> Wilfred Harrington brings out another point of view about the creation of human beings. “God will not remain alone. He set to creating a creature that would correspond with one whom he can speak and who would listen...with humans alone, in all creation, can God have dialogue.”<sup>17</sup>

The creation of human beings is a very intimate action of God. God breathes into the nostrils of human beings. (cf. Gen 2:7) God wants to be relational in its most intimate sense, and in the best possible way. That may be the reason that

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<sup>10</sup> Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*, 98

<sup>11</sup> Navone, John *Our Creator God*, 63

<sup>12</sup> Delio, Ilia *Does God ‘Act’ in Creation? A Bonaventurian Response*, 334

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Navone, John *Our Creator God*, 64

<sup>14</sup> By eating from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve act against the original plan of God. Mary Hills means violation of this rule as contrast to God’s benevolent interest. Violation of the command of God had its own consequences for the generations to come.

<sup>15</sup> Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament*, 11

<sup>16</sup> Delio, Ilia *Does God ‘Act’ in Creation? A Bonaventurian Response*, 335

<sup>17</sup> Harrington, Wilfred *The Tears of God: Our Benevolent Creator and Human Suffering*, 17

God created human beings in his image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-28) – as his ambassadors on earth. The relationship of God with his creatures is expressed in the terms of creator and creation. Creation was something of God himself. “In the creation of human beings, God expressed a divine desire for a relationship with that which is other than Himself.”<sup>18</sup> “To experience God as Creator implies experiencing him as a *God who holds the reins of history*, as the one who has not only ordained a beginning and end for the entire world and for each individual human life, but who is efficaciously present in the midst of creation.”<sup>19</sup> The creation story reveals that God likes to hold an intimate relationship with human beings.

### 1.1.2 The Relationship Between Creator and Creation

If the relationship of God with human beings started with creation, then the question of Ottamar Fuchs is very valid. “The real question is not whether there is a divine creator of this world, but what relationship he has with this creation.”<sup>20</sup> The aim of creation is to begin the relationship. The creation act itself makes changes in the person of God. In other words, we can assume that creation was an extension of God himself who seeks a relationship with his creatures. Oberndorf confirms the initiative of God for relationships, “...That the God for whom Jesus bore witness not only dwells in the hereafter, but also reaches into the concerns of this life; that he does not only define himself through his omnipotence and perfection, but also accepts and takes into himself powerlessness and fragility; that he is not self-sufficient in some splendid isolation, but seeks living communion with his creatures.”<sup>21</sup>

Karl Löning and Erich Zenger depict that what we read in the Bible of God giving the ‘world its beginning,’ does not mean the beginning of the world

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<sup>18</sup> Hartmann, David *Living in Relationship With the Other: God and Human Perfection in the Jewish Tradition*, 146

<sup>19</sup> „Gott als Schöpfergott erfahren impliziert, ihn als *geschichtsmächtigen Gott* zu erfahren, der nicht nur der Welt und jedem einzelnen menschlichen Leben einen Anfang und ein Ende gesetzt hat, sondern inmitten der Schöpfung wirkmächtig präsent ist“.(Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 77)

<sup>20</sup> „Denn die eigentliche Frage liegt nicht darin, ob es eine göttlichen Schöpfer dieser Welt gibt, sondern darin, welche Beziehung er zu dieser Schöpfung hat. (Fuchs Ottamar, *Gott: Unendliches Geheimnis als unerschöpfliche Liebe*, 11)

<sup>21</sup> „Genau diese Einsicht vermag die Trinitätslehre zur Geltung zu bringen. Sie macht ernst damit, dass der Gott, den Jesus bezeugt hat, nicht nur im Jenseits wohnt, sondern auch im Diesseits ankommt, dass er sich nicht nur über seine Allmacht und Vollkommenheit definiert, sondern Ohnmacht und Zerbrechlichkeit in sich annimmt und aufnimmt, dass er sich nicht in *splendid Isolation* selbst genügt, sondern lebendige Gemeinschaft mit seinen Geschöpfen sucht.“ (Oberndorfer, Bern *Man müsste sie erfinden*, 58)

alone but it is also a starting of a relationship between God and the world.<sup>22</sup> A relationship between the Creator and the creation begins from that moment. “The Creation is a beginning that alters and determines God’s own life history. And it is a beginning that aims to reign over and transform everything that exists. It is a beginning whose dynamism grows out of the fact that is constituted by the goal toward which the relationship that links the creator and ‘his’ creation is aimed.”<sup>23</sup> Creation initiates a history. Gerhard Von Rad shares that creative acts are given to justify the redemptive relationship between Yahweh and Israel. To justify the relationship, according to him, from the beginning of the creation onwards new rules and ordinances are revealed which would guarantee the redemption of the people of God.<sup>24</sup>

The creation brings into existence a dynamic relationship. That means that the creation has seeds that have to unfold and be developed. In other words, the entire creation needs permanent care on the part of God. After the creation of Adam, we can note the dialogue that takes place between Adam and God and these developments in the relationship lead, to a certain extent, to God trying to accommodate the wishes of Adam. “Genesis 2 [19-25] suggests something else: the creation of man requires that God *reacts* and *corresponds* to Adam’s needs and desires which he did not anticipate. From a certain point on, the creation of man becomes more than his making. This is to say that within the space of God’s creating, humans start to respond to their being created. Adam’s longing for a corresponding other and his desire for what the tree of wisdom has to offer are such instances of human response that makes God change the course of his work on Adam.”<sup>25</sup> Christoph Dophmen describes the encounter with God as a dynamic relationship event.<sup>26</sup> “In the beginning, God had filled the earth with living things, and he celebrated their diversity. In the beginning, out of the earth, God had created earthlings, men and women who would enjoy intimacy with God, with one another, and with the rest of creation. And God had said, “This is very good!”<sup>27</sup> “Every pattern, every element of order that we find in the universe, from the lights of the sky to the complex interacting patterns of living things, has its source and origin in God’s creative work. And this same conviction that the universe finds its origin in God stands behind the fun-

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Löning, Karl; Zenger, Erich, *To Begin With God: Biblical Theologies of Creation*, 10

<sup>23</sup> Löning, Karl; Zenger, Erich *To Begin With God: Biblical Theologies of Creation*, 10

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>25</sup> Schüle, Andreas *Made in the Image of God: The Concepts of Divine Images in Genesis 1-3*, 19

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Dophmen, Christoph *Ein Beweglicher Gott: Ezek: 1-3 Kapitel*, 139

<sup>27</sup> De Borst, Ruth Padilla *God's Earth and God's People: Relationships Restored*, 7

damental belief in the goodness of that creation. That is the reason why we read in the Bible, “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. (Gen 1.31)”<sup>28</sup> Creation is in long-term evolution. This process – from the part of God – has an aim. It is not just an aimless evolution out of itself. God has placed into its development the inner entelechy.

Iain Provan states that the dynamism of a relationship needs worship and trust in divine goodness. The first step of man away from God takes place when this trust is broken by following the temptation of the serpent. God had given them freedom to eat from any tree except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (cf. Gen 2:16-17) God related to them with freedom and generosity. “It is the God of generosity and freedom who is truly the God of creation, however, and he calls his image-bearers to be like him in relating to their fellow human beings and to the creation over which they have been given dominion.”<sup>29</sup> God was not forced to create. God’s creative act is entirely free.<sup>30</sup> The creation of human beings was a very personal act of God, according to Doris Nauer. “In metaphorically elaborated images, the Old Testament records that it was the transcendent God himself who most personally created the whole world, including man, in a supremely creative act.”<sup>31</sup> David Hartman joins in the opinion of Abraham Joshua Heschel who articulates the central metaphor describing God in the Bible is of a divine quest and need for relationship with human beings.<sup>32</sup> With the creation of human beings God establishes his relationship and God extends his invitation for relationship to all his creation.

## 1.2 Covenants as Relational Acts

### 1.2.1 The Connection Between Creation and Covenant

The creation of human beings paved the way for a relationship. The covenants we read about in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, are another dimension in this relationship process between God and human beings. Pope Benedict tells us that the purpose of the creation is itself not to fill the heaven and

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<sup>28</sup> Ormerod, Neil *Creation, Grace and Redemption*, 2

<sup>29</sup> Provan, Iain “*All These I Have Kept Since I was a Boy*“ (Lk 18:21) *Creation, Covenant, and the Commandments of God*, 43

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ormerod, Neil *Creation, Grace and Redemption*, 5

<sup>31</sup> „In metaphorisch ausgeschmückten Bildern wird im Alten Testament festgehalten, dass der transzendente Gott selbst es war, der höchstpersönlich die ganze Welt mitsamt den Menschen in einem äußerst kreativen Akt geschaffen hat. (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 77)

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Hartmann, *David Living in Relationship With the Other: God and Human Perfection in the Jewish Tradition*, 147

earth with things and creatures, but to make a covenant.<sup>33</sup> “Creation is the foundation of the covenant. In terms of the biblical narrative, creation is only the beginning, whereas the covenant occupies the middle of the narrative in which most of the action occurs. But creation and covenant are interdependent, bound to one another by many connections and analogies, and it is theologically disastrous to separate them or to exalt one at the expense of the other.”<sup>34</sup> “Once you begin looking for what was important to the biblical writers themselves, you’ll find that the concept of covenant is a central thread woven throughout Scripture. The dramas that we’ll examine describe how God the Father, through a series of covenants, has moved from dealing with one couple – Adam and Eve – to dealing with the whole world. Each step along the way has moved us further up the pathway to heaven, providing yet one more crucial component in God’s plan to form a family of faith.”<sup>35</sup>

The covenant is the basic relational form we come across in the Bible. “In Hebrew the word for covenant is *brit*. The word *brit* connotes a cutting of the flesh in some way so that blood has flowed out; therefore we may use the expression ‘cutting the covenant,’ or ‘blood covenant.’ Cutting, blood, and covenant are combined together in the word *brit*. *Brit* today among Jewish people is often used to refer to the particular ceremony of circumcision. The word for the covenant of circumcision would be *brit milah*. Circumcision is a cutting away of the excess foreskin off the male organ. It is usually done on the eighth day after birth.”<sup>36</sup> “The first mention of such an idea is found in Genesis 9, wherein God sets out his future commitment to Noah, after the flood.”<sup>37</sup> In the opinion of Jean Marc Chappuis, God gives identity to us through the covenants. “The living God who in the covenant gives us our identity by speaking to us, by making his presence known, by postulating through the ‘I’ which he utters, the identity of a ‘thou’ to greet him and respond.”<sup>38</sup> Lukas Vischer points out the elaborate use of the term covenant in the Bible.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Pope Benedict XVI *Jesus of Nazareth*, 77

<sup>34</sup> Watson, Francis *Text and Truth*, 241

<sup>35</sup> Hahn, Scott *A Father who Keeps his Promises: God’s Covenant Love in Scripture*, 23

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 26

<sup>37</sup> Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament*, 33

<sup>38</sup> Chappuis, Jean-Marc *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Variable Geometry of Communion*, 13

<sup>39</sup> The use of the term in the Bible is different. Covenant (*berith*) there means primarily an initiative taken by God. It means a unilateral promise and commitment on God’s part in respect to a third party. The idea of a contract or pact between equal partners is not implied in the term. This has been made even clearer by recent scholarship (Lothar Perlitt, Ernst Kutsch). It used to be said that *berith* applied in the first instance to contracts and agreements among human beings and was then applied by way of analogy to describe the relationship between God and

Francis Watson reminds us that, “God’s covenant partner is not simply the human being but every creature, and his covenant faithfulness protects creation and its future from every threat.”<sup>40</sup> “The relation between creation and covenant is one of interdependence and circularity: God’s covenant faithfulness casts a retrospective light on his faithfulness in creation, but the faithfulness of the creator to his creation is a necessary presupposition of Israel’s experience of the covenant.”<sup>41</sup> Does it mean that the term creation is meant for the relationship of God with the human beings alone? “The term ‘creation’ is thus applied to the entire process or history of God’s covenant relationship with the world, and old dogmatic and creedal distinctions between creation, redemption and eschatology are dissolved in the dynamic flux of the single unceasing divine activity.”<sup>42</sup> “The creator is also the God of the covenant, and the divine faithfulness disclosed in the stability of the created order illustrates and guarantees the faithful maintaining of the covenant.”<sup>43</sup> Creation and covenant are closely knit together in the development of the sealing of the different covenants.

### 1.2.2 The Relational Dimension of Covenant

How do covenants serve as relational acts? Why covenants were used as the mode of relationship between God and his people? Every relationship has its own rules and regulations. God also has instructions for his relationship. Covenants served as the reminders for the Israelites. Covenants motivated them to remain in the relationship with their God, and were the guidelines for their relationship with God. “It [covenant law] is also designed to enable Israel, specifically as Israel, to function well within the world that she inhabits; a world in which she is to be a distinctive people in order to fulfill God’s purposes, and a world in which moral darkness continually presses in upon human community and threatens to extinguish the light.”<sup>44</sup> Every covenant has its special formula

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God’s people. Recent studies have shown that *berith* means a commitment entered into by one partner in favor of another, or again, an obligation imposed on a partner. The verbs connected with *berith* make that clear: a covenant is “cut,” not “concluded.” It is not a case of mistranslation, therefore, when the word is translated in the Septuagint, and later on in the New Testament, by the Greek *diatheke* (and not *syntheke*) or by the Latin *testamentum*. (Vischer, Lukas *I Will Be Your God – You Shall Be My People*, 73-81)

<sup>40</sup> Watson, Francis *Text and Truth*, 228

<sup>41</sup> Watson, Francis *Text and Truth*, 231

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 228

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 234

<sup>44</sup> Provan, Iain *All These I Have Kept Since I Was a Boy (Lk 18:21) Creation, Covenant, and the Commandments of God*, 44

of relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel. Characteristics of each covenant make each covenant different from the other.

Covenants depict the depth of relationship and attachment the covenant partners had with God. “Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David: What do these five men have in common? Each of them shared an intimate bond of friendship with God, a relationship initiated by God and founded on a personal covenant. In fact, this series of covenants leads up to and climaxes in the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who instituted the New Covenant and thus changed the course of history.”<sup>45</sup> “God made the first covenant with Adam in the form of a marital bond under the sign of the Sabbath. ‘God created man in his image... male and female he created them.’ (Gen 1:27) Ten generations later, God made the second covenant with Noah under the sign of the rainbow. (Gen 9:8-17). After another ten generations the third covenant was made with Abram with the sign of circumcision. (Gen 17) The fourth covenant was made by God with Moses at Mount Sinai. It transformed the twelve tribes into God’s national family, Israel. The fifth covenant was done under the leadership of David. (2 Sam 2)”<sup>46</sup>

William D. Barrick perceives four different steps or aspects for the covenants of Yahweh in general. “The following elements establish Yahweh’s relationship to the covenants in Leviticus 26: (1) the self-introduction formula, (2) the divine history formula, (3) the attribution of the source of the laws at Sinai (v.46), and (4) the first-person singular suffixes on ‘covenant.’ The covenants did not originate with Israel. Yahweh promulgates the covenants unilaterally.”<sup>47</sup> Keith Intrater summarizes the whole development of covenant and its relational dimension. “First there is an intervening act of redemption on the part of the savior. Then there is a gracious offer of relationship from the savior to the rescued party. This relationship is the heart and the goal of the whole matter. Words and promises of a covenant are set forward to delineate the nature of that relationship. Signs of remembrance are given to make a graphic impression upon both parties of the permanence of the covenant. Terms of expectation between the two parties are set forth in the form of law. The positive rewards (or blessings) are set forth for continuing in the covenant. The punishments (or curses) for breaking the articles of the covenant are also set forward to enforce it. The various parts of Scripture work together to form a com-

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<sup>45</sup> Hahn, Scott *A Father who Keeps his Promises: God’s Covenant Love in Scripture*, 30

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 32-35

<sup>47</sup> Barrick, William D. *Inter-Covenantal Truth and Relevance: Leviticus 26 and the Biblical Covenants*, 94



posite picture that we call a covenant.”<sup>48</sup> John Green brings another five elements for covenant.<sup>49</sup> Interpersonal covenants are made to a God-centered direction, formulation of the covenant into words of an oath, commitment from the both partners and the covenant has to be continued by partner’s descendants.<sup>50</sup>

The two concepts of covenant and image each highlight a different aspect of our relationship with God and therefore of our own humanity. Covenant stresses the difference between God and human beings; image underlines the similarity.<sup>51</sup> “Covenant is the historical counterpart to the creational Imago Dei. They are parallel realities expressing the nearness of God and the unique relationship to God which is humanity’s preordained destiny. The covenant is only possible within the framework of creation and serves a creational goal, the ultimate reconciliation of God and humanity. Just as the Creator committed Himself to humankind through the original creation, so He recommits Himself through the covenant to certain individuals and a specific people.”<sup>52</sup> Covenants Yahweh seals with different people in different times serve as the core way of building and maintaining the relationship of Yahweh with his chosen people.

### 1.2.3 Relational God as Covenant Partner

The covenants God made with the Israelites were always sealed between two covenant partners. The covenant partners on the part of the Israelites changed one after another: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. God was the stable covenant partner. God wanted the covenant partners because, “He (God) had desired a counterpart with whom he could converse - who would listen - and talk back.”<sup>53</sup> Covenantal people related to God in different ways and through different relational imageries. “We relate to God in a variety of ways.

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<sup>48</sup> According to Keith Intrater, there are several general parts to a covenant. The most important ones are: (1) the personal relationship that the covenant is designed to confirm; (2) the specific covenant itself or the words of oath-taking that seal the relationship; (3) the signs of the covenant, some elements that form a graphic impression to remember the covenant; (4) the blessings or positive rewards that ensue from keeping the covenant; and (5) the curses or negative punishments that ensue from breaking the covenant. (Cf. Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 20-25)

<sup>49</sup> 1. Heading: Parties to the covenant identified 2. Witnesses: Convents were publicly executed; witnesses were named in the document 3. Stipulations: Each party of the covenant agreed to specific issues and responsibilities 4. Blessings and Curses: Advantages and disadvantages for keeping or not keeping the covenant 5. Provisions for periodic renewals, re-ratifications and amendments to the covenant) (Greene, John T. *Covenant Ecclesiology: Trusting Human and God*, 30)

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 34

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Ibid, 36

<sup>52</sup> Och, Bernard *Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation*, 231

<sup>53</sup> Harrington, Wilfred *The Tears of God: Our Benevolent Creator and Human Suffering*, 21

God is Creator, we are creatures. He is Lord, we are servants. He is Teacher, we are learners. He is the Holy One, we are sinners. He is Redeemer, we are redeemed. He is the infinite Good and source of all good gifts; we are grateful recipients of his gifts. Each of these relationships needs to be expressed.”<sup>54</sup> For the Israelites, experiencing Yahweh as the covenant partner was a new relational image of God.

What are the characteristics of the relational God as the covenant partner? What makes Yahweh as the covenant partner different from others? The unconditional love showed by Yahweh towards the people of Israel remains as the foundation for the covenants from the part of God. In the opinion of Lawrence Toombs the “Deuteronomist teaches that the Covenant — and with it, the possibility of obedience — swings on the hinge of love. Love is the middle term between God's act and man's response to it in his life in society.”<sup>55</sup> He interprets it as a reciprocal relationship between the God and human beings. To illustrate this aspect of Covenant as love Toombs gives the following explanation, “In order to investigate the way in which the Deuteronomist employs love in his presentation of the Covenant, one must begin with the commonplace observation that the Covenant involves a triangle of relationships: the first and formative element is God's relationship to Israel; derived from this is Israel's response to the initiative and grace of God; and, as a consequence of the former two elements, there emerges the relationship of the members of the Covenant community to one another.”<sup>56</sup> A reciprocal relationship is developed from the Covenant which places influence on the life of the community as consequence. The Deuteronomist is aware of the fact that without this reciprocal dimension of love experienced in the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, it does not serve its purpose. “Thus, the Covenant, as the Deuteronomist understood it, rests on a two-dimensional love: love which moves in the first and crucial instance from God to Israel and calls the Covenant into being; and love which, as a consequence, flows out from Israel to Yahweh and keeps the Covenant in effect.”<sup>57</sup>

People experienced that the unchangeable faithfulness of God to the promises of the covenants as uniqueness of a relational God as a covenant partner. That is why even when the people of Israel were not faithful to him, God intervened in their lives when they were in need. The relationship with God is usually un-

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<sup>54</sup> Hinnebusch, Paul *Calling God “Beloved”*, 58

<sup>55</sup> Toombs, Lawrence E. *Love and Justice in Deuteronomy, a Third Approach to the Law*, 402

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 403

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 409

derstood as a covenantal relationship in the beginning. “Having a relationship with God, biblically speaking is always understood in the context of covenant. Biblical covenants are not unlike contracts, but they are much more personal in nature. Covenant faithfulness brought blessing; unfaithfulness, a curse....”<sup>58</sup> People knew from their experience that God in the course of time intervened in certain ways in the history of people.<sup>59</sup> We read in the Bible that, “I have seen the affliction of my people...therefore I have come down to rescue them.” (Ex 3:7 ff) Such interventions repeatedly gave reasons for the renewal of the covenants in a new form. The initiative for the covenants was taken first by God himself because God speaks to Noah (cf. Gen: 9:8-17), God speaks to Abram (cf. Gen 17). “Because of his covenant loyalty, the Judeo-Christian God can be characterized as a God who gives the opportunity again and again for himself and his covenant partners to hold fast to the covenant of loyalty.”<sup>60</sup>

A breach in the covenantal relationship is the unfaithfulness of the Israelites. But people experienced that God remained loyal and faithful and that made the relational God as covenant partner more outstanding. The prophets Jeremiah and Hosea depict how God cared for them even when they (Israelites) went away from him. “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son...they kept sacrificing to the Ba'als, and burning incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught E'phraim to walk, I took them up in my arms...I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.” (cf. Hos 11:1-4) “...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (cf. Jer 31:34) Israel always experienced the nearness of God in their history and most of the time this nearness was expressed in such a way as that of a relationship between God and the Israelite people. So passionate is his understanding of how Yahweh feels betrayed at Israel's abrogation of her stipulated responsibilities vis-à-vis the Covenant, he acts out the role of a ‘cuckolded’ Yahweh before suing for his rights as the injured *Covenant partner*. (Hos 2-3)<sup>61</sup> Thomas F. Torrance tells that the Israelites proved themselves as the most stiff-necked and rebellious people, they were brought into *covenant*

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<sup>58</sup> Farrelly, *Mathew A Covenant With the Earth*, 27-28

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Dietrich, Walter; Link, Christian *Die Dunklen Seiten Gottes*, 72-73

<sup>60</sup> „Aufgrund seiner Bundestreue lässt sich der jüdisch-christliche Gott somit charakterisieren als ein Gott, der sowhol sich selbst als auch seinen BündnispartenerInnen immer wieder die Möglichkeit eröffnet, am Treuebund festzuhalten.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 78)

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Greene, John T. *Covenant Ecclesiology: Trusting Human and God*, 37

*partnership* with God out of his love. And keeping the covenant did not depend on the worthiness of the Israelites but purely on the out-flowing love of God.<sup>62</sup>

Adrio König argues that the covenants God made are not with equal partners. God has a greater advantage in choosing the outlines of the covenant. So he brings two different concepts which are vital in the covenant. According to his perspective there is inequality between God and us. The input by the two covenant partners are not the same. God takes the initiative, we have to respond. God decides and we have to be grateful; God is faithful, we must trust him. Promises are made by God and we have to live them. “The covenant is an unequal relationship between God and humanity. God is the creator, we the creatures. God takes the initiative, determines the content of the covenant and the obligations on either side, and we have only to respond.”<sup>63</sup>

To keep up our faithfulness in the commitment is the difficult part of the covenantal relationship.<sup>64</sup> The purpose of covenant, then, is to ensure faithfulness and commitment to the very relationships that are so precious in God's sight.<sup>65</sup> The story of the Israelites tells us that the relational God as a covenant partner is loyal to his commitments and pledges. “Yahweh communicates his goodness and faithfulness through covenant relationships...”<sup>66</sup> God as covenant partner shows unconditional love for his people and his love inspires him for the repetition of the covenants. The specialness of Yahweh as covenant partner is that he is faithful in his promises and remains loyal even when his covenant partner fails in the promises.

#### **1.2.4 Universal Covenant of God with Noah**

The story of Noah in the Bible shows that people experienced God always selecting his own covenant partners who would work for him to convey his messages to his chosen people, and who would represent Him in the midst of the people. The covenants were made with those leaders in the name of the whole nation or group of people. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. (cf. Gen 6:11) We read in the Bible that when the people began to lead immoral lives and go away from the ways of God, God decided to destroy the people of the earth but Noah found favor in the

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Torrance, Thomas F. *Israel of God: Israel and the Incarnation*, 308

<sup>63</sup> König, Adrio *Covenant Partner and Image: Deriving Anthropology from the Doctrine of God*, 36

<sup>64</sup> The comparison is made to Proverbs 20:6 which states, “Many a man claims to have unflinching love, but a faithful man who can find?”

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 15

<sup>66</sup> Story, J. Lyle *The Dynamic, Relational, and Loving Purpose of God*, 108

eyes of God. (cf. Gen 6:9) So God used Noah to restore the relationship in the form of covenant. “Noah and Abraham are the two individuals chosen by God to reinstate the original creational blessings.”<sup>67</sup> The covenant with Noah is an attempt on the part of God to amend the broken relationship with his people.

What are the different unique characteristics in the relationship between God and Noah from the relational perspective of God? Why did God choose Noah? One interesting factor in the story is that there is no dialogue in the conversation. God tells how the preparations are to be done, directions on how to make the ark, who is going to be in the ark and what is going to happen when the flood comes. (cf. 6:12-21) “Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.” (Gen: 6:22) There is no consultation with Noah and Noah does not ask questions of God.<sup>68</sup> Ruth Padilla argues that God sees the exemplary life of Noah as a reason to remain in the relationship with the people. “The writer of Hebrews attributes his [Noah’s] love of justice and his obedience of God to his faith. (Heb 11:7)<sup>69</sup> His was a life of connectedness with God and God’s good purposes. And that is the turning point of the story. It’s as if God - even in his just rage and disappointment - had been waiting for an excuse to yet again embrace his wayward children, to clothe them when they were naked.”<sup>70</sup> In spite of the sins of the people (cf. Gen 6:11), people felt that God did not want to lose his relationship with his creation. The aim of the covenant is to save at least one pair of all the animate beings before God destroys the world with the flood.<sup>71</sup> God could have destroyed the whole world and created again, but then it would not have corresponded to his relational character. Along with the family of Noah, God is asking Noah to bring, “Every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.” (Gen 6:19)

The specialness of the covenant with Noah is the first time in which God shows the relationship between human beings and the animals. “The goal envisaged in the covenant is the harmonious relationship between human beings and the

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<sup>67</sup> Och, Bernard *Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation*, 231

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Hartmann, David *Living in Relationship With the Other: God and Human Perfection in the Jewish Tradition*, 147

<sup>69</sup> “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.” (Heb 11:7)

<sup>70</sup> De Borst, Ruth Padilla *God’s Earth and God’s People: Relationships Restored*, 9

<sup>71</sup> The question may arise as to how a God who created everything can destroy his creation. This imagery of God is used to show what would happen when people do not live in accordance with the given rules. The aim is to highlight the consequences when there is a breach in the covenant.

creation.”<sup>72</sup> “A covenant is made by God with Noah and his descendants, with animals, and with the earth. God’s relationship with all of creation is reestablished. The Noah story is a story of creation lost and creation renewed. [Lost relationship and renewed relationship.] A new era is begun, and it is marked by a covenant.”<sup>73</sup> “The text actually says that after Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, and their wives had entered the ark with all the animals, ‘The Lord shut him in.’ (7:16) God plunged Noah into the homemade school of intense, unavoidable, intimate relations. There was no way out: Noah had to learn to relate afresh to the inhabitants of that microcosm and to take responsibility for them.”<sup>74</sup> Lukas Vischer confirms that, “God’s unilateral initiative and commitment embraces the whole creation. God’s attention is turned to all the living beings God has created. Indeed, what is at stake in this covenant is the relationship between human beings and all living creatures. The prophet Hosea refers to the promise that God will protect human beings from the wild animals; God will set limits to the animals in the interests of human beings. (Hos. 2:18) More important still is the covenant established by God in favor of Noah and his children as well as with ‘All living beings that are with you’ forever. The commitment of God embraces not only human beings but also all God’s creatures.”<sup>75</sup> God wanted Noah to learn to relate and that is why he had to put up with different sorts of animals in the ark. The relational God likes to teach his creatures how to relate with other creatures. God personally takes care of the responsibility of their interrelationship. Or a God who likes to keep relationships between human beings and nature and that is the reason he gives one more chance for the creatures before he destroys the whole of living beings from the face of earth.

In the Bible we read that God learns from this experience and decides not to have floods in the world and not to repeat the form of punishment for which he opted. The covenant is God’s self-commitment: “... never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” (Gen 9:12) God will go so far as to tie a string about his finger! He not only makes a promise but gives the assurance that he has included a built-in reminder, ‘I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth,’ a gracious touch.”<sup>76</sup> The rainbow remains as the symbol of God’s promise and relationship for the Israelites. The communitarian element of the covenant has been revealed in the covenant of God with Noah. The whole world is part of this covenant. Krystin Granberg

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<sup>72</sup> Vischer, Lukas *I Will Be Your God – You Shall Be My People*, 79

<sup>73</sup> Williams, Chet *Genesis 9:8-17 Creation and Chaos*, 96

<sup>74</sup> De Borst, Ruth Padilla *God’s Earth and God’s People: Relationships Restored*, 10

<sup>75</sup> Vischer, Lukas *I Will Be Your God – You Shall Be My People*, 79

<sup>76</sup> Harrington, Wilfred *The Tears of God: Our Benevolent Creator and Human Suffering*, 21

states that, “God has made a covenant with each of us individually and with all of us communally. There is no escaping God's covenant. We ignore, disregard, forget, and fall short, but God's covenant is still there all the time. It is not based on our behavior or our promise, but on God's everlasting presence and promise.”<sup>77</sup> It is a privilege to live in the covenantal relationship with God and to remain in the covenantal relationship with the whole of nature.

### 1.2.5 God's Particular Covenant with Abraham

The story of the relationship of Abraham with God reveals to us how Abraham experienced God in his relationship. The God who extended a relationship to human beings from the moment of creation prepares Abraham to make a particular covenant with him in which God continues his invitation for the generations to come. The covenant with Abraham happens because God seals a covenant with all the generations that are going to be born from the ancestors of Abraham. (cf. Gen 17:10-14) The content of the covenant is that, “I [God] will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.” (cf. Gen 17:7) What is the specialty of this covenant? This covenant was singular in character because the covenant was made particularly to Abraham and his descendants. The ancestor is the way God reaches his people, because the ancestor also has the function of a pattern (role-model) for posterity. God is a God on the way: he accompanies the ancestor on an unknown way. God was committed to the people he had chosen and, “This commitment comes to expression in the calling of individuals God needs as partners: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, David.”<sup>78</sup>

Each covenant had its own distinctive sign. The particular covenant of God with Abraham was with the sign of circumcision. (cf. Gen 17) “The seal/sign of each covenant affects the realm of the other covenant: the covenant of the land (Abrahamic) relates directly to the people by circumcision, and the covenant of the people (Mosaic) relates directly to the land by means of the Sabbaths.”<sup>79</sup> From the relational perspective of God, there is a difference in the covenant with Abraham. God converses with his covenant partner. There is a dialogue taking place in the covenant sealing. “God's covenant with Abraham goes far beyond and fulfills His previous covenant with Noah. The Abrahamic

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<sup>77</sup> Granberg, Krystin *The Covenant of God Calls us to Live*, 24

<sup>78</sup> Vischer, Lukas *'I Will Be Your God – You Shall Be My People'*, 79

<sup>79</sup> Barrick, William D. *Inter-Covenantal Truth and Relevance: Leviticus 26 and the Biblical Covenants*, 86

covenant is one of reconciliation as well as restoration and signifies the reestablishing of communication between man and God.”<sup>80</sup> When God promises that Sarah will be the mother of nations, Abraham laughs and asks God how a ninety year old woman can have child. (cf. Gen 17:16-17) The relationship of Abraham with God grows into a friendship wherein God dialogues with Abraham.

How do we know from the Bible of the special relationship of Abraham with God? What was the consequence in the life of Abram once he began to relate with God? God changes the name of Abram to Abraham and even changes the name of Abraham’s wife from Sar’ai (cf. Gen 17:5-15) to Sarah. That shows that the relationship between Abraham and God is deep, intense and very personal. “A God who is a person treats Abraham as a person. He is asked to co-operate in the plan of Yahweh, and this plan is entirely for Abraham’s benefit and the benefit of all the families of the earth.”<sup>81</sup> The uniqueness of this covenant is that, “God and man enter into an ‘I – thou’ relationship.” Francis J. Moloney analyses the development in the promises God made to Abraham and the change from the second person to the first person is notable. Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from *your* country and *your* kindred and *your* father's house to the land that I will show you. And *I* will make of you a great nation, and *I* will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. *I* will bless those who bless you, and him who curse you *I* will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.” (Gen 12:1-3)<sup>82</sup> To enter into this I-thou relationship Abraham had to really take the risks that God asked of him. To leave one’s own country, children and father’s houses means to leave one’s own material securities and possessions. As a reward for leaving his securities, God pledges him the Promised Land, the father of a nation, blessings...etc. Moloney continues that, “Yahweh subjects this mystery to himself by using it as an example for the splendor which would come to Abraham if he would take the risk of accepting the promise of the God who was dealing with him in a unique ‘*I-thou*’ relationship. He does, and the development of this relationship between Abraham and his God make up the rest of the story of the Old Testament, and is prolonged into the New Testament.”<sup>83</sup>

Once Abraham fulfills the demands of the promise of God by migrating to another country, the relationship between God and Abraham reaches a new di-

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<sup>80</sup> Och, Bernard *Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation*, 233

<sup>81</sup> Moloney, J. Francis *Disciples and Prophets: A Biblical Model for the Religious Life*, 22

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Ibid

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 23



mension. After this God is defined and described in relation to Abraham, “God is thus, ‘the God of Abraham’ that is the deity who speaks to Abraham and whom Abraham is prepared to worship.”<sup>84</sup> “The special bond of the relationship God had with Abraham did not end with Abraham but continued through generations and reached its climax, “In Exodus where the God of the burning bush in Midian declares himself to Moses as ‘The God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’”<sup>85</sup> The depth of the relationship between God and Abraham is revealed when God takes the name of Abraham (God of Abraham) to address the people. This is a sign from God in which he allows the people to know how their forefathers related with him and how he is looking for this same loyalty and commitment from the coming generations. Because of the covenantal relationship with God, Abraham is presented as being a friend of God’s along with other important characters in the Bible.<sup>86</sup> The relationship of God with Abraham is shown as the role model for the generations to come so they can see and know how their forefather (Abraham) lived loyally before God.

### **1.2.6 The Unique Covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai**

In each covenant God made, people experienced the unique story of their relationship with him. People felt that the covenant on Mount Sinai was a declaration of a God who likes to remain in a relationship with his people and that the covenant is established with the whole people. Moses is the covenant mediator and he assumes the responsibility of leadership. William D. Barrick writes that, “The foundation of the Mosaic Covenant (Lev 26:13, 45) consists of the history of Yahweh’s deeds on behalf of His people. Yahweh is the God of history, the sovereign Lord of time and of place. Divine election and deliverance comprise the main factors in Israel’s history. Nothing that Israel possesses results from her own work. Yahweh as Creator and Giver graciously and mercifully associates Himself with this nation.”<sup>87</sup> God did not choose Israelites because they were better than other nations but because of his love.<sup>88</sup> Steadfast love and faithfulness of God always remain behind every repetition of the covenants.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament*, 20

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 21

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Ssettuuma Benedict *Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission*, 60

<sup>87</sup> Barrick, William D. *Inter-Covenantal Truth and Relevance: Leviticus 26 and the Biblical Covenants*, 89

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Reist, Irwin W. *The Theological Significance of the Exodus*, 227

<sup>89</sup> “The Israelites cried out to God because of their oppression from foreign rulers. The Lord refused to deliver them because they had abandoned him. (Judg 10:13-14) The Israelites repented, put away their foreign gods, and worshiped the Lord. The Lord ‘could no longer bear

The content of the covenant is expressed in a relationship formula. People felt that God wanted to possess the people as his own. "If you (Israel) will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (cf. Gen 19:5-6) "The implied corollary to God's demand that Israel shall have no other gods is God's commitment that He will have no other people. Through His accessibility to and involvement in the life of Israel, God has reentered the realm of human existence. God not only participates in but also becomes a part of the history of the people of Israel."<sup>90</sup> The unique covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai makes Israel as his nation (family) and God remains as their God. "The prosperity of the nation Israel was conditioned by her faithfulness to the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances of God."<sup>91</sup> David Hartman tells that, "The idea of a covenant between God and Abraham and between God and the people of Israel at Sinai is ultimately grounded in the metaphysical theme of divine self-limitation for the purpose of relationship with human beings."<sup>92</sup> God is ready to make himself small so that he can enter into relationship with human beings. "Sinai represents but the commencement of the relationship between God and Israel. God and the nation must identify with each other if the wilderness years are to lead to the Promised Land."<sup>93</sup>

People knew that the commandments given on Mount Sinai can be seen as the guidelines for them to remain and to grow in the friendship and relationship with God. "At Sinai, Israel is separated from the other nations, restored and recreated in the image and likeness of God. Through the covenant at Sinai, God reaffirms the original blessings of life and prosperity which will now be realized in the life of a people dwelling in the land promised by God to its forefathers."<sup>94</sup> "The covenant at Sinai is based upon Israel's historical deliverance

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to see Israel suffer' (Judg 10:16), and therefore changed his mind about the matter and fought once again on behalf of Israel. (cf. Judg 10:13-16) It becomes clear then that the rejection of Israel is not its abandonment, but the reaffirmation of Israel in the fullness of the covenant and its promises. The covenant remains. God keeps his promises and his faithfulness are not made of none effect by the faithlessness of his ancient people." (Torrance, Thomas F. *Israel of God: Israel and the Incarnation*, 315)

<sup>90</sup> Och, Bernard *Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation*, 237

<sup>91</sup> Willoughby, Bruce E. *A Heartfelt Love: an Exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4-19*, 73; See also Johnson, Rick *The Old Testament Demand for Faith and Obedience*, 30

<sup>92</sup> Hartmann, David *Living in Relationship With the Other: God and Human Perfection in the Jewish Tradition*, 147

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Ibid, 147

<sup>94</sup> Barrick, William D. *Inter-Covenantal Truth and Relevance: Leviticus 26 and the Biblical Covenants*, 87

<sup>94</sup> Och, Bernard, *Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation*, 240-241

from Egypt. Yahweh performed that deliverance in accordance with the prior covenant. (Lev 26:13-45) The Mosaic covenant intentionally identifies the people of Yahweh more narrowly.”<sup>95</sup>

Once the preparation for the covenant was done, Moses went up to Mount Sinai for the first time (cf. Ex 19:3) and God gives him the general ordinances. After speaking with the people and consecrating them, Moses goes up to the Mountain to receive the tablets of stone on which the covenant commandments are written. (cf. Ex 24:12) The tablets of stone had two special *relational touches of God: they were written with the finger of God and the tablets were work of God.* (cf. Ex 31:18, 32:16) Before Moses could come down with stone tablets, the people had violated the covenant. They had worshiped golden calf. (cf. Ex 32:1-5) We read in the Bible that, out of his anger, God wanted to destroy the people, but Moses pleaded with him. Later, according to the direction of God, Moses goes for the third time to Mount Sinai with the two tablets of stone on which the commandments of God were written and God accepts them. (cf. Ex 34:1-4) “It was therefore with Israel in its sinful existence and indeed in its refusal of God that God bound himself in the covenant of love, while Israel, on its part, was unable to escape the decision of God's love that had overtaken it in the covenant of grace gathering it into partnership with God.”<sup>96</sup>

The Sinai covenant also presents the relational conflicts between God and Israel. “The events at Sinai reveal the tragic paradox which underlies the Divine/human relationship. Man who seeks reunion and reconciliation with God inevitably succumbs to the temptation of separating himself from the Divine center to which he strives to return. The incident of the golden calf dramatically demonstrates the basic truth that reconciliation is not a gift that can be granted by God but a goal which must constantly sought after by man.”<sup>97</sup> On one hand the people like to belong to God and remain in his relationship; but they again go after false gods and violate his relationship codes.

The inimitability of the Covenant on Sinai is that as a sign of relationship with Moses, God reveals his name to him. “The true and personal name of a person incorporates their life force; to know this real name was to have power over the person and to be able to make an intimate relationship with them. When God reveals his name, then, he is inviting Moses and Israel into a personal relation-

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<sup>95</sup> Barrick, William D. *Inter-Covenantal Truth and Relevance: Leviticus 26 and the Biblical Covenants*, 86

<sup>96</sup> Torrance, Thomas F. *Israel of God: Israel and the Incarnation*, 310

<sup>97</sup> Och, Bernard *Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation*, 241-242; See also Torrance, Thomas F. *Israel of God: Israel and the Incarnation*, 310- 311

ship of trust and loyalty.”<sup>98</sup> Mediatorship implies an ever growing friendship. The relationship with Moses and God has a special character because only to Moses does God reveal his name and that is something unique. “Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’” what shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’” (cf. Ex 3:13-15)

The relationship between God and Moses grows deeper as the covenant preparations are done and this relationship (friendship) is a key factor of the Sinai Covenant. Jacqueline Lapsley tells that, “The same intimacy present in Yahweh's initiating encounter with Moses at the burning bush characterizes their relationship throughout Exodus and Numbers.”<sup>99</sup> This intimacy is continued through in the book of Exodus, the meeting with the Pharaoh, the exodus and finally at Sinai. Jacqueline Lapsley finds four salient features in the friendship (relationship) of Moses and God. These four elements are constitutive of the intimacy of the friendship Moses had with God. Those four elements are: habit, reciprocity,<sup>100</sup> self-assertion and a special category, emotion.<sup>101</sup> Israel felt that its relationship with God is election. Israel is elected to be mediator with regard to other nations. Election cannot be self-sufficiency. Election is to be close to God and is meant for fulfilling a mission and in the intimate personal relationship we have to always be open to be entrusted with a mission.

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<sup>98</sup> Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament Israel of God: Israel and the Incarnation?* 31

<sup>99</sup> Lapsley, Jacqueline E. *Friends with God? Moses and the Possibility of Covenantal Friendship*, 118

<sup>100</sup> “At least four salient features of this divine friendship emerge from the interactions between Moses and God in Exodus (already assuming intimacy as constitutive of all of them): habit, reciprocity, self-assertion, and a special category, emotion. We will examine each of these in turn. Interpreters have long puzzled over the way vv. 7-11 fit into the overall structure of ch. 33. As Brevard Childs notes, “This section which is basically unified has no obvious connection with either what precedes or follows.”<sup>14</sup> This section seems to interrupt God's refusal to accompany Israel on the journey (as a result of the golden calf debacle) related in w. 1-6, with that topic picked up again in v. 12. Yet the description of Moses' actions in w. 7-11 anticipates the dialogue between God and Moses in v. 12 by providing a foundation for understanding the nature of their relationship over the long term. The NRSV appropriately translates the frequentative verbs in the passage with “used to”: “Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp...” (33:7). This sketch in w. 7-11 describes not a one-time event, but the repeated, habitual actions of Moses and God. So v. 11 serves as a kind of summary: “Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.” In sharp distinction to the other individuals who encountered God “face to face” only once, Moses had these face-to-face meetings routinely. Like human friendship, divine friendship is not about a once-in-a-lifetime encounter, or even about casual, occasional meetings. Rather, it entails a commitment to regular encounters that form habitual practice.” (Lapsley, Jacqueline E. *Friends with God? Moses and the Possibility of Covenantal Friendship*, 122)

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 119

Moses, who did not believe in his ability to talk to the people and to the Pharaoh in the beginning (cf. Ex 4:10, 13), and who requested God to send another person because of his lack of self-confidence, is courageous now. The intimacy of the relationship Moses had with God empowers him to represent God to the people, but it equally empowers him to represent the people to God. This is an effect of the reciprocal relationship of Moses and God. “Friendship with God is born out of a deep care for God’s people, for if Moses had cared less, he would not have intervened in this way. It is not a personal, individual relationship to be enjoyed alone, for its own sake. Rather, it is this care for the whole people of God that forms the context for divine friendship, and it is this care that feeds the mutuality and reciprocity of that friendship.”<sup>102</sup>

According to Jacqueline Lapsley, the mediatorship of Moses involves his whole existence and it also includes all types of emotions. Expressing emotions in a relationship is a sign of freedom and understanding. “In sum, the divine friendship between Moses and Yahweh embraces a wide array of emotions—everything from rage to love—and none is seen as inappropriate to, or testing the limits of, that friendship.”<sup>103</sup> Moses was very angry at the people when he saw them worshipping the golden calf. The emotional expression is seen in the throwing of the stone tablets. (cf. Ex 32:19) In the midst of all the tensions and anger, his “friendship with God sustains him and his faith, even in the midst of severe testing, when he is caught between God’s demands and the people’s anger and faithlessness.”<sup>104</sup> (cf. Ex 4:10-13) The conversation style we note in Exodus 33: 12-17 (Moses is asking that the presence of God go with him and the nation, and God agrees to his request) shows the depth of the relationship Moses had with Yahweh.<sup>105</sup> The way God was speaking with Moses shows the depth of the relationship of God with Moses. “Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” (Ex.33:11)

Israelites knew that the flow of the blessings of the covenant promised depended on their cooperation. As long as they remain in the relationship with God, they will have his blessings. The blessings that flow out of the covenant at Sinai for Israel will remain as long as they remain as Israel.<sup>106</sup> Blessings of the covenant remain with them as long as they keep the covenantal bond. Accord-

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<sup>102</sup> Lapsley, Jacqueline E. *Friends with God? Moses and the Possibility of Covenantal Friendship*, 122-123

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 125

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Ibid, 128

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Irwin, William H. *The Course of the Dialogue between Moses and Yhwh in Exodus 33:12-17*, 631

<sup>106</sup> Greene, John T. *Covenant Ecclesiology: Trusting Human and God*, 37

ing to Gregory Boyd, in being a relational God, his estimation of relationship varies as the relationship varies. He is not eternally settled in his divine mind about the Israelites. If his estimation was fixed, he would not have saved the Israelites from their plight. People experienced that God is responsive to all the new circumstances human beings (Israel) initiate to keep the relationship.<sup>107</sup>

From the covenant with a particular nation, the covenantal invitation is given to the whole universe. God's relationship encompasses all the nations. According to Thomas Torrance, every sealed covenant from the beginning was a relation of union and communion with God and one particular history. "In the enactment of the covenant between one particular people and Yahweh at Sinai, the bond of the covenant was the Decalogue which was basically universalistic."<sup>108</sup> Bruce E. Willoughby explains the universal element of the Decalogue in the following way: "Yahweh is the sole God of Israel. He is the God of her history and demands her obedience, love, and loyalty. And yet, even as the exodus from Egypt manifested not only the God of the Israelite people, but also the God of all peoples, so here, under the declaration of God's unique and exclusive covenant with Israel, hides the concept that there is one God, not only for Israel, but also for the world. 'Yahweh, our God, is the one Yahweh for Israel and the world.' In Israel's practical faith Yahweh is her God alone. In truth, Yahweh is the God of the universe."<sup>109</sup> All three covenants had their own thrust and special situations which led to the sealing of the covenant. Each covenant shows how people and the mediators experienced God under different situations. In each covenant the relational God is experienced in a personal, intense and deep way which transmits a higher form of the relationship and closeness between the covenant partners.

## 1.3 Relational Images of God

### 1.3.1 Positive Relational Features of God in Relationship

The lives of the people in biblical times also had their imageries with which they could identify their attachment to God and use to bring their unique relationship to expression. According to Michael Klessmann, without any picture or image of God we cannot develop any relationship with him. Different images of God are seen in the Bible: father, mother, light, life, shepherd...etc. and these different images of God help us to enter into a relationship with him. All

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Boyd, Gregory A. *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*, 159-160

<sup>108</sup> Torrance, Thomas F. *Israel of God: Israel and the Incarnation*, 310

<sup>109</sup> Willoughby, Bruce E. *A Heartfelt Love: An Exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4-19*, 80

these images of God were influenced and shaped according to the culture and time of each epoch and they vary as time goes by.<sup>110</sup> “The name of God, Yahweh, rendered in Latin as *Adsum* or in English as “I shall be with you as who I Am,” displays the personal character of God as one who is engaged in a particular covenanted history with the people of Israel.”<sup>111</sup> Relational images of God speak of how the people related with God and how they experienced God in their relationship with him. To enter into a relationship with God we need some imagery which enables us to perceive an image of God for us. In the Bible we see many places where God will be depicted not only through personal images but also through abstract images like light, alpha and omega, and representational images such as bread and wine and rock and fortress which support us in building up our relationship with God.<sup>112</sup>

When we go through the different features of God in covenantal relationships, we come across two main categories of images. One of the images points to the positive relational features of God and the second category deals with the unusual relational features of God. Walter Dietrich and Christian Link tell us that, very often the bible passages give us the impression of a God who is hidden and not reachable for anyone. “They (Israel) perceived God as a pilgrim who secretly accompanies human history, coming closer, sometimes hurrying a few steps ahead, but never dictating over their fate from inaccessible heights.”<sup>113</sup>

In their relationship with God, people experienced the care and concern of God as one who accompanies them in all the different phases of their lives. Accompanying the people is part of his covenant loyalty towards his chosen people. “God and Israel belong together as partners. Together they go into exile, and together they return.”<sup>114</sup> God walks with the people and shares the life of the people with them. (Pillar of cloud and pillar of fire {cf. Ex 13,17-22}; giving them bread {manna} from heaven {cf. Ex 16:4-32}, providing water to drink {cf. Ex 17:2-6}). “God's love is further illustrated by the fact that God shares in

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Klessmann, Michael *Gott hat viele Namen*, 254

<sup>111</sup> M. La Cugna, Catherine *The Relational God: Aquinas and Beyond*, 647

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Klein, Stephanie *Das männliche Gottesbild und die Religiosität von Frauen und Männern*, 11

<sup>113</sup> „Sie nimmt auch Gott als einen Wanderer wahr, der auf eine verborgene Weise die menschliche Geschichte begleitet, sich auf sie zubewegt, ihr mitunter einige Schritte vorausseilt, niemals aber aus unzugänglicher Höhe herab über sie verfügt.“ (Dietrich, Walter; Link, Christian *Die Dunklen Seiten Gottes*, 72)

<sup>114</sup> „Gott und Israel gehören als Partner zusammen. Gemeinsam gehen sie in die Verbannung, und gemeinsam kehren sie zurück.“ (Neudecker, Reinhard *Die vielen Gesichter des einen Gottes*, 158)

the many-sided life of the people.”<sup>115</sup> Reinhar Neudeck explains the fatherly care of God during their journey in the desert. God’s love of man literally moves him to an *imitatio hominis*, an imitation often especially of the lowly man. So it was during the journey in the desert, God took on not only the service of a father toward his child – he carried the Israelites as a father carries his children – he also took on the service which otherwise is the work of a slave: he washed and dressed them, helped them put on their sandals, went ahead of them and illumined their way, watched over them when they slept.”<sup>116</sup> John D. Caputo depicts the relational image of a down-to-earth God who takes part in the daily lives of his people. “One need only think of the image of God strolling in the Garden of Eden to catch an evening breeze, looking for Adam and Eve (because he does not know where they are), or wrestling with Jacob through the night, to see what Kugel means. God gets into a scuffle with humankind, grows angry, regrets what he has done and starts over, and has to be talked down off the edge by humans.”<sup>117</sup>

Another image that comes to the forefront of the relational dimension is that of the nearness of God. Israel always felt the closeness and nearness of God.<sup>118</sup> God promises his presence and nearness to Moses (cf. Ex 3:12), he will continue to be there with Joshua also. (cf. Josh 1:5) Meier Soloveichik explains this care and presence of God as if making the desert into an Eden.<sup>119</sup> Isaiah recalls the promise of God that before we call, God will answer us. (cf. Isa 65:24) Reinhard Neudeck tells us that, “For the Jews, however, this God is not only transcendent, unapproachable, foreign. For them, above all else, he is the God-Who-Goes-With, whom they have always experienced and whom religious Jews today still experience as a God who loves us human beings, who suffers with us, who needs us, and who from his inexhaustible fullness reveals himself to us again and again, in surprising ways, in many faces.”<sup>120</sup> According to Do-

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<sup>115</sup> „Liebe zeigt sich ferner darin, dass er am vielseitigen Leben der Menschen Anteil nimmt“ (Neudecker, Reinhard *Die vielen Gesichter des einen Gottes*, 147)

<sup>116</sup> „Die Liebe zu den Menschen bewegt Gott buchstäblich zu einer *imitatio hominis*, einer Nachahmung oft gerade des niedrigen Menschen. So übernahm Gott bei der Wüstenwanderung nicht nur die Dienste eines Vaters dem Kind gegenüber – er trug die Israeliten, wie ein Vater sein Kind trägt- er übernahm auch die Dienste, die sonst einem Sklaven zukommen: er wusch und kleidete sie, zog ihnen die Sandalen an, ging ihnen voraus und beleuchtete ihren Weg, während sie schliefen, hielt er Wache.“ (Ibid, 146-147)

<sup>117</sup> Caputo, John D. *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event*, 73

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 78-79

<sup>119</sup> Soloveichik, Meir Y. *Torah and Incarnation: Torah Learning Rabbi Meir Y. Soloveichik Explains, Bridges the Gap Between Man and God*, 48

<sup>120</sup> „Dieser Gott ist aber für die Juden nicht nur der transzendente, unnahbare, fremde; er ist für sie vor allem der Mit-Geher-Gott, den sie immer erfahren haben und den religiöse Juden auch heute noch erfahren als einen Gott, der uns Menschen liebt, der mit uns leidet, der uns braucht



ris Nauer the nearness of God to his covenant people is the character of God. “As can already be found in the Old Testament narratives of the prophets, man experienced God from all time as a God who is near and interested, who accompanies, is loyal, concerned, caring and comforting. (Is 66:13, As a mother comforts her son, so I will comfort you.) At the same time, however, man always experienced (and experiences) God as a militant covenant partner who personally guarantees the right of existence and dignity of each of his creatures. He is a God who relieves distress, saves lives, and keeps alive hope for a better life. (Jer 29:11, For I will give you a hope and a future.)”<sup>121</sup>

One of the positive features of God in a covenant relationship is the experience his people had of God as part of a family. Hosea compares this family-like relationship Israel enjoyed with God to the multidimensional relational imageries of husband and wife, parent and child, and fatherly and motherly care. Hosea’s redefinition of God as a bridegroom and Israel as bride is ideal for God as relational. (cf. Ho 2:14-16, 19-20) The deep and intimate relationship God is promising is vividly expressed in this image. “Hosea is so bold as to describe the JHWH-Israel relationship not only using the image of parent and child, but also that of husband and wife.”<sup>122</sup> Mary Mills says, “God is a good husband who remains faithful and constantly desires the proper renewal of relationship with his wife, Israel.” (cf. Ho 1-2)<sup>123</sup> Another form of the relationship with Yahweh is revealed in the book of Hosea which unveils the mother side of God. The brokenness in the relationship between Israel and God is compared to a relationship of a mother towards her children and how she brings up her children. (cf. Hos 11:3-4)

For Laura Neufeld, “God relates to Israel not only as husband to wife, but as mother to child. When responding to Ephraim’s plea for forgiveness, God de-

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und der sich uns aus seiner unerschöpflichen Fülle heraus immer wieder neu und überraschend offenbart, in vielen Gesichtern.“ (Neudecker, Reinhard *Die vielen Gesichter des einen Gottes*, 141)

<sup>121</sup> „Wie bereits in alttestamentlichen Berichten über das Handeln von Propheten nachlesbar ist, erfuhren Menschen Gott immer schon als nahen, interessierten, begleitenden, treuen, besorgten, fürsorglichen und tröstenden Gott (Jer 66:13: wie einen seine Mutter tröstet, so will ich euch trösten). Zugleich aber erleb(t)en Menschen Gott immer auch als einen streitbaren Bundesgenossen, der das Überlebensrecht und die Würde eines jeden einzelnen Geschöpfes persönlich garantiert. Ein Gott, der Not lindert, Leben rettet und Hoffnung auf ein besseres Leben wach hält (Jer 29:11: Denn ich will euch eine Zukunft und eine Hoffnung geben).“ (Nauer, Doris *Trinitarisch Erfahrbarer Gott: Theologisches Fundament pastoralen Handelns*, 90)

<sup>122</sup> „Hosea wagt das Verhältnis JHWH-Israel nicht nur in das Bild von Eltern und Kind, sondern auch von Ehemann und Ehefrau zu kleiden.“ (Dietrich, Walter; Link, Christian *Die Dunklen Seiten Gottes*, 91)

<sup>123</sup> Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament*, 74

clares, "I am deeply moved for him," using Hebrew words that not only echo the grief of mother Rachel, but suggest that God experiences God's love for Israel in a particularly female way."<sup>124</sup> God compares his love to the love of mother to show how great motherly love is (cf. Isa 49:15), and the prophet compares the care of God to that of a mother, "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." (Isa 66: 13) "It is of course, interesting that Wisdom is a female image of God, spoken about with feminine pronouns. It is likely that biblical Wisdom was originally adapted from the great Mother Goddess worshipped around the Mediterranean world; some of her biblical words and deeds have roots in texts of Isis, Ishtar, and Astarte."<sup>125</sup>

McKay compares the covenantal relationship of Yahweh and Israel with that of a father/teacher-son/pupil relationship in view of the covenantal promises and demands.<sup>126</sup> The covenantal demands are meant for the son/pupil to follow and the fulfilling of the promises is the responsibility of father/teacher. The relationship is the common binding factor for this relational image. Images like father/son and teacher/pupil have a deep relational character in their nature. In the same direction, Bruce Willoughby shows us the relational image of God and Israel in the father-son relationship. "Similarly, this type of love is also present in the father-son relationship. Yahweh demands of Israel, his son, reverential fear, loyalty, and obedience as a father. (Deut 1:31; 8:5) This relationship even occurs in treaty passages of the Old Testament. (Deut 14:1; Jer. 31:9; Isa 30; 2 Kings 16:7) The father is tender, a merciful king, but the focus is on the attitude of the son."<sup>127</sup>

Keith Intrater speaks of the relational image of fatherhood and its link with relationship, "God as relational is interpreted according to the relationship in fatherhood. In this sense, we can understand the term God as relational. It is easier to understand this concept using the word father since a father cannot be defined alone. To be a father is to be the father of someone. Father implies relationship. Fatherhood cannot be in and of itself. The Scriptures throughout unfold God's central nature as that of father."<sup>128</sup> "The relationship between God

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<sup>124</sup> Neufeld, Laura *An Invitation to an Intimate and Transformative Relationship With God (Jeremiah 31:15-22)*, 232

<sup>125</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Holy Wisdom: Image of God's Saving Presence*, 6

<sup>126</sup> He brings the texts from Wisdom and compares it with the text of Deuteronomy and proves that the covenant Yahweh sealed with Israel has the character of a father-son and teacher-pupil relationship. (cf. McKay, J. W. *Man's Love for God in Deuteronomy and the Father/Teacher--Son/Pupil Relationship*, 426-435).

<sup>127</sup> Willoughby, Bruce E. *A Heartfelt Love: An Exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4-19*, 75

<sup>128</sup> Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 6

and the Jewish people is analogous to that of a father and a child. God's treatment of the Jewish people in history is even portrayed as a process similar to the way in which a parent contributes to the maturity of a child. Jewish history is seen as progression from thorough dependence upon God to greater self-reliance. God the parent guides the child along until the child can stand on its own. One passage characterizes this relationship as so powerful that God must voluntarily withdraw from the child in order for the child to achieve his or her own dignity and self-respect."<sup>129</sup> David Ariel states that God's parental relational image teaches us all the qualities a parent must have. "God as parent is not a gender specific motif. God is the neither male nor female but exhibits what the rabbis must have seen as ideal characteristics of any parent: love, nurturance; empathy; placing the child's needs first, self-sacrifice, and self-restraint."<sup>130</sup> The positive relational features of God enhance the relationship of God and Israel. The driving force behind all these features is the steadfast love of God for Israel because his love is unchangeable even if the mountains and hills may depart. (cf. Isa 54: 9-10)

### 1.3.2 Unusual Relational Features of God in Relationship

Rarely do texts depict the unusual and negative features of the relational images of God. It would be incomplete to analyze the relational images of God if this element is not mentioned. Unusual and negative features do not minimize the positive features of relational images of God, but it complements and leads to a comprehensive and full picture of God. According to Doris Nauer, "Precisely because the people felt, in accord with the testimony of the Old Testament, that they were not unimportant to God, they also had to come to terms with a second experience which, so to speak, represents the flip side of God's parental care: The experience that their God is a God who challenges and makes demands, who directs, guides, educates, checks and punishes. God's concern for his creatures can thus also be experienced as threatening. This happens especially when they fall short of God's expectations."<sup>131</sup> Dietrich Walter and Christian Link point out that, "God is not the strict but the gracious and

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<sup>129</sup> Ariel, S. David *What do Jews Believe?* 27

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 29

<sup>131</sup> „Gerade weil Menschen gemäß dem Zeugnis des Alten Testaments spürten, dass sie ihrem Gott nicht gleichgültig sind, mussten sie aber auch mit einer zweiten Erfahrung, die sozusagen die Rückseite der Für-sorge Gottes ausmacht, zurechtkommen: Die Erfahrung, dass sie es mit einem Gott zu tun haben, der sich fordernd zeigt, der Ansprüche stellt, der lenkt, leitet, erzieht, kontrolliert und straft. Gottes Sorge um seine Geschöpfe kann somit von diesen auch als bedrohlich erfahren werden. Dies besonders, wenn sie hinter Gottes Erwartungen zurückbleiben.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 81)

merciful God. If he afflicts, it is because it can no longer be avoided; but he infinitely prefers to prove to his people his loyalty. In this he is as he really is; in punishment he is a stranger to himself.”<sup>132</sup>

Doris Nauer brings forth the two sides of God. God is both full of care and love towards the Israelites and at the same time he does not close his eyes towards the injustice and unrighteousness they commit. The Israel people experienced the wrath of the Lord blazing against his people. He raises his hand against the people and strikes them (cf. Isa 5:25), the wrath of God is like whirling tempest (cf. Jer 23:19), and Deut 4:24 explains about God as a jealous God. We read in the psalms his calls for vengeance (Ps 137: 8-9, O daughter of Babylon, you destroyer!...Happy the man who shall seize and smash your children against the rock.), his threats of judgment and violent interventions. (Ex 12:29, At midnight the Lord slew all the firstborn in Egypt).<sup>133</sup> “That the Bible narrates in detail about the wrath of God, is not, in their opinion, testimony to the fact that God should be portrayed as a vengeful, sadistic ruler, but that one should bear in mind that even in the very greatest individual and collective disasters God is not far off, but still plays a role, even if it be a negative one. His role as punisher, caused (usually) by culpable conduct of man, ends (usually) with God relenting from the destruction of sinners, showing once more that he is a true lover of life.”<sup>134</sup> God tells his people that they do not deserve his mercy since they sinned. “I am called a merciful and gracious God, patient, rich in grace and fidelity. (Ex 34:6) But because of your sins I have become strict and have changed my quality of mercy into my quality of strict justice.”<sup>135</sup>

Mary Mills brings the argument that the reason why God eliminated all the Canaanites was that, “God cares for his people so much that he will give them

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<sup>132</sup> „Gott ist nicht der Strenge sondern der Gnädige und Barmherzige. Wenn er heimsucht, dann deswegen, weil es gar nicht zu vermeiden ist: unendlich viel lieber aber erweist er den Seinen Treue. Darin ist er bei sich selbst, beim Strafen ist er sich selbst fremd.“ (Dietrich, Walter; Link, Christian *Die Dunklen Seiten Gottes*, 103)

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Trinitarisch Erfahrbarer Gott: Theologisches Fundament pastoralen Handelns*, 88-89; See also Dietrich, Walter; Link, Christian *Die Dunklen Seiten Gottes*, 72

<sup>134</sup> „Dass die Bibel ausführlich vom Zorn Gottes berichtet, zeugt ihrer Meinung nach nicht davon, dass Gott als rachsüchtig-sadistischer Herrscher dargestellt werden soll, sondern dass festgehalten werden soll, dass selbst in den allergrössten individuellen und kollektiven Katastrophen Gott nicht fern ist, sondern selbst dort noch eine, wenn auch negative Rolle spielt. Eine Straffrolle, die ihren Grund (zumeist) im schuldhaften Verhalten der Menschen hat, wobei Gott (in der Regel) vor der Vernichtung der Sünder zurückschreckt und sich damit wiederum als Freund des Lebens bewährt.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 81-82)

<sup>135</sup> „Ich werde barmherziger und gnädiger Gott genannt ‘langmütig und reich an Gnade und Treue’ (Ex 34:6). Aber infolge eurer Sünden bin ich streng geworden und habe meine Eigenschaft der Barmherzigkeit in meine Eigenschaft der strengen Gerechtigkeit gewandelt.“ (Neudecker, Reinhard *Die vielen Gesichter des einen Gottes*, 163)

a land. But this land is not empty, it already has inhabitants. The balance to God's love is that of his wrath which he will pour out on the Canaanites thus driving them from the land in the face of the Israelite attack. Because there must be no temptation for Israel to worship other gods, the army must destroy all the women and children as well as breaking down cult centers.<sup>136</sup> God goes to the extreme of even destroying inhabitants of another land because of his chosen people. Though one may interpret it as his extreme way of care for his people, still it depicts an unusual way of caring for God. When the Bible says God will take vengeance it has to be understood in an entirely different way. Vengeance is connected with the commitment of Yahweh to covenantal faithfulness and he expects the same from his partner. When this promise is violated they experience God as a vengeful God.<sup>137</sup>

People experiencing the negative presence of God is revealed very vividly in the ten plagues God (cf. Ex 7: 14-11:10) sent against Pharaoh so that his people may be freed. The killing of the first born of the Egyptians is an action of revenge of God on pharaohs for his chosen people. (cf. Ex 12: 29-36) God sends pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time and more than seventy thousand men died from Dan to Beer-sheba. (cf. 2 Sam 24) When we go through the Bible there are many stories<sup>138</sup> of God taking revenge on the other nations. Doris Nauer makes the observation that, "God himself is described as a warlord who is thirsty for vengeance while defending his people, inciting against each other men and entire peoples (nations) and destroying them in a merciless way..."<sup>139</sup> Walter Dietrich and Christian Link portray that, "Behind this affirmation of war stands – something difficult for us to grasp – God, God in the mask of the most merciless, ruthless reality-principle of history, God as a representative of the rules of conquest and subjugation. How do we deal with this God? How can we endure him, provided that we are willing to face him?"<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament*, 46

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 14

<sup>138</sup> "I trod down the peoples in my anger, I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth." (Isa 63:6) "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore." (Ex 14:30) "And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand you shall put all its males to the sword." (Deu 20:13)

<sup>139</sup> „Gott selbst wird als ein rachedurstiger, sein Volk verteidigender Kriegsherr beschrieben, der gnadenlos Menschen und ganze Völker gegeneinander aufhetzt und vernichtet..." (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 82)

<sup>140</sup> „Und hinter dieser Kriegsbejahung steht – schwer begreifbar fuer uns – Gott, Gott in der Maske des unbarmherzigsten, härtesten Realitätsprinzips der Geschichte, Gott als Repräsentant der Regeln von Eroberung und Unterwerfung. Wie gehen wir mit diesem Gott um? Wie halten

However, the challenging and unusual features of the relational God are to guide the people not to commit sins at least for the fear of punishment. Deuteronomy has an image of God which appears to be very strict with punishment for the people if they violate the rules. (cf. Deut 21:18-23, how to handle stubborn and rebellious son; Deut 22:22-23, punishment if caught in adultery.) Because of the sins of Sidon, God says that he will punish them and send pestilence into her and blood into her streets; and the slain shall fall in the midst of her by the sword that is against her on every side. (cf. Ezek 28:22-23) “The practical side of Israel's religion is to maintain the covenant and to avoid kindling God's divine anger. They can accomplish this if they fear God, serve him, and swear by his name. To fear God is a popular concept in Deuteronomy. (4:10; 5:29; 6:24; 8:6; 10:12; 14:23; 17:19; 28:58; 31:13) Although Israel's motivation for maintaining the covenant comes from God's initiating love, the reverence and awe of God's powerful justice and vengeance also help the Israelites to be loyal and obedient.”<sup>141</sup> “In the Decalogue, the core of the religious and ethical commands of the Sinai revelation, the Bible speaks for instance of a jealous God who punishes the guilt of the fathers in the children down to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him.” (Ex 20:5; Dt 5:9)<sup>142</sup> God, being always loving, never wants to punish his people and be a negative presence among them; but most of the time, according to Walter Dietrich and Christian Link, God is forced to do it. They describe it as a risk on the part of God. “What the Hebrew Bible so impressively depicts that God, who has chosen them, with his love, his anger and his regret in human history, puts himself on the line and risks his divinity...”<sup>143</sup> When Moses persuades God to forgive the Israelites the sin of the golden calf, God reminds him of his oath, “Moses, I have already sworn that whoever sacrifices to idols...shall be destroyed (Ex 22:19) And a vow that I have spoken, I cannot take back.”<sup>144</sup>

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wir ihn aus, wenn wir uns ihm denn überhaupt stellen? “ (Cf. Dietrich, Walter; Link, Christian *Die Dunklen Seiten Gottes*, 215)

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Willoughby, Bruce E. A Heartfelt Love: An Exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4-19, 85

<sup>142</sup> „Im Dekalog, dem Kern der religiösen und sittlichen Satzungen der Sinai-Offenbarung, spricht die Bibel zum Beispiel von einem eifersüchtigen Gott, der die Schuld der Väter heim sucht an den Kindern bis in die dritte und vierte Generation derer, die (ihn) hassten (Ex 20,5: Dtn 5,9).“ (Neudecker, Reinhard *Die vielen Gesichter des einen Gottes*, 149)

<sup>143</sup> „Was die Hebräische Bibel so eindrucksvoll schildert, dass der erwählende Gott sich mit seiner Liebe, seinem Zorn und seiner Reue in der menschlichen Geschichte selbst aufs Spiel setzt und seine Gottheit riskiert...“ (Dietrich, Walter; Link, Christian *Die Dunklen Seiten Gottes*, 67)

<sup>144</sup> „Als Beispiel wird wieder einmal Mose angeführt: Als Mose Gott dazu überreden will, den Israeliten den Sündenfall des Goldenen Kalbs zu verzeihen, beruft sich Gott auf seinen Schwur: „Mose, ich habe bereits geschworen, wer Göttern opfert...soll vernichtet werden (Ex

Having a distant or non-relational attitude is very painful in the relationships. This non-relational attitude of God comes into play because his people did not listen to his words or keep the covenantal promises. The people feel the distance of God. The exilic lament in Isaiah (Isa 63:7-64:11), in the night of the greatest collective abandonment by God, invokes the relationship posited as “beginning” between Yahweh as Father/Creator and Yahweh’s people. Here Israel has this feeling of abandonment since they have a relationship with God. Feeling abandoned is depicted as part of the relationship.<sup>145</sup> This abandonment is expressed as God turning his face from them and delivering them into the hands of their enemies. (cf. Isa 64:5-7) Psalms depicts the pain of abandonment that Israel is going through in moments when they were separated from the relationship of God. They cannot grasp that such a loving God will hide his face from them. Why do you hide your face from me and reject me? (cf. Ps 85:5) They wonder if the wrath of God will be prolonged to generations (cf. Ps 80:4) and how long he will not answer their prayers. Ruth Padilla De Borst explains that, “Violence reigned inside and out of the human heart. The people, the land, even the animals and plants suffered. But the narrator affirms that God was not far away nor on vacation. God saw all of this. Neither was God indifferent. His loving and just nature would not allow him to remain impassively distant from this scene.”<sup>146</sup> Israel and God in their journey together go through all the levels of relationship: from utmost care to utmost abandonment, from closeness to distance, from deep relationship to lost relationship. Each relational image strengthens and motivates them to become close to God.

### 1.3.3 Emotions in God’s Relationship

The Israelites were given the chance to experience the emotional reactions of God in their relationship with him. J. Lyle Story is of the opinion that analyzing these elements of God’s behavior or actions is needed to understand the relational dimension of God.<sup>147</sup> Throughout the Bible we have incidents of where the people experience God in his different emotional levels.<sup>148</sup> God ex-

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22,19) Und einen Schwur, den ich ausgesprochen habe, kann ich nicht zurücknehmen.“ (Neudecker, Reinhard *Die vielen Gesichter des einen Gottes*, 165)

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Ormerod, Neil *Creation, Grace and Redemption*, 27

<sup>146</sup> De Borst, Ruth Padilla *God's Earth and God's People: Relationships Restored*, 7

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Story, J. Lyle *The Dynamic, Relational, and Loving Purpose of God*, 99-126

<sup>148</sup> Mary E. Mills affirms the need of using emotive language but has a second thought about such descriptions. “The use of this emotive language to define the image of God in relationship to Israel humanizes the deity. God becomes more accessible since he can be described in language which already has meaning in human society. But such humanizing lays the deity open to the charge of being too much akin to humans, sharing their darker side as well as their more constructive qualities.” (Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament*, 53)

presses his disappointments and concern when his chosen people go away from the rules and run after the false gods. Jack M. Bloom points out that most of the time the anger side of God is omitted, and for him, “The living God of Israel and the world is not served by making God politically correct by diminishing God’s complexity and tensions.”<sup>149</sup> Expression of the emotions is part of a genuine relationship. “The terms<sup>150</sup> reflect a God who is affected by people with their various needs and problems, even for those who reject him; as a person, *God is passionate and emotional when he responds to those who love or hate him.*” (Italics added)<sup>151</sup>

Very often we see in the Bible the image of God who is disappointed in his covenant partners. God is very upset because with each break-up in the covenantal relationship. His disappointment is shown when he decides to take away peace from the people. I have taken away my peace, my steadfast love and mercy from this people (cf. Jer 16:5). And the LORD said, “Call his name not my people, for you are not my people and *I am not your God.*” (Hos 1:9) The Lord regretted that he made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. (cf. Gen 6: 6) The beautiful narration of the disappointment of God in the relationship with Israel has been portrayed well in, “I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’ to a nation that did not call on my name. I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices.” (Isa 65:2-3) The conversation of God with Baruch reveals that not only is Baruch suffering from frustration but even God.<sup>152</sup> We read many instances in the Bible where God explicitly expresses his disappointment with his chosen people.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Bloom, Jack H. *Hide and Seek: On Teaching God to be a Better Exemplar*, 154

<sup>150</sup> J. Lyle Story means with “terms” is that the verbs, nouns, prepositions and conjunctions reflect the many facets of God’s purpose.

<sup>151</sup> Story, J. Lyle *The Dynamic, Relational, and Loving Purpose of God*, 107

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Blank, Sheldon H. *“Doest Thou Well to be Angry”: A Study in Self-Pity*, 31

<sup>153</sup> “Yet he (God), being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up his entire wrath.” (Ps 78:38). And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, Out of his disappointment with the people, Yahweh is telling he will not answer their prayers any more. “I will not answer your prayers anymore” (Is 29:13). “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.” “You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” (Ex 20:2-6, Deu 5:6-10)



The faithlessness of the people of Israel is compared with the faithlessness of a wife towards her husband in Jer 3:20. “Surely, as a faithless wife leaves her husband, so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel, says the LORD.” Harrington Wilfred brings forth the idea that God is worried that people have forgotten his steadfast and faithful love and care. God expresses his despair when there is no corresponding reaction on the part of his promised people. (cf. Isa 1:2-3)<sup>154</sup> God feels left out by his own people because they behave as if they do not know him and understand him. (cf. Ex 34:6) God is affected by the behavior of his people since they do not follow his commandments from their hearts.

According to Mary M. Mills, the reason God was trying to destroy the tower of Babel attempt by the people was that, “God is suffering from jealousy in seeing the human organization as a challenge to his power.”<sup>155</sup> Because God understood that if human beings united, they would be able to conquer anything in this world and so the jealous God decided to scatter them. (cf. Gen 11:5-7) “One of the primary traits of God's nature is that He is a jealous God. In introducing the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:5 and Deut 5:9) the Lord states: I am a jealous God. In Exodus 94:14 the very name and nature of God as Jehovah is closely related to His characteristic of being jealous: for you shall worship no other God, for Jehovah whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. In the context of Exodus 34, the Lord is renewing His general covenant with the nation of Israel. He is stating His name and nature as ‘jealous’ in His position as one partner to this covenant. He presents Himself this way as a jealous covenant partner.”<sup>156</sup> The people of Israel felt that their God is a jealous God. “God's view of being jealous is the opposite of the selfish way in which the word jealous is usually taken. Jealousy is commonly understood to involve possessiveness. Being jealous for the covenant is not the same thing as being possessive of and selfish toward the other person. Being jealous for the covenant is actually the highest form of respect for the other partner.... Jealousy sets itself to demand loyalty and to avenge in most horrible terms any betrayal of the covenant.”<sup>157</sup> “God is reminding the people that they have to remain loyal to him, and to remain loyal the way he expects from their part is to accept and honor him alone as the only God. God himself expresses that he is a jealous God. He will be jealous if his people show reverence to other gods. (cf. Ex 20:2-6, Deu

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<sup>154</sup> Harrington, Wilfred *The Tears of God: Our Benevolent Creator and Human Suffering*, 32-34

<sup>155</sup> Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament*, 12

<sup>156</sup> Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 14

<sup>157</sup> Ibid

5:6-10) ‘God is a jealous God.’ (Deu: 4:25; 5:9; 6:15; 27:15-26; 32:16, 21) Jealousy and wrath are just as much functions of his lordship as his love and grace. They are anthropopathic attributes given to God on the basis of his action. God actively works against that which he dislikes and which his power can destroy.”<sup>158</sup>

Nancy Roberts brings forth the dilemma God experiences in the relationship with Israel. God is caught up between wrath the people enkindled in him by their waywardness and the compassion he longs to demonstrate towards them. We read, for example, in the book of Genesis that when God, “Saw that the wickedness of men was great on the earth...The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart.” (Gen 6:6) “How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboiim! My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender.” (Hos 11.8)<sup>159</sup> Yahweh trying to kill Moses is the bizarre episode in the emotional side of Yahweh. (cf. Ex 4:24-26) This type of reaction is unusual in the prophetic call narratives. Yahweh is expressing his suppressed rage because of the continuous attempt of Moses to get out of the job. “Attempted murder is not part of the typical prophetic call narrative, of course, but this is the first time in the biblical narrative that YHWH has encountered such extreme resistance in one called to serve—Abraham, for example, was considerably more compliant. After Moses, YHWH seems to have developed a divine resignation toward resistance as a normal prophetic reaction.”<sup>160</sup>

Laura Neufeld brings forth the transformation that takes place in the lives of Israelites people and also from the side of God. “Both God and Israel experience transformation in this relationship. God experiences transformed fidelity towards Israel, and Israel experiences transformation through its spiritual and geographic reunion with God.”<sup>161</sup> God himself assures them that all the images are the different faces of the same reality and that he remains the same. “Even though you see Me in many different images, I am the same. I am He who was with you at Sinai: I am the Lord your God.” (Ex 20:2) All the different positive and challenging features of the relational God enrich the vibrant relationship of

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<sup>158</sup> Willoughby, Bruce E. *A Heartfelt Love: An Exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4-19*, 86; See also Nauer, Doris, *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 81-83

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Roberts, Nancy N. *God as Father-Mother, and More*, 103

<sup>160</sup> Lapsley, Jacqueline E. *Friends with God? Moses and the Possibility of Covenantal Friendship*, 125

<sup>161</sup> Neufeld, Laura *An Invitation to an Intimate and Transformative Relationship with God (Jeremiah 31:15-22)*, 233

God and his chosen people at the different courses of their history and it unfolds a deep and unique relationship they enjoyed together as covenant partners. Different features of the relational dimension of God unveil the story of the life of Israelites with its ups and downs in their journey of relationship with God.

## 2. Jesus Christ Experienced as Relational

The relationship of God with his people that we looked into in the Old Testament gains another facet when it comes to New Testament. Jesus, who is at the same time both God and Man, lives with his people like any normal human being on earth sharing all the hardships, hurdles and happiness of earthly life. The ways and means of how Jesus built up the relationship with people and how people experienced him are different and unique. To examine the relational dimension of Jesus is equal to summarizing his meetings with different types of people in different locations and in different times.

Anthony T. Padovano represents the idea that Jesus had a great longing for relationships and that this is explicit in his dealings and words. “The gospels portray Jesus’ yearning for community as the losses in his life intensify. He wonders whether there will be any community of faith left in the future. He grows impatient as the disciples fail to understand and accept him in large measure because they cannot absorb the notion of a defeated Messiah. Jesus laments the unwillingness of Jerusalem to appreciate how much he cared for it. At the end, he gathers his friends and asks to be remembered. He breaks bread, calls for companionship in the garden and cries on the cross to not be left alone.”<sup>162</sup> There is a paradoxical move in the relationship of Jesus with his own family and the way he related to others. (cf. Mt.12:48-50, Mk. 3:31-35, Lk. 8:19-21) The one who wanted to be with people always manages to find time and ways to be away from people. (cf. Mk.1:35-39, Lk.4:42-44) The one who knows everything is ready to discuss theological issues with the normal and uneducated people. (cf. Joh.4:1-42) There are instances where he is very soft and kind towards the people but at the same time rough and strict. People experience both the human and divine side of Jesus in their relationship with him.

To draw a picture of the relational dimension of Jesus we have to go through his relationship towards his family, his disciples, with God the Father from whom he received the strength and encouragement for his ministry and the people with whom he came into contact through his healing and other instances

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<sup>162</sup> Padovano, Anthony T. *The Point of all Grace is Relationship*, 2

during his mission on earth. The resurrection of Jesus gives them a new image of God in their relationship.

## 2.1 Jesus and His Relationship with his Family

### 2.1.1 Historical Questions About the Family of Jesus

The study on the relationship of Jesus with his family leads us to an unavoidably complicated issue of discussion. There are many questions regarding whether Jesus had other brothers and sisters and whether Joseph was the husband of Mary. The questions are raised about the virginity of Mary too. There is no exact and satisfactory explanation given to all the questions raised towards the fatherhood of Jesus and brothers and sisters of Jesus. Each fragment brings forth their conclusions and arguments to substantiate their views which may not be acceptable for others. John M. Samaha argues that Joseph was more than a foster father. “Through this marriage, St. Joseph was not a mere foster father, nor was he an adoptive father of Jesus. He was much more than that. Jesus was given to Mary not simply because she was a single maiden, but because she was the virginal and true wife of St. Joseph. Jesus was given to the family of St. Joseph, and that was accomplished only through Mary. Even though St. Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus, he was given the spiritual ties of that fatherhood over a Son who was his own because he was the Son of Mary.”<sup>163</sup> Elizabeth McNamer and Bargil Pixner bring the proof about the royal family of Jesse from whom the savior of the world would be born.<sup>164</sup> Robert M. Price brings another argument entirely which suggests that Jesus was the son of the Priest Zacharias.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Samaha, John M, *The Dignity of St. Joseph*, 61

<sup>164</sup> “Gentiles were settled in the valleys of this fertile land {mountains were unpopulated} after the Assyrian wars of the eighth century BCE. Isaiah called it ‘Galilee of the Gentiles.’ Because Alexander Jannaeus wanted to make Galilee Jewish and force circumcision on the population, many left and immigrated to the Decapolis (the ten pagan cities on the other side of the Jordan River. At this time, Jews still living in Babylon since the deportation in the sixth century were invited to return. Several scholars suggest that among the returnees were the Nazoreans, a clan who claimed to be descendants of David, to whom the family of Jesus belonged. These people derived their name from the word Netzer (Isa 11:1) ‘shoot of Jesse,’ and regarded themselves as the royal family from whom the Messiah would come.” (McNamer, Elizabeth; Pixner, Bargil *Jesus and First-Century Christianity in Jerusalem*, 3)

<sup>165</sup> “Robert M. Price argues that it can be told or even confirmed because of the cultural background at that time that Zacharias could be the father of Jesus. Price is taking the consideration of Reverend Sun Myung Moon for this argument. According to Moon, “The true parentage of Jesus is a piece of what scholars like to call ‘inspired’ or ‘charismatic’ exegesis. That is a euphemism implying ‘subjective and Kabbalistic’ exegesis, genuinely of interest to scientific exegetes, but primarily as an example of the kind of pre-scientific mythopoeic imagination that created the Bible in the first place.” (Price, M. Robert *Was Jesus the Son of the Priest Zacharias?*, 1-2)

There are different opinions about the brothers and sisters of Jesus. No arguments can be proved fully and denied completely. “The question of the degree of the kinship between Jesus and his brothers and sisters receives various answers in the traditions of the Eastern and Western Churches. In the Protestant Churches it is generally considered that they were Jesus’ own younger brothers and sisters. The Catholic Church favors the opinion of Jerome that they were in fact his cousins. In the East it is customary to regard all extended family relations as brothers and sisters. The oldest interpretation, which is to be found with the Early Fathers, still lives on in the Oriental Churches including the Greek Orthodox. According to this tradition, Joseph was a widower when he took Mary to be his wife. His first wife bore him four sons and two daughters. Mary had only one son of her own but raised all of them and was greatly esteemed by all as their mother. This interpretation goes back to the *Protoevangelium of James*, written in the second century. It certainly contains many additions. But its ascription to James - the Lord’s brother - allows one to assume that it also contains authentic family records. The tradition that the brothers of the Lord mean half-brothers may belong to such a category.”<sup>166</sup>

John Dart reports that, “Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church doctrines contend that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virgin in perpetuity. Eastern Orthodox says the biblical mentions of brothers of Jesus refer to half-brothers, children of Joseph by a prior marriage. Rome interprets brothers to mean either relatives such as cousins or brothers in faith. Protestants generally see the brothers (and sisters) of Jesus in the natural meaning of a nuclear family.”<sup>167</sup> John Dart quotes Luke Timothy Johnson and says that if Jesus had other brothers and sisters, the whole question about the humanity of Jesus and the motherhood of Mary would take another turn.”<sup>168</sup> There are different opinions among scholars about the virginity of Mary because it raises the historicity of the question of whether Jesus had other brothers and sisters. Bargil Pixner provides information from Qumran to explain the meaning of the question which Mary asked to the angel, “How will this be, since I do not know man?” (Lk.1:34)<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Pixner, Bargil, *With Jesus Through Galilee According to the Fifth Gospel*, 51

<sup>167</sup> Dart, John *Scholars, Churches Debate: Was Jesus an Only Child?*, 13

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, 14

<sup>169</sup> “According to the oldest sources the words of Mary to the angel at the annunciation, ‘How will this be, since I do not know man?’ (Lk.1:34) are interpreted to mean that Mary felt herself bound by a vow of continence (chastity). Experts of present-day rabbinical Judaism and the pharisaical Judaism of the Second Temple period maintain that such a behavior could not be Jewish. In the Pharisaic view the very first duty of a person is to marry and to have children to ensure the continuation of a family line.” (Pixner, Bargil *With Jesus Through Galilee According to the Fifth Gospel*, 51)



### 2.1.2 The Life of Jesus in his Family

By becoming man, Jesus also went through a home schooling where he learned his relationship skills and adapting abilities. The evangelist in the Gospel of Luke provides us with basic texts in which we meet the family members of Jesus in the Bible. It begins with the annunciation story. (cf. Lk 1:26-38) The visitation to the cousin of Mary, Elizabeth, is the second place where we have the mention of the relative of Mary. (cf. Lk 1:39-56) The visitation is followed by the birth in Bethlehem and the circumcision (cf. Lk 2:1-21), the presentation of Jesus in the Temple (cf. Lk 2:22-38), the childhood in Nazareth (cf. Lk 2:39-40), the lost Jesus found in the Temple among the teachers (cf. Lk 2:41-50), and the hidden life in Nazareth. (cf. Lk 2:51-52)<sup>174</sup>

The Child Jesus had been taught many prayers by his parents Joseph and Mary. Lucien Deiss points out the blessings prayers Jesus prays are those which he had been taught in his childhood days.<sup>175</sup> “There were also blessings accompanying meals. When, at the multiplication of the loaves Luke writes that Jesus took the five loaves, looked up to heaven and blessed them, we must understand that he repeated the formula which Joseph used to recite in Nazareth at the beginning of each meal: You are blessed, Lord our God, King of the universe, you who have produced bread from the earth.”<sup>176</sup>

We have very less information or sources of information to know and evaluate how Jesus related with his family members. “Even in the darkest days, like those of the flight into Egypt, the life of the Holy Family was a continual feast of praise and thanksgiving to God. It is thanksgiving as the Pauline tradition would say later. (cf. Col 3:15)”<sup>177</sup> We do not have any proof if Jesus was obedient to his parents, but what we can assume after the finding of Jesus in the Temple is that he went with them and lived with them. (cf. Lk.2: 52) “The obedience of Jesus perfectly reflected the religious atmosphere of the family whose head was Joseph.”<sup>178</sup> Concerning his obedience to the heavenly Father, Jesus would declare later, “I always do what is pleasing to him.” and, “He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.” (Jn 8:29)

The two groups were close to Jesus. The first group is his own family circle and the second group is the so-called spiritual family, i.e. the twelve whom he

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<sup>174</sup> Cf. Deiss, Lucien *Joseph, Mary, Jesus*, 36

<sup>175</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 40-49

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 49

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 48

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, 24

elected and took with him in his ministry work. Though there are events where Jesus gives preference to his disciples rather than his own family, we have instances in the Bible where both families co-exist harmoniously and relate with each other well. John writes, “After this (the wedding at Cana) he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for few days.” (Jn. 2:12) The second instance takes place after the ascension of Jesus into heaven: they all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. (Acts 1:14)<sup>179</sup> As Jesus began to evolve in his mission, it was clear, “To the relatives in Nazareth who certainly loved Jesus dearly, it appeared as though they had lost their son and brother to the new group of the Twelve.”<sup>180</sup>

We can assume that at least one time in the Gospel we encounter Jesus who shows a non-relational attitude towards his family members. When Jesus’ brothers and sisters arrived together with his mother at Peter’s house and called for Jesus, they must have experienced a painful sense of rejection at Jesus’ response. Jesus makes it clear to his family members that his relationship with his disciples and his mission are more important. He gives a new definition for his mother and his brothers. Jesus extends the invitation of a relationship to be his brothers and sisters to all those who fulfill the will of his Father. (cf. Mk 3:33-35) Like most families, this family of Jesus, especially Mary, had to realize that the time had come that they had to let him go to seek his own way. Those who heard what Jesus said about his own family showed the disinterestedness of Jesus towards his family.

When Jesus was fully immersed in his mission awareness, many thought that he was out of his mind because they could not understand what the meaning of his sermons was. “The people of the Nazarene clan who wanted to retrieve Jesus by force and who dismissed him with the words, ‘he is out of his mind’ (Mk 3:21), must have influenced Jesus’ immediate family, ‘Try to bring your son and brother to his right mind.’”<sup>181</sup> Jesus had to live with the fact that there were prejudices about Nazareth and that is why when Philip tells Nathanael that he met Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, Nathanael’s reply is, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (cf. Jn 1:45-46) Many disciples except the twelve left Jesus because it was not easy for them to grasp what Jesus was preaching. His brothers told him to leave Galilee and to go to Judea. The answer given to this suggestion by Jesus was not understood by his brothers be-

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<sup>179</sup> Cf. Pixner, Bargil *With Jesus Through Galilee According to the Fifth Gospel*, 49

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 50

<sup>181</sup> Ibid



cause, “Even his brothers did not believe in him.” (cf. Jn 7:1-5) When we think on the relational level, we can assume that Jesus was not understood by his own brothers either.

In spite of all the proof we find, “The mystery remains untouched. We do not know to what depth familial influence marked Jesus' soul. Nor do we know how Jesus himself, as his personality developed, deepened his relationship with the heavenly Father or how the piety learned and practiced in Nazareth finally led him to the folly of the cross. This relationship remains Jesus' secret garden into which only the Father had access. For our part, to know that the tenderness of a man and woman, who lived in the simplicity of Nazareth, contributed to building up the personality of the One our faith acclaims as the Lord of eternal ages is enough to nurture our wonderment and praise.”<sup>182</sup> Jesus had a good relationship with his family members though sometimes the way he reacts to their needs may lead us to think in another way. If he had not learned relationship skills at home from his family members, Jesus would not have been successful in relating with hundreds of people and to give them a sense of confidence in their lives. His public life along with his ministry substantiates this truth.

## **2.2 Jesus Who Reached Out to the People**

### **2.2.1 Healings and Miracles as Means of Relationship**

The relational pattern of Jesus has not defined how he related with the people with whom he came into contact in the streets, in the synagogues, in the public places, in the families and in different locations and places. Most of the meetings take place in the framework of a dialogue (Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:7-30), question and answer (choosing of the disciples (cf. Lk 5:1-11), or action and reaction (healing of the crippled). (cf. Jn 5:1-16) In all the four gospels together we have 70 instances that have described where Jesus is meeting with men, 16 times meeting with women and 86 times meeting with groups.<sup>183</sup> Jesus treated everyone equally and did not disregard anyone. How could Jesus touch the lives of so many people? Doris Nauer gives the answer to this question, “The extraordinary thing with Jesus was that he did keep in contact with rich and socially respectable people but he turned primarily to people who at that time were regarded as unclean, liturgically unfit, unbelievers, sinners or for-

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<sup>182</sup> Deiss, Lucien *Joseph, Mary, Jesus*, 41

<sup>183</sup> Horn, Christoph *Christus Begegnung*, 49

eigners.”<sup>184</sup> The relationships of Jesus have been developed through different events or healing or through his ministry. Christoph Niemand represents the opinion that the healings or encounters with Jesus were to enable them to gather experiences of the new situation. Miracles of healings and expulsion of the demons happen according to God’s ruling. Jesus’ praxis of social integration of the marginalized does not at all exclude the members of the social elite from his invitation.<sup>185</sup>

Benedict Ssettuuma brings forth the way Jesus entered into relationship with them. “The reality of friendship in Jesus’ life towards every person is both striking and challenging. The effort to mirror God’s love and mercy even to religious and social outcasts earned Jesus the epithet, ‘A friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ (cf. Act 9:11; Lk 7:34) The answer to the leper’s request, ‘If you want to, you can cure me.’ (Lk 5:13), shows Jesus’ total willingness to restore life in a spirit of genuine friendship.”<sup>186</sup> He undoes the scribes by forgiving and healing a man who was paralyzed as punishment for his sin. (cf. Mk 2:1-12) He discourages his disciples from regular fasting (cf. Mk 2:18-20), he allows his disciples to shuck grain as they traversed a field on the Sabbath (cf. Mk 2:23-28), and on that holy day he does not hesitate to heal a man’s withered hand. (cf. Mk 3:1-6)<sup>187</sup> His healing of the leper in Mk 1:40-45 shows that he was not afraid even to touch the leper. When the leper stated that Jesus could heal the leper if he wills it, the reaction of Jesus was, “Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I will; be clean.’” (Mk 1:41) Because of this outstanding and caring action of Jesus the relationship with leper is established.

Walter Dietrich and Christian Link try to find out the reason why Jesus used parables and presentations during his ministry. According to them it is to win our trust. “The Kingdom of God is communicated in the celebration of a meal-community, in the emotion-filled actions of eating and drinking. The parables of Jesus are scenic proposals, presentations of personally lived images (the Prodigal Son, Lk 15:11ff) and societal Utopias (the Good Samaritan, Lk 10:25ff) that invite [its listeners] to identify themselves to them. God’s Name is

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<sup>184</sup> „Das Außergewöhnliche an Jesus war, dass er zwar auch mit wohlhabenden und sozial angesehenen Menschen Umgang pflegte, sich aber in erster Linie den Menschen zuwandte, die in der damaligen Terminologie als unrein, liturgieunfähig, ungläubig, sündig, oder fremd galten.” (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 85)

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Niemand, Christoph *Jesus – Wie er wirklich war*“? 260-263

<sup>186</sup> Ssettuuma, Benedict *Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission*, 66

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Blackburn, Barry L. *Liberation, New Covenant, and Kingdom of God: A Soteriological Reading of the Gospel According to Mark*, 222-223

lived out in these presentations, where he strives to earn our trust.”<sup>188</sup> Doris Nauer points to the ability of Jesus to draw people which helped him to gather the crowds. His appearance had an attractive style which drew people close to him. “There is no doubt that he was neither temple priest, pharisee, nor scribe, nor belonged to the political revolutionary party of the Zelotes. The reason for his public and publically effective appearance is to be seen in the fact that people experienced him as an attractive person and therefore followed him. As a wandering prophet, he was not only surrounded by a changing and later stable group of disciples of men and women, but also let himself be more or less supported by them since he did not have a constant profession.”<sup>189</sup> His capacity to attract disciples was helpful to gain the trust of the people. What is interesting in the relationships of Jesus is that he demands and strengthens faith and trust in the people. (If you say to the mountain to go and land in sea it will happen. cf. Lk 17:6) Most of the time the healing of Jesus demands faith and trust and it takes place as a result of it. (The statement of the Centurion, “If you say the word my servant will be healed.”cf. Mt 8:5-14)

A transforming consequence and strengthening effect was the uniqueness of the relational dimension of Jesus. “Instead, however, the divine giving of gifts turns social locations upside down. Such a giving occurs in the most unlikely of places and ways. The Samaritan woman, an outsider at the well, becomes an authority on the good news to her people. A prostitute, one living in shame, gives Jesus a precious gift of foot washing with fine oil.”<sup>190</sup> “Therefore, Jesus had confidence in people. He asked something of them, namely to trust God and therefore take their own lives into their hands, to throw away the indispensable crutches used till then, yet avoided overtaxing them.”<sup>191</sup> Christoph Theo-

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<sup>188</sup> „Das Reich Gottes teilt sich im Fest der Mahlgemeinschaft, in den elementaren affektbesetzten Handlungen des Essens und Trinkens mit. Jesu Gleichnisse sind szenische Entwürfe, Darstellungen von persönlichen Lebensbildern („verlorener Sohn“ Lk 15:11ff) und gesellschaftlichen Utopien („barmherziger Samariter“ Lk 10:25ff), die zur Identifikation einladen. In diesen Gestaltungen lebt der Name Gottes, in ihnen wirbt er um unser Vertrauen.“ (Cf. Dietrich, Walter; Link, Christian, *Die Dunklen Seiten Gottes*, 115)

<sup>189</sup> „Kein Zweifel besteht darüber, dass er weder Tempelpriester, Phariseer oder Schriftgelehrter war, noch der politischen Umsturzpartei der Zeloten angehörte. Sein öffentliches und öffentlichkeitswirksames Auftreten verdankte sich dem Umstand, dass er anziehend auf Menschen wirkte, weshalb sie ihm folgten. Als Wanderprediger war er nicht nur von einer wechselnden und später auch festen („12 Apostel“) Jüngerschar aus Männern und Frauen umgeben, sondern ließ sich wohl auch mehr oder weniger von diesen aushalten, da er keinem festen Beruf nachging.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 85)

<sup>190</sup> Marga, Amy *To Possess is Human? Not in the Economy of Salvation!*, 158

<sup>191</sup> „Jesus traute Menschen daher etwas zu. Er forderte etwas von ihnen, nämlich auf Gott zu vertrauen und deshalb das eigenes Leben in die Hand zu nehmen und bisher unverzichtbare Krücken wegzuwerfen, wobei er jedoch vermied, sie zu überfordern.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 85)

bald would say that for all those who are interested in the “courage to be,” Jesus communicated with them and gave them amazing riches; and for all those who came into contact with him, he helped them to find their own identity. “He (Jesus) gives it freely to a multitude of men and women, letting them go their own way, even sending the majority of them back without tying them to him or to one another in the bond of disciple and master. He engenders people who discover their own depths in freedom of conscience. This is suggested magnificently by the paradoxical remark addressed to a woman, ‘My daughter, it is your faith that has saved you.’ (Mark 5:34)”<sup>192</sup> People feel the special touch of strengthening in the relationship of Jesus. The freedom Jesus gives them helps them to accept their way of life and to make the necessary steps to change their ways of life to return to the nest of care and love of Jesus.

The relationship of Jesus with the people embraced all levels of daily life. People witnessed that Jesus expresses his emotions in his relationships. Joseph Ratzinger raises opposition to the opinion of the Stoics that Jesus and Christian faith are passionless. From the life of Jesus, Ratzinger proves that the Christ who wept at the tomb of Lazarus, experienced anxiety at Gethsemane, who drove the people from the temple angrily, and who participated at the wedding at Cana cannot belong to a passionless spirituality. Jesus places all of his passion in the service of the divine.<sup>193</sup> The ministry of Jesus had to do with the daily lives of the people which had many emotional sides to it. “One of the most challenging and heartbreaking manifestations of the deep friendship Jesus had for humanity and the world is exhibited in His passion particularly, in the Garden of Gethsemane; the scourging and crowning with thorns, the way of the cross and on the Cross, when this true friend, Jesus Christ suffers and dies for a sinful world. (cf. Mt 26-27; Mk 14-15; Lk 22-23; Jn 18-19)”<sup>194</sup> We witness an angry Jesus when he sees the merchants and money traders in the Temple. (cf. Mk. 11: 15-17) As he met many people he had sympathy for them and, “When he saw the crowds, he had *compassion* for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Mt. 9:36)

Jesus understands what each one needs and he helps, reduces their pain, and give suggestions for the development of life. In his all relationships, Jesus not only accepts the person but also gives hints for growth. Either he gives some food for thought (Even if you gain the whole world but if you lose your heart

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<sup>192</sup> Theobald, Christoph ‘*God is Relationship*’: *Some Recent Approaches to the Mystery of the Trinity*, 54

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, Josef *Der Katholizismus nach dem Konzil – katholische Sicht*, 257

<sup>194</sup> Ssettuuma, Benedict, *Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission*, 66

what is the benefit. cf. Mt 16:26) or asks question (To the rich fool, if God is taking your life today what you do? cf. Lk 12:13-21). Another example of the growth of the relationships of Jesus was taking place through his confrontations. In the story of rich young man (cf. Mk. 10:21), Jesus is demanding from him a certain level of sacrifice so that he can come into relationship with him.

Most of the time, the transforming effect in the life of those who came into a relationship with Jesus was a deeper form of relationship: discipleship. The openness Jesus showed during his earthly ministry left an imprint in the hearts of the people. The warmth of the relationship those experienced during the meeting with Jesus, either in the context of healing, a discussion or any other situation, encouraged them to remain in the relationship with Jesus. If we want to name those relationships, we can add them to the category of discipleship. These so-called disciples were not elected disciples of Jesus but they came to discipleship because of their encounters with Jesus which led them to form a unique relationship with him, which I would call discipleship of relationship. "In fact this partnership with God, between God and humanity, becomes discipleship."<sup>195</sup>

It is clear for us that we do not have every detail of the relationships of Jesus. John has confirmed it, "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." (Jn 21:25) Peter Schmidt remarks that the content of the proclamation is God's relationship with human beings. "After Easter, the Word of God, historically issued in Jesus becomes the content of the apostolic kerygma: His death and resurrection. (1 Cor 15: 3-5) The contents are not a theory, not facts, but in turn relational experiences: the content of the proclamation is God's relationship to man (the people). The process of proclamation can therefore not be separated from its content."<sup>196</sup> "His life was his message and his message became clear in his life: his relationship with God, and his encounter with others. Relationship and message were in his person doubtlessly and unsurpassably one."<sup>197</sup> With his unconditional acceptance,

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<sup>195</sup> Ross, Cathy *The Theology of Partnership*, 147

<sup>196</sup> „Das geschichtlich in Jesus ergangene Wort Gottes wird nachösterlich zum Inhalt des apostolischen Kerygmas: sein Tod und seine Auferstehung ist (1 Kor 15: 3-5). Gerade diese Inhalte aber sind eben keine Lehre, keine Sachverhalte, sondern sind ihrerseits Beziehungserfahrungen: Inhalt der Verkündigung ist die Beziehung Gottes zu den Menschen. Der Vorgang der Verkündigung lässt sich also von ihrem Inhalt nicht trennen.“ (Schmid, Peter F. *Begegnung ist Verkündigung: Paradigmenwechsel in der Seelsorge*, 26)

<sup>197</sup> „In seinem Leben wurde seine Botschaft deutlich und seine Botschaft war sein Leben: seine Beziehung zu Gott, seine Begegnung mit den Mitmenschen. Beziehung und Botschaft waren bei ihm in unübersehbarer und unüberbietbarer Weise eins.“ (Ibid, 29)

Jesus did not choose with whom he liked to get in touch. He did not have any prejudices and did not deny relationship to anyone. The matchlessness of the relationship of Jesus is that HE not only accepts and affirms the person, but that there is also growth in the person through the relationship with Jesus. This growth in relationship is sometimes in the way of conversion, healing, and readiness to be a missionary.

### **2.2.2 The Relational Aspect of Jesus in the Formation of Disciples**

To answer the question of how Jesus is experienced as a God of relationship, especially when he was living on earth, the best source we have of disciples living within a relationship is in the Bible. Disciples were one of the privileged groups who could go with Jesus everywhere, experienced many miracles and bore witness to extraordinary events like the transfiguration. (cf. Mt 17:1-9) Jesus had a special strategy with his disciples. Andrew Leroy confirms that, “Jesus considered his disciples something like a privileged group and that is why he explained to them the parables later after it had been told to the people. This shows a special bond. Jesus considers his disciples as insiders because for outsiders everything about the mystery of the kingdom of God was given in parables.”<sup>198</sup> “Often Jesus would deliberately protect His twelve and would separate with them from the masses of other disciples who followed Him (John 6; Luke 8), thus indicating that the relationship that Jesus had with the twelve was of a more intimate level than that which He had with all others.”<sup>199</sup>

The relationship of Jesus with the disciples began with the choosing of the disciples. The selection and calling of the disciples was not so appealing for the elite groups of their society because they expected another category of people than those Jesus had selected. The disciples were most of them fishermen: the calling of the first four disciples (cf. Mt 4:18-22) and the selection of Mathew, the tax collector. (cf. Mt 9:9-13) They were not the highly respected people of the society. “In the third chapter [Gospel of Mark] Jesus begins withdrawing from the public and building a small, loyal band around him. A ‘great multitude’ follows him (Mark 3:7) but Jesus makes plans to escape them by boat. (3:8) He ascends a mountain and calls ‘those whom he wanted’ (3:13), from whom he chooses twelve apostles. (3:14-15) Not only have the scribes, the Pharisees and Herodias turned on Jesus; even his family attempts to ‘restrain

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<sup>198</sup> Cf. Huizenga, Leroy Andrew *Solus Christus: The Markan Contrast Between Jesus and His Disciples*, 406

<sup>199</sup> Belsterling, Ron *The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13*, 78

him,' for people were saying 'he is out of his mind.' (3:21) Jesus in turn asserts that his true family consists of those who are seated 'around him' who do the will of God. (3:34-35)" <sup>200</sup>

Jesus did not mind that the disciples had questions. He mentored the disciples through teaching that responded to their questions and confusions. He used Peter's confusion about the foot washing to teach the disciples that if anyone refused the cleansing of Christ, he would be refusing the messianic call and gift of eternal life.<sup>201</sup> Jesus' method was to teach them through questions.<sup>202</sup> Jesus also corrected using this same process when his audience was in error. "Jesus took a common practice<sup>203</sup> and applied himself in an uncommon way to address underlying common needs for a sense of belonging, a sense of responsibility, a sense of hope, a sense of duty, a sense of purpose."<sup>204</sup> "But it has also been reported that he withdrew and took time for himself and his relationship with God, that he did not solve all individual, structural and political problems; that he did not heal all the sick and did not call all the dead back to life from the grave like Lazarus."<sup>205</sup> "Jesus' desire to love and counsel His disciples in this way suggests that he viewed the disciple-teacher relationship as an enduring one."<sup>206</sup>

The relational care Jesus extends is to the integral development of his disciples. Unique in the relationship of Jesus with his disciples was that he had a very special bond with each one of them and understood them from their given background. He shows an unconditional understanding and perennial source of friendship. "Jesus' dealing with His disciples depicts Him as a friend who loves

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<sup>200</sup> Huizenga, Leroy Andrew *Solus Christus: The Markan Contrast Between Jesus and his Disciples*, 406

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Belsterling, Ron *The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13*, 86

<sup>202</sup> "The Gospel of Luke records 26 questions asked of Jesus. All but two of these questions received an answer from Him. (Luke 22:64; 24:18) Jesus answered questions and corrected misconceptions the people had. This pattern is typical of the other Gospels. The Gospels record more than 100 questions addressed to Jesus. He did not reply to two questions that needed no answer: one before the high priest (Matt. 26:62-63), and a second before Pilate (27:13). He answered one question with a question (21:23-27), and offered a partial reply to another. (John 12:34) In all the others He responded with a full answer in which He corrected wrong thinking by the audience." (McLean, John A. *Did Jesus Correct the Disciples' View of the Kingdom?*, 219)

<sup>203</sup> What is meant here is the foot washing of the disciples. Jesus uses a normal custom of foot washing to teach his disciples.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Belsterling, Ron *The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13*, 86

<sup>205</sup> „Ebenso überliefert ist aber auch, dass er sich zurückgezogen und Zeit für sich selbst und seine Gottesbeziehung genommen hat, dass er nicht alle individuellen, strukturellen und politischen Probleme gelöst hat, dass er nicht alle Kranken geheilt und alle Toten wie Lazarus aus dem Grab ins Leben zurückgeholt hat." (Nauer, Doris *Trinitarisch Erfahrbarer Gott: Theologisches Fundament pastoralen Handelns*, 92)

<sup>206</sup> Belsterling, Ron *The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13*, 78

at all times. As a true friend, He wishes for the wholesomeness of His friends, so He heals their spiritual, physical and emotional illnesses, thus restoring their dignity as disciples. Even after failing and abandoning Him during His passion, and when they themselves were disturbed by remorse, fear, doubt, incredulity, suspicion and despair, Jesus remains a true and dependable friend to them. Even after Peter had denied Him three times (cf. Mt 26:69-75), Jesus looks at Peter with eyes of understanding, love, forgiveness, and not of condemnation. In His moments of sorrow, when all His friends fell asleep, leaving Him alone, Jesus presented Himself and told His captors to let the others [His friends] free. Jesus is interested in the good of His friends and does not seek His own safety at the expense of His friends.”<sup>207</sup>

Jesus wanted the disciples to see that the love He had for them was distinct from any kind of love they had known.”<sup>208</sup> Benedict Ssettuuma tells that, “Jesus Christ, the concretization of God’s friendship for human beings, makes His disciples understand that He is among them as a symbol of God’s friendship. He makes them aware that God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, who did not come to judge the world but that through Him, the world could be saved.” (cf. Jn 3:16-17)<sup>209</sup> The sense of security that the disciples had in their relationship with Jesus can be seen in the examples of their personal encounters. A significant consistency in John 13 and the rest of John’s gospel is John’s tendency to note isolated interactions between Jesus, Peter, and himself as well. (John 13:23; 18:15; 20:2) In John 13, one sees an intimate picture of John with his head on the breast of Jesus. One also sees Jesus and Peter engaging in heartfelt dialogue, not minding that the others were present. John and Peter were two of three with whom Jesus spent the most time.<sup>210</sup>

Being a good teacher, Jesus did not close his eyes towards the shortcomings of these disciples. Jesus confronts the disciples with the areas of life in which they need improvement. Even after experiencing many extraordinary miracles and being eyewitnesses to most of them, the disciples did not develop the deep faith that Jesus had hoped for. Mk 4: 35-41 shows the faithlessness and fear of disciples and their amazement when even the sea obeys Jesus. Other times the people come and complain to Jesus about the disciples because they could not cure the sick. “And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal

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<sup>207</sup> Ssettuuma, Benedict *Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission*, 66

<sup>208</sup> Belsterling, Ron *The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13*, 82

<sup>209</sup> Ssettuuma, Benedict *Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission*, 65

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Belsterling, Ron *The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13*, 84



him.” (Mt 17:16) Jesus confronts the faithlessness of his disciples indirectly and realizes that his disciples still have to grow in their trust in the Master.

Even though Jesus was sincere in his relationships and in his commitment to others, he also experienced disappointments in his relationships. The denial of Peter (cf. Lk.22:55-62) and betrayal of Judas were the most disappointing relational experiences for Jesus. Judas was a failed student in the academy of Jesus because he could not discern what was waiting for him. He could not grow in the relationship with Jesus like other disciples. Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Lk.22:48) This reflects his pain of not being understood by his own disciple. Even at the time of his betrayal, Jesus is addressing Judas as friend. (cf. Mt 26:48-49) Judas failed to deepen his relationship with Jesus and did not feel the warmth and acceptance of Jesus which was extended to him.

“Jesus made friendship a prerequisite in His approach to mission. (Jn 15:14-17) In calling His apostles, companionship and friendship preceded empowerment and commissioning. (cf. Mk 3:13-14)”<sup>211</sup> In the commissioning scene, Jesus gives importance to two types of relationships that the disciples have to pay attention to. The first one is that they have to continue the relationship they had among themselves when Jesus was with them. Rarely did Jesus leave his disciples alone. That is why when he told them to go to different places; *he sent them two by two*. (Mk 6:7) Jesus wanted the disciples learn to relate to each other and to continue the ministry that Jesus started.

The second type of relationship is that the fruitfulness of their ministry depended to a certain extent on how they formed a relationship with the people. Jesus insists to the disciples that they should not take anything with them *except sandals to wear and their staff* when they go other places. (cf. Mk 6:8-10, Lk 22:35) What does that mean? The disciples have to build a relationship with the people wherever they go; only then they can meet the needs of the people. Preaching becomes a practical test for the disciples to make their livelihood. “Jesus first established interpersonal relationships with those whom He invited to share in His mission. Before sending them out, He instructed His Apostles to extend the same friendship to those they would encounter in their mission. Through this approach, Jesus formed a closely-knit community of followers with a distinctive set of values based on interpersonal relationships. Human professionalism and expertise were not Jesus' concern for mission.”<sup>212</sup> Accord-

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<sup>211</sup> Ssettuuma, Benedict *Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission*, 57

<sup>212</sup> Ibid

ing to Peter C. Phan, “Jesus brought his father’s work to fulfillment not only by accepting his Father’s plan for him to die on the cross but also by creating a new community, not of servants but friends. (15:15)”<sup>213</sup> In other words, Jesus prepares the disciples so that the Good News they have to preach is the good news of relationship, and the life they have to live is the life of relationship with others; so that the relational experience the disciples inherited and experienced from Jesus may continue through the works of the disciples creating new community.

The people begin to see the difference in the fishermen after being in the company of Jesus. The only reason that they can see for this transformation is their relationship with Jesus. “Peter’s listeners, astonished at how such unlettered men could be so bold, had to conclude that they had been with Jesus, a subtle reminder that these rulers were not just of the class of those who sent Jesus to the cross, but were some who had dealt with him directly enough to recognize his influence on Peter and John.”<sup>214</sup> Peter, being the failed student in the relationship academy of Jesus, makes his master proud by taking up the leading role. Peter could achieve this zenith of growth in the relationship with Jesus because Jesus had an understanding love which Peter could feel even after his denial of Jesus. The unchanging trust of Jesus in his disciples was rewarded later through their missionary works.

## **2.2.3 Jesus and the Samaritan Woman**

### **2.2.3.1 Development of Relationship**

The meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:7-30) and the conversation that takes place is another important episode in the relational dimension of Jesus. Since the disciples were with Jesus all the time, their events and instances are reported very often. It does not mean that Jesus did not relate with women. Relationships with women played a vital part in the public ministry of Jesus. From the anointing of his feet with oil (Lk 7:36-50) and the women caught in adultery (Jn 8:1-11), many women followed Jesus and supported his public ministry. (Lk 1-3) Female characters are involved in the parables, healings, and teachings of Jesus.

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<sup>213</sup> Phan, Peter C. *An Interfaith Encounter at Jacob’s Well: A Missiological Interpretation of John 4:4-42*, 168

<sup>214</sup> Scharf, Greg R. *Were the Apostles Expository Preachers? Old Testament Exposition in the Book of Acts*, 71

In the New Testament, Samaritan is the name given to the inhabitants of the district of Samaria. "For the people who dwelt in Samaria, particularly in the tribal regions of Manasseh and Ephraim and who have maintained a unique identity to the present, the form of the Israelite religion that developed in the area centered on Mount Gerizim."<sup>215</sup> "To the Jews the Samaritans were a heretical and schismatic group of spurious worshippers of the God of Israel."<sup>216</sup> Jesus did something unusual that normally a Jew would not have done. He spoke to a woman publicly and asked her for water to drink from the ritually unclean bucket of a Samaritan. The Jewish cultic code forbade a Jew to eat or drink from a vessel of a non-Jew.<sup>217</sup> The Samaritan woman represents the marginalized, excluded, and oppressed of the first century Palestine by sex, race and religions to whom Jesus directed his message of good news and ministry. (Lk.4:18-19) She is mentioned without name, whereas in the third chapter of John the name of Nicodemus is given.<sup>218</sup> Speaking with her, Jesus demonstrated that his relationship is extended to all without any discrimination. Thus Jesus overturned the accepted patterns and structures of this society. "Jesus' action consists in destroying the wall of separation, in raising the age-old ban, in making communication possible between people separated by their ethnic, cultural and religious traditions."<sup>219</sup>

The personal relationship of Jesus with the Samaritan woman begins in a common place. Certainly the conversations in such places do not go deep, or become personal and intense. But in the case of Samaritan woman it changes her life. It was a genuine, face to face interpersonal encounter for her. The Samaritan woman comes into a relationship with Jesus as a result of a process that takes place in the form of a conversation. (cf. Jn 4:7-30) Her progress in the relationship can be traced from the words that she uses to address Jesus at different opportunities, and according to the influence that Jesus takes in her life. She realizes the great truth that she is speaking with the Savior. But the whole conversation in the long run leads to a conversion of the Samaritan woman and her relationship with Jesus.

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<sup>215</sup> Perkins, PHEME *The Gospel According to John*, 947

<sup>216</sup> Freedman, David Noel (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 940; See also Moore, Stephen D. *Are There Impurities in the Living Water That the Johannine Jesus Dispenses? Deconstruction, Feminism, and the Samaritan Woman*, 210

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Stagg, Evelyn and Frank, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 115-116

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Moore, Stephen D.? *Are There Impurities in the Living Water That the Johannine Jesus Dispenses? Deconstruction, Feminism, and the Samaritan Woman*, 210

<sup>219</sup> Chappuis, Jean-Marc *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Variable Geometry of Communication*, 14

In forming a rapport in a relationship, it is important to go to the partner's level. The step Jesus takes to get close to the Samaritan woman is very conscious and well thought out. Jesus is asking for water because she is coming to draw water from the well. Jesus takes advantage of everyday life moments and actions, and uses them for deep and life-changing dialogue. Jesus was ready to be challenged by the Samaritan woman just as he challenged her in the conversation.<sup>220</sup> It is important to note the pattern of the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. It is not a one - way talk, but there are questions and clarifications on both sides, and all these clarifications help her to become close to Jesus. When we look at the conversation of both of them we can observe that, "The first dialogue of each section is initiated by Jesus, responded to by the Samaritan woman, and concluded by Jesus. The second dialogue reverses the order, with the woman initiating, Jesus responding, and the woman concluding."<sup>221</sup>

The conversation begins with the question of Jesus asking the Samaritan woman for water. The first misunderstanding in the question leads to a dialogue. She did not understand what Jesus was meaning with water and she associated the question as for normal drinking water. The misunderstanding is seen in her reply in that Jesus has nothing with which to draw the water from the well. (Jn 4:11) The woman heard his words but missed his meaning. Living water meant to her fresh spring water such as the well supplied. She could not understand how he could provide this water without having any means of drawing it from the well. Craig S. Farmer tells that when Jesus asks for water, the Samaritan woman was patient even though Jesus was a foreigner.<sup>222</sup> When Jesus asked for the water, the woman replied to Jesus as she would to a stranger by the normal usage of "you." (Jn 4:9) After the discussion about the Jewish and Samaritan differences, Jesus speaks about the living water. She does not understand what kind of water is offered by Jesus but she longs for it. There she realizes that the one with whom she is speaking is not an ordinary man, but that he knows something more. She then addresses Jesus as "Sir." The first step in her growth of a relationship with Jesus begins with confusion and misunderstanding.

The Samaritan woman is illumined when she comes to knowledge of Christ and when Jesus reveals himself to her as the one for whom their people were

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<sup>220</sup> Cf. Phan, Peter. C. *An Interfaith Encounter at Jacob's Well: A Missiological Interpretation of John 4:4-42*, 173

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 163

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Farmer, Craig S. *Changing Images of the Samaritan Woman in Early Reformed Commentaries on John*, 366-367

waiting. During the dialogue Jesus puts certain questions in front of her. The gentle way of asking the questions instills more confidence in the woman than fear. Questions were an easy way for Jesus to begin the relationship. P.C. Phan interprets the questions asked by the Samaritan woman as signs of her self-confidence. And that must be the reason that she is asking Jesus how is that he, a Jew, can ask for a drink of her, a woman of Samaria.<sup>223</sup> Jesus' reaction to the woman was not disgusted.

The second step in the development of the relationship of the Samaritan woman with Jesus begins with a confrontation. "Jesus' request to return to him with her husband catches her by surprise."<sup>224</sup> When Jesus asked her to bring her husband, her answer was complete rejection. Jesus encourages her since she had told the truth. (Jn 4:17ff) "She acknowledges at once the insight of Jesus and considers that he must be a seer to know so much."<sup>225</sup> Jean Marc Chappuis agrees that confrontation is part of true dialogue. If dialogue has to produce change, confrontation helps the partners of the dialogue.<sup>226</sup> The Samaritan woman is hesitant to talk about her personal life. Is she afraid to build a relationship with another man? It was clear on the part of the woman that she wanted to avoid further conversation about her personal life history. "She wants to steer the conversation away from the unpleasant subject of her sins."<sup>227</sup>

May be her past experiences are keeping her from relating with one more man. May be she is trying to avoid the steps which would lead her to have a relationship with Jesus because of her sinfulness or her inferiority complex. She skillfully turns away the prophet's attention to the burning local question of the legitimate place for worship. (Jn 4: 19-20)<sup>228</sup> Anselm Grün states that Jesus does not force her to reveal her personal secrets but shows unconditional concern for her life. Jesus does not ask her to correct her married life. He understands her situation very well and speaks to her in such a way that she may understand the meaning of her deep thirst and inner searching.<sup>229</sup> From religious issues Jesus slowly enables her to look at her life.

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<sup>223</sup> Cf. Phan, Peter C. *An Interfaith Encounter at Jacob's Well: A Missiological Interpretation of John 4:4-42*, 163

<sup>224</sup> Hachchen, Ernst *A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1- 6*, 221

<sup>225</sup> Guthrie, D. *New Bible Commentary*, 928

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Chappuis, Jean-Marc *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Variable Geometry of Communication*, 19

<sup>227</sup> Morris, Leon *Gospel According to John*, 267

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Fuller, Reginald C. *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 1044

<sup>229</sup> Cf. Grün, *Anselm Bilder von Seelsorge*, 84

The culmination of the progress of her relationship is in the self-revelation of Jesus as Messiah. Jesus prepares her through the question regarding worship before the self-revelation. The controversy was connected with the place of worship. Jews and Samaritans restricted themselves more to the place of worship than to the object of worship.<sup>230</sup> They believed that when the Messiah came all the questions would be settled and the Messiah would reveal everything to them. She knows that the Messiah will come. This remark by the woman opens the way for the announcement by Jesus: I who speak to you am he.<sup>231</sup> The revelation about true worship has aroused in the woman the Messianic expectations, which were the long cherished expectations of Israel. She felt as if she was standing before the Messiah himself. Apparently the words, “I who speak to you am he,” finally broke through to the woman’s consciousness and immediately she left her water pot to go back to the town calling out to, “Come see a man who told me everything that ever I did. Can this be the Christ?” (Jn 4.29) Being convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus, the Samaritan woman preaches the good news first to her city men.

### 2.2.3.2 Empowerment in Relationship

The sole aim of the dialogue of Jesus with the Samaritan woman was to help her own self-identity and dignity. She comes to the point of finding herself because of the relationship with Jesus. Taking the idea from *Gaudium et Spes*, (26) Teresa Okure explains the best way to empower the human being is to promote the dignity of the human being. Jesus dignified human beings by being one among them through Incarnation. (cf. Heb 4:15)<sup>232</sup> “... the Samaritan woman is illumined when she comes to know who she is; only when she comes to know herself can she proceed to the knowledge of Christ.”<sup>233</sup> According to Jean Marc Chappuis, the mission of Jesus consisted “In giving a voice to those who have no voice, in making clear what is confused, in promoting *true human relationships*, in denouncing idols and bringing to light God’s icons in this world. He establishes communication between people as a new covenant, by promoting in them the new humanity, freed from the baleful power of separation and possessed by the beneficent power of reconciliation and peace.”<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Guthrie, D. *New Bible Commentary*, 939

<sup>231</sup> Buttrick, George Arthur (ed.) *The Interpreters Bible (John)*, 529

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Okure, Teresa, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-42) in Africa*, 417

<sup>233</sup> Farmer, Craig S. *Changing Images of the Samaritan Woman in Early Reformed Commentaries on John*, 373

<sup>234</sup> Chappuis, Jean-Marc *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Variable Geometry of Communication*, 15

Teresa Okkure elucidates the meeting of Jesus and the Samaritan woman this way: “The contours of the story are simple. Rejected in Judea, Jesus left for Galilee through Samaria, in obedience to the divine imperative of his mission. Sitting there exhausted at a well, he enters into dialogue with a Samaritan woman who has come to fetch water, and leads her to faith in him as her long-expected Messiah. She abandons her water pot, symbol of her daily and society-gendered chores, goes to the town, and invites her people to come and encounter Jesus and to discover him for themselves as she had done.”<sup>235</sup> Jesus’ approach to the woman is notable because his way of approach is appealing to all. Jesus’ attitude is compassionate and encouraging.

When Jesus speaks with the woman he understands that the six men she had could not satisfy the inner thirst of the woman. Jesus realizes her deep need for love and security.<sup>236</sup> Jesus healed people above all through his love. “As the Immanuel God with us, Jesus heals tortured people by his loving nearness, by loving affirmation.”<sup>237</sup> Schnackenburg explains better that, “It is not Jesus who is in need of anything, but the woman; and she is confronted with the one person who can satisfy the deepest needs of man.”<sup>238</sup> The questions Jesus asks her leads to her inner self-exploration and her attempt to know herself better. Jesus helps her to find the answer by herself, and through the process of self-exploration and self-discovery she understands the answer. Her attitude and mentality is changed. In the opinion of Agnes Sanford, “We do not need the gift of tongues nor the ability to instruct, to reason or to argue. We need only a loving heart.”<sup>239</sup> Jesus had a loving heart which could nurture any sinner or outcast or mentally or bodily handicapped person.

The change in her attitude and values takes place after the conversation where she is strengthened and renewed in spirit. She is no longer afraid or ashamed of herself. She had a change of values, a change in her interests. John indicates it beautifully when he tells us, “The woman then left her water pot, and went her way into the city.” (Jn 4:28)<sup>240</sup> The leaving of the water pot can be seen as the symbol of leaving the old life and the beginning of the new life. The relationship process reaches its climax when the woman accepts herself with her own past which she wanted to hide from Jesus. Jesus knew all her stories. Since he wanted to heal the woman, he really challenged her to confront it. The one who

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<sup>235</sup> Cf. Okkure *Teresa Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-42) in Africa*, 402

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Grün, Anselm *Bilder von Seelsorge*, 84

<sup>237</sup> Häring, Bernard *Healing and Revealing*, 50

<sup>238</sup> Schnackenburg, Rudolf *The Gospel According to St John*, 426

<sup>239</sup> Sanford, Agnes *The Healing Light*, 94

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Boice, James Montgomery *The Gospel of John*, 382

questioned everything becomes the one who is going forth to proclaim it. The outcome of the relationship between the Samaritan woman and Jesus is her discipleship. "She had come down the hill a child of Adam's race, thinking only of the life she had known and of her very mundane need for more water. Instead she had met the second Adam. Jesus had filled her with a desire for a quality of life that she had never dreamt of and who had revealed Himself to her as the one through whom that life was imparted to men and women."<sup>241</sup>

There are two instances that take place against the expectation or tradition of the social structure and customs. In spite of being a Jew, Jesus talks and discusses theology with a Samaritan woman. "That a man, a rabbi, holds theological discussions with a woman is for her mental capacity just as unfathomable as it was unfathomable for the woman that a Jew asked her for water, and even more, offered her water on his part afterwards."<sup>242</sup> Brigitte Kahl tells us, "The encounter with this one man changed them both, turned them toward each other against their original intention."<sup>243</sup> The second cultural shock is at the end of the story where the people of the village follow the Samaritan woman because it is not usual at the time the women to lead men. "The woman's excitement over her personal discovery of Jesus moves the Samaritans (themselves an estranged and outcast people) to look beyond traditional practices whereby women do not lead men (Sir 9:1-9) and accompany her to meet Jesus 'on account of the woman's word.'" (Jn 4:30)<sup>244</sup>

The relational experience the Samaritan woman had with Jesus changes her image of God, and its influence is that we see in her a readiness to go and tell everyone what happened. Jesus elevates the Samaritan woman to a unique relationship experience which she never had in her life. Jesus strengthens the faith of the woman and helps her to find her inner strength which makes her give witness for Jesus. The enthusiasm and the interest in sharing her story with others is the sign that she is no longer ashamed of her past life. The relationship with Jesus empowers her to look beyond her shadows and she is strengthened by finding her own dignity. "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" The Samaritan woman tells what had happened to her.

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<sup>241</sup> Boice, James Montgomery *The Gospel of John*, 382

<sup>242</sup> „Dass ein Mann, ein Rabbi, mit einer Frau theologisch diskutiert, ist für ihr Vorstellungsvermögen ebenso unfassbar, wie es für die Frau unfassbar war, dass ein Jude sie um Wasser bat, mehr noch, ihr gleich darauf auch seinerseits Wasser anbot (Kahl, Brigitte *Der Fremde und die Frau am Brunnen (Joh 4): Menschliche Begegnung als Gottes Erfahrung*, 36)

<sup>243</sup> „Die Begegnung mit diesem einen Menschen, hat sie beide verändert, umgewendet, entgegen ihrer ursprünglichen Absicht einander zugewandt.“ (Ibid, 37)

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Okure, Teresa *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-42) in Africa*, 414



She testifies to it. She invites her hearers to come and see for themselves this surprising man who has deciphered her existence ... The Samaritan woman does not proclaim anything. She *relates* and questions. She does not teach.”<sup>245</sup> Her life itself is the best witness for the great wonder she experienced in the relationship with Jesus.

Comparing the call of the disciples and call of the Samaritan woman, she is superior to the apostles because they left their fishing nets when Jesus commanded them. But in the case of Samaritan woman she left her water jar of her own volition and began to tell the people her story of a relationship with Jesus.<sup>246</sup> She became an apostle because of the fire of faith in her heart. Jesus wins the trust of the Samaritan woman during the dialogue with her, and helps her to find her own dignity and identity which empowers her to be an announcer of the good news to her own people in the city.

## 2.3 Jesus and his Relationship with God the Father

### 2.3.1 The Source of the Relationship of Jesus

It is justifiable to ask what the source was of the relationship of Jesus. Jesus, who was an expert in relationships with all types of people, raises the question about his source of relationship, or the inner recharging center of his relationship. George Augustin explains the source of the relationship of Jesus. “Jesus Christ is the original image of man since He showed by His unique attachment to God what this attachment did to a person, how the person is lead into great freedom when he attaches himself always more and more to God. Jesus Christ bases his teaching on his relationship to God, his father.”<sup>247</sup> Bonaventura tells that the Father-Son Relationship is the basis of all other relationships of Jesus.<sup>248</sup> Joseph Wohlmuth explains that, “The relationship with the Father, which in the Son was characterized by the word ‘birth,’ is characterized by the expression ‘who proceeds from the Father.’”<sup>249</sup> The relationship of Jesus with

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<sup>245</sup> Chappuis, Jean-Marc *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Variable Geometry of Communication*, 13

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Farmer, Craig S. *Changing Images of the Samaritan Woman in Early Reformed Commentaries on John*, 366-367

<sup>247</sup> „Jesus Christus ist das Urbild der Menschen, denn er hat durch seine einzigartige Bindung an Gott gezeigt, was diese Bindung aus dem Menschen macht, wie der Mensch in eine große Freiheit geführt wird, wenn er sich immer mehr an Gott bindet. Jesus Christus begründet sein Weisung im Rahmen seines Verhältnisses zu Gott, seinem Vater.“ (Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 29)

<sup>248</sup> Cf. Delio, Ilia *Does God ‘Act’ in Creation? A Bonaventurian Response*, 334-335

<sup>249</sup> „Die Beziehung zum Vater, die beim Sohn durch das Wort ‚Geburt‘ gekennzeichnet wurde, wird durch den Ausdruck ‚der aus dem Vater hervorgeht‘ gekennzeichnet.“ (Wohlmuth, Josef *Gottes Heiliger Geist – ausgegossen in die Herzen der Menschen*, 154)

the Father is an exceptional Father-Son relationship. This is clear from the interaction of Jesus with God the Father. “Jesus noticeably and tenderly calls God his father and places himself by that into a unique son relationship with him. Jesus appears (especially impressive at the Sermon on the Mount) as the exclusive, authentic and authoritative revealer and interpreter of the will of God. He demands authority which is reserved for God, (especially the forgiveness of sins, Mk 2:7). Through him, his talking and actions, God’s promised salvation for his people appeared definitively, God’s kingdom has begun. (Lk11:20)”<sup>250</sup> Ron Belsterling depicts the obedient relationships of Jesus with God as the model for the relationship of all disciples with God.<sup>251</sup> “Indeed, he cannot say nor do anything unless enabled and authorized to do so by his Father. (5:19-20, 30; 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10)”<sup>252</sup> The life mission of Jesus is to fulfill the mission given to him by his Father; Jesus gathers strength to complete this task from his relationship with his Father.

What was the kind of relationship for Jesus had with his Father? How did Jesus relate with his Father? Prayer is given as a relating method for both Son and Father. There are many places in the Bible where we find Jesus taking time to pray alone. “And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.” (Mt 14:23) “Arising early, while dark, Jesus went to a solitary place and prays.” (Mk 1:35). “He withdrew himself into the wilderness to pray.” (Lk 5:17) “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” (Lk 6:12) Through prayer the Son remains connected with his Father and very often it becomes the mode of communication between the two. The deep relationship of Jesus with the Father is exposed in the prayers of Jesus where prayer is depicted as a relational mode.<sup>253</sup> The prayer of Jesus for unity can be understood as the prayer for the relationship with God the Father. To be united with someone means to have a relationship with him. The prayer of Jesus is that the disciples and all must be united with God the Father as he is united with him and as they are one. “And now I am no

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<sup>250</sup> „So spricht Jesus auffällig innig Gott als seinen Vater an und stellt sich damit in eine einzigartige Sohn-Beziehung zu ihm. Jesus erscheint (besonders eindrucksvoll in der Bergpredigt) als der exklusive, authentische und autoritative Offenbarer und Ausleger des Gottwillens. Er beansprucht Vollmachten, die Gott vorbehalten sind (so vor allem die Sündenvergebung; Markus 2,7). Mit ihm, seinem Reden und Handeln ist Gottes verheißene Rettung für sein Volk definitiv eingetroffen, Gottes Reich angebrochen (Lukas 11,20 par).“ (Oberndorfer, Bernd *Man müsste sie erfinden*, 56)

<sup>251</sup> Belsterling, Ron *The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13*, 83

<sup>252</sup> Phan, Peter C. *An Interfaith Encounter at Jacob's Well: A Missiological Interpretation of John 4:4-42*, 165

<sup>253</sup> Cf. also Story, J. Lyle *The Dynamic, Relational, and Loving Purpose of God*, 108

more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given me that they may be one, even as we are one.” (Jn 17:10) That means Jesus is wishing that all of them develop a deep relationship with God the Father and prayer is a key form for that relationship.

The relationship between the Father and Son is so deep and intense that their existence to a certain extent depended on their mutual life-giving and life-receiving principle. “The Father is Father because he is eternally giving life to the Son. The Son is Son because he is eternally receiving life from the Father. Father and Son eternally breathe the Spirit because he is eternally being breathed by the Father and the Son.”<sup>254</sup> The answer for the question of where Jesus draws his energy from is doubtless. The Father-Son relationship Jesus enjoyed with God the Father was his source of inner strength. “For Christians, Jesus was and is really a person with human facets, needs, strengths and weaknesses; a person [Jesus], who stood however in a special relationship with the Creator God. New Testament authors report explicitly that Jesus regarded God as his (heavenly) father. That is why he drew from his relationship with God, on the one hand, the strength for his life and his actions and, on the other hand, experienced most painfully God’s absence at least at the cross”<sup>255</sup> According to the reflection of Bernd Jochen Hilberath, what gives strength to Jesus to fulfill his concept of life is not what he has learned from his parents or was communicated to him by the people, but rather his relationship with God the Father.<sup>256</sup>

Did Jesus remain always in relationship with his Father always? Was there any moment when this relationship was broken or lost? The feeling of being separated from God the Father comes into expression in his cry from the cross. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "E'lo-i, E'lo-i, la'ma sabachtha'ni?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk. 15:34) “On the cross the Father and the Son are so deeply separated that their relationship breaks off. Jesus died ‘without God’ - godlessly. Yet on the cross the Father and Son are at the same time so much one that they represent a sin-

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<sup>254</sup> Bramwell, Bevil *The Jubilee Year and Relationships*, 30

<sup>255</sup> „Für ChristInnen war und ist Jesus somit tatsächlich ein Mensch mit menschlichen Facetten, Bedürfnissen, Stärken und Schwächen. Ein Mensch, der jedoch in einer besonderen Beziehung zum Schöpfergott stand. Ausdrücklich berichten neutestamentliche Autoren, dass Jesus Gott als seinen (himmlischen) Vater betrachtete, weshalb er aus seiner Gottesbeziehung heraus einerseits die notwendige Kraft zum Leben und Handeln schöpfte, andererseits aber auch die Abwesenheit Gottes spätestens am Kreuz als äußerst schmerzhaft erfahren hat.“ (Nauer, Doris *Trinitarisch Erfahrbare Gott: Theologisches Fundament pastoralen Handelns*, 93)

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Hilberath, Bernd Jochen *Heiliger Geist – heilender Geist*, 78

gle surrendering movement. Whoever has seen the Son has seen the Father.”<sup>257</sup> That is why Jesus says, “Father into your hands I commit my spirit.” (Lk 23:46)

The relationship between Jesus and God the Father coming to the level where Jesus is able to address God the Father as FATHER shows a growth in the level of the relationship. The relationship Jesus had with his Father does not end with him. Jesus transmits this special privilege to his chosen ones. The relationship of Jesus with his Father gives us the special privilege to address God the Father as our own Father too. “... Our God is the ‘Father’ of Jesus,”<sup>258</sup> the God of the Bible whom Jesus has revealed to us as a unique creating, loving and saving ‘Father.’ This is the God who created us and calls us to himself. Unless we keep this God and his demands continually before us, we will rapidly fall into ‘the ways of the other peoples.’”<sup>259</sup> Jesus who lived his relational world out of the strength from the relationship with his Father kept his connectedness through prayer, and at the end extends his relationship with his Father to his followers.

### 2.3.2 The Incarnation as a Relational Act

The relationship bond of Jesus with human beings began at the time of his incarnation, because without the incarnation Jesus would not have related with people on the level of human beings. All the different relational images people experienced about Jesus are because he lived with them and like them. It does not just show solidarity with the fate of human beings but starts a relationship. If we ask what the aim of the Incarnation is, then we may have to take the words of Kathy Ross and state that establishing a relationship with human beings was the aim of the Incarnation.<sup>260</sup> More than that, people experience the human side of Jesus through the fact of the Incarnation.

According to Ralf Miggelbrink, the Incarnation of Jesus is an act of communication by God.<sup>261</sup> Meir Soloveichik shares another view of the Incarnation, “For Christians, that gap is bridged through the Incarnation — through God becoming man. God thus accomplishes what man himself cannot, becoming

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<sup>257</sup> Moltmann, Jürgen *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 209-210

<sup>258</sup> See especially Matt 6. 7-15; Luke 11.2-4; Mark 11.25-6; Gal 1-7

<sup>259</sup> Moloney, J. Francis *Disciples and Prophets: A Biblical Model for the Religious Life*, 19

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Ross, Cathy *The Theology of Partnership*, 147

<sup>261</sup> Cf. Miggelbrink, Ralf *Inkarnation: systematisch-theologische Übersetzung eines kardinalen Reflexions-begriffs des Glaubens*, 422-426

finite so that finite man may commune with him.”<sup>262</sup> Josef Ratzinger makes it clear that through the Incarnation it is proved that our God is one who lives in this world. “The idea of the Incarnation determines the relationship of the Christian to God, the direction of his relationship to God. God became flesh, i.e. God exited from himself, descended and entered into the flesh of the world. ... The Christian God, God made man, is not a God of the other world but a God especially of this world. The kingdom of heaven which Christ proclaimed is in fact God’s activity directed to this world, it is not a place beyond this world.”<sup>263</sup> Ottamar Fuchs would argue that, “The most radical proof of this love is God’s Incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. Here he vouches for this type of mercy with his life and with his own body.”<sup>264</sup>

George Augustin presents the elements of relationship in the mystery of the Incarnation. God takes our human nature to his divine nature. (Phil 2:7) Being the unity of God-man, he is the true God and true man. He is God’s way to us and the way of man to God.<sup>265</sup> That means Jesus is the relational link for us to God and the relational link of God to us. The relationship with God has been made easy for human beings with the Incarnation. The incarnated Jesus is shown as the way of relationship to both human beings and God. The Incarnation itself lifts the dignity of human beings because in the Incarnation God centers on man and on the mystery of God and man. “He who takes it seriously that God became man for the sake of our salvation by the working of the Holy Spirit cannot speak of God without speaking about man. And he must talk about God when he asks about man. In the Incarnation of God the mystery of God and man is unveiled.”<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Soloveichik, Meir Y. *Torah and Incarnation: Torah Learning Rabbi Meir Y. Soloveichik Explains, Bridges the Gap Between Man and God*, 44- 45

<sup>263</sup> „Die Idee der Inkarnation bestimmt zunächst das Gottesverhältnis des Christen, die Richtung seiner Gottesbeziehung. Gott ist Fleisch geworden, d.h. Gott ist ausgezogen aus sich selbst, abgestiegen und eingetreten in das Fleisch der Welt. Der christliche Gott, der menschengewordene Gott ist nicht ein Gott des Jenseits, sondern ein Gott gerade dieser Welt: Das Himmelreich, das Christus verkündigte, ist in Wahrheit ein Handeln Gottes an dieser Welt, nicht ein Ort jenseits von ihr.“ (Ratzinger, Josef *Der Katholizismus nach dem Konzil – katholische Sicht*, 257)

<sup>264</sup> „Der radikalste Beweis dieser Liebe ist die Menschwerdung Gottes in Jesus von Nazareth. Hier steht er mit seinem Leben und mit seinem eigenen Leib für eine solche Barmherzigkeit ein.“ (Fuchs, Ottamar *Gott: Unendliches Geheimnis als unerschöpfliche Liebe*, 13)

<sup>265</sup> Cf. Augustin, George, *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 27

<sup>266</sup> „Wer ernst nimmt, dass Gott um unseres Heils willen durch das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes Mensch geworden ist, der kann nicht mehr von Gott sprechen, ohne vom Menschen zu sprechen. Und der muss von Gott reden wenn er nach dem Menschen fragt. In der Menschwerdung Gottes erschließt sich das Geheimnis Gottes und des Menschen.“ (Ibid, 19)

Ralf Miggelbrink sees that the Incarnation is God's communication of himself and this self-communication is to each and every individual regardless of his or her religious and moral capacity.<sup>267</sup> In other words, the invitation for the relationship on the part of God is always there, and does not consider the condition and state of the individuals. God not only loves Jesus, but he loves each one of us as well. God's commitment to a relationship is first to Jesus and then equally to us. The meaning of existence is our commitment to a relationship to Jesus. This meaning is also an extension of God's commitment to a relationship with us. That they may be one just as we are one. (cf. Jn 17:21). The Incarnation made the relationship of human beings to God more tangible and Jesus elevates the relational dimension of the Incarnation through his own life on earth where he became a center of relationships to God and to human beings. There is no greater image for the relationship of God than the picture of God we comprehend in the Incarnation of Jesus.

### 2.3.3 The Resurrection as Relational Act

The resurrection of Jesus was a turning point in the relationship of the people with Jesus, and gave the people a new experience of the person of Jesus. Since Jesus took part in their meals, feasts and the normal events of daily life, the miracles he performed had made him like a prophet or someone who has some supernatural power. Their imagination did not go beyond that. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was not easily digestible for them. Because of this new phenomenon, the people began to think that he was Son of God too. People went through a big transition in their relationship with Jesus after the resurrection. From the human side of Jesus they moved to the divine side of Jesus, or to a new faith experience from Jesus to the Christ. William H Willimon explains the resurrection as the time when God showed up, and this experience influences us to talk about God.<sup>268</sup> "The resurrection of Jesus was the central fact of the gospel message. (Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30.) It formed the climax and interpreting center of the account of what God had done for men through Jesus. It was the key fact. The several occasions when the risen Christ made his presence known to his disciples led to a confident witness which the entire group, after some initial cases of hesitation, accepted without question. (Matt. 28:17; Luke 24:41; John 20:25)"<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Cf. Miggelbrink, Ralf *Inkarnation: systematisch-theologische Übersetzung eines kardinalen Reflexions-begriffs des Glaubens*, 422-426

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Willimon, William H, *Preaching After Easter*, 39

<sup>269</sup> Filson V., Floyd *Jesus Christ: The Risen Lord*, 48

What does the resurrection contribute to the relationality of Jesus? What is the role of the resurrection in the life of Jesus? The resurrection and post-resurrection events show us that a new relational identity had been ascribed to Jesus. “Though Jesus’ resurrection does inaugurate a new creation and a new way of seeing him and point to the establishment of faith in him as Lord, these aspects of the resurrection narratives are but signposts pointing to the uniqueness of Jesus’ risen body: they shed little light on its singularity.”<sup>270</sup> After the resurrection people began to find meaning for the suffering of Jesus because all these facts together led them to believe the new identity of Jesus as the Son of God. “The only thing fixed, settled about Jesus after his death is his identity: after his cross, we cannot make God into anything we like. His resurrection not only confirms his identity, but also extends it. It makes all the differences to now that God raised only the humiliated, rejected, tortured to death by the government Jesus.”<sup>271</sup>

Peter is proclaiming the resurrection in his first sermon to the people on Pentecost. (cf. Acts 2:22-24) He is not talking about the dead Jesus but about the risen Lord. The relationship with Jesus does not come to an end because he was crucified and died. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the connecting link for everyone to begin a new relationship with Jesus, as Son of God. According to Filson Floyd our life is grounded on the resurrection, and our faith is what always has been from the first day of the resurrection. “Certainly to the first disciples, the Resurrection was indubitable fact. It was the answer to all slander of Jesus and to all those who would reject him. It was the basis for all future faith, worship, thought, and witness.”<sup>272</sup> St. Paul explains that a new bond in the relationship takes place through the resurrection, and he named it Sonship. (cf. Gal 4:5) According to Margaret Baker, Jesus went through a process which made him experience that he was now the Son of God. “The remarkable early testimony in Romans 1:4, Jesus having ‘become the son of God,’ Lord and Christ after the resurrection must imply that if Jesus himself was aware of his being Son of God, Lord and Christ *he must himself have experienced the event which was described as his Resurrection.*”<sup>273</sup> All the events that took place after the resurrection added different relational images for the people with Jesus. These names and titles were an outcome of a relationship for which a faith experience with the risen Lord is the key part. “All sovereign titles that Jesus has been ascribed to in the post-Easter perspective (Christ, Son

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<sup>270</sup> Norman, David J. *Doubt and the Resurrection of Jesus*, 790

<sup>271</sup> Willimon, William H, *Preaching After Easter*, 39-40

<sup>272</sup> Filson V., Floyd *Jesus Christ: The Risen Lord*, 49

<sup>273</sup> Baker, Margaret *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith*, 7

of God, King, Lord, Savior, Son of man, Judge) owe therefore not theoretical speculation, but the faith-experience that Jesus above all time and any space of time 'for us' is important."<sup>274</sup>

What would have happened if Jesus had not risen? If Jesus would not have risen from the dead, the relationship of Jesus would have been limited only to the people who lived with him or experienced him or his miracles. Through the resurrection, the relationship of Jesus received another dimension. The resurrection connects all the dead, the living and all the people to be a part of the salvation story which began with the creation story.<sup>275</sup> According to Josh and Sean McDowell, "All the promises and prophecies in the Bible depend on the resurrection. The whole history of God's plan to restore his relationship with man and woman depends on the resurrection."<sup>276</sup> People were convinced of the divine sonship of Jesus because of his resurrection. The way they looked at Jesus when he lived with them changed, and they had more experiences wherein they felt the Lordship of Christ which inaugurated a new age with the resurrection.<sup>277</sup> The relationship of people with Jesus continues but under a different and new approach towards him.

### 3. The Holy Spirit Experienced as Relational

How we experience the Holy Spirit in our relationship is a very relevant question. What do we understand with the Holy Spirit as relational? In the beginning, people experienced relationships from a God who appeared to them in different forms and who used human beings as his mediators. We see an extension of those relationships in the Incarnation of Jesus, one who lived with the people as one among them. "This relationship between the Father and the Son comes forth as the third Trinitarian member, the Holy Spirit. Because he is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, the Spirit is the essence of the triune God."<sup>278</sup> Margit Eckolt brings forth the unique role of the Spirit in the Trinitarian community. "God is community of life and love of three. God is unity and difference, communion in diversity. God is life that in diversity is still one and shows itself in the love of the Father to the Son, the expression of which is the

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<sup>274</sup> „Alle Hoheitstitel, die Jesus aus nachösterlicher Sicht zugeschrieben wurden (Christus, Sohn Gottes, König, Herr, Erlöser, Menschensohn, Retter, Richter) verdanken sich daher nicht theoretischen Spekulationen, sondern der Glaubens-erfahrung, dass Jesus 'für uns' über alle Zeit und jeden Raum hinweg bedeutsam ist.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 97)

<sup>275</sup> Cf. Ibid, 96-97

<sup>276</sup> McDowell, Josh; McDowell, Sean *Evidence for the Resurrection: What It Means for Your Relationship*, 54

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Filson V., Floyd *Jesus Christ: The Risen Lord*, 54

<sup>278</sup> Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*, 83



Spirit. Precisely in this expression, this gift, the world and man are brought into this love.”<sup>279</sup>

In the functional relationship of God the Father, the unity of God the Son with the Holy Spirit is clear in the announcement of the Counselor (Holy Spirit) by the Son who has been sent from the Father. “But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me.” (Jn 15:26) According to Steven Studebaker, “The work of the Spirit, in what is traditionally referred to as grace, parallels the creative work of the Spirit in Genesis 1 and 2. The Spirit who is the breath of life is the Spirit-wind unleashed at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) who creates and sustains the early Christian communities.”<sup>280</sup> Elizabeth Johnson defines, “Spirit literally meaning a blowing wind, a storm, a stream of air, breath in motion, or something dynamically in movement and impossible to pin down, points to the livingness of God who creates, sustains, and guides all things and cannot be confined.”<sup>281</sup>

We experience the relational dimension of the Holy Spirit when we become the channels of grace or the Holy Spirit uses us as instruments. “He works through and perfects human personality; he does not dehumanize man by treating him as a machine. He also works through the individual in Christian fellowship, not in isolation. The Spirit's illumination is no sudden magic which makes instantaneous wonder-workers out of irresponsible self-seekers.”<sup>282</sup> “It is that Spirit who frees people from the delusion of achieving and constructing their own heaven on earth only through their own ideas and efforts.”<sup>283</sup> According to Werner Neuer, the Holy Spirit helps us relate to God the Father. We cannot limit our understanding about the effects of the Holy Spirit just in terms of extraordinary revelations or gift of tongue or exorcism. The Holy Spirit helped

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<sup>279</sup> „Gott ist die Lebens- und Liebesgemeinschaft der drei. Die Gott ist Einheit und Differenz, Gemeinschaft in der Verschiedenheit. Gott ist Leben, das in der Vielfalt doch eines ist und sich zeigt in der Liebe des Vaters zum Sohn, deren Ausdruck der Geist ist. Gerade in diesem Ausdruck, dieser Gabe, sind Welt und Mensch in diese Liebe hineingeholt.“ (Eckolt, Margit *Die faszinierende Neuheit des Heiligen Geistes*, 95)

<sup>280</sup> Studebaker, Steven M. *The Spirit in Creation: A Unified Theology of Grace and Creation Care*, 951

<sup>281</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, 82-83

<sup>282</sup> Hunt, W. Boyd *Holy Spirit and Revelation Today*, 42

<sup>283</sup> „Es ist jener Geist, der Menschen von dem Wahn befreit, den Himmel auf Erden ausschließlich durch eigene Ideen und Anstrengungen erreichen und errichten zu können.“ (Schlagintweit, Markus *Globalisierte Welt: Babel oder Jerusalem?: Eine Pfingstpredigt*, 91)

the Apostles in the beginning to have childlike trust towards God the Creator, indeed as the heavenly Father. (cf. Mt 6:9, Rom 8:15)<sup>284</sup>

Markus Schlagnitweit opines that, “In any case there is one thing that I think can be said about the Holy Spirit: He is always encountered as the giver and expression of loving relationship. It is that Spirit who moves people to use their own abilities and talents not in order to build self-glorifying towers but for the glory of God and the common good of all mankind, especially the poor and defenseless. It is that Spirit who frees people from the delusion of achieving and constructing their own heaven on earth only through their own ideas and efforts.”<sup>285</sup> Joseph Wohlmuth also holds the view that the Holy Spirit helps us to get into relationship with others.<sup>286</sup> The different instances and interventions of the Spirit of God in the lives of the people reveals the relational dimension of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, and how the Holy Spirit plays an important role today bringing people in relationship together and providing experience of God.

### 3.1 The Relational Dimension of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

How did the Spirit relate with the people of the Old Testament? How did they feel the presence of the Spirit in their lives? What was the role of the Spirit? The instances in the Old Testament show that people felt the Spirit of God as the power of God. From the moment of creation onwards, the Spirit of God was active in the lives of the people, remaining as the relational link. It is this Spirit of God that hovers over the waters of creation as they are spoken into existence. (Gen. 1:1-2) Bernd Jochen Hilberath points out that, “When the Old Testament Scriptures speak of the Spirit of God, the *ruach* of Yahweh, they usually have in mind the life-giving power of the Creator God, which is most elementally experienced in the wind and in the breath as something absolutely beyond our control and fully original.”<sup>287</sup> Elizabeth Johnson compares creation

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<sup>284</sup> Cf. Neuer, Werner *Geist und Heiliger Geist im Horizont des christlich-trinitarischen Gottesbegriffs*, 12

<sup>285</sup> „Eines jedenfalls glaube ich doch, über den Heiligen Geist sagen zu können: Immer begegnet Er als Stifter und Ausdruck liebender Beziehung. Es ist jener Geist, der Menschen die ihnen eigenen Fähigkeiten und Begabungen nicht zum Bau selbstherrlicher Türme gebrauchen lässt, sondern zur Ehre Gottes und zum gemeinsamen Wohl aller Menschen, besonders der Armen und Schutzlosen.“ (Schlagnitweit, Markus *Globalisierte Welt: Babel oder Jerusalem?: Eine Pfingstpredigt*, 91)

<sup>286</sup> Cf. Wohlmuth, Josef *Gottes Heiliger Geist – ausgegossen in die Herzen der Menschen*, 153-173

<sup>287</sup> „Wenn Schriften des Alten Testaments vom Geist Gottes, von der *ruach* Jahwes, reden, haben sie meist die lebensstiftende Macht des Schöpfergottes im Sinn, die als absolut unverfüg-

as the Pentecost of the Old Testament. “The act of creation is already a Pentecost, a first and permanent outpouring of the fiery Spirit of life.”<sup>288</sup>

The Israelites experienced wind as perhaps the first representation of God’s spirit found in the Bible. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (Gen 1:1-2) Later wind becomes a relational symbol of the Spirit as Israel made their way to the Promised Land. There are certain moments in the life of Israel in which they felt the relational dimension of the Spirit closely and vividly. There is also the way God intercedes in the life of Israel when they were in the exile land.<sup>289</sup> God sends the wind, “So Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night...” (Ex 10:13) “And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and it brought quails from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp...” (Num 11:31) The Old Testament has certain instances which help to show how the people relate to the Spirit and the way in which they feel the presence of the Spirit. “The Spirit can be likened to the wind and can be discerned as actively present in dramatic, windblown events. Think of the strong wind that blows back the Red Sea so the escaping slaves can run free (Ex 14:21); and of the wind that blows through the valley of the dry bones, breathing life into the vast multitude (Ez 37:1-4); and of the mighty Pentecost wind that shakes the house where Jesus’ disciples, women and men alike, are praying, impelling them to public witness of the good news. (Acts 1:13-14, 2:1-4) But the blowing Spirit can also be discerned in mundane events none the less wondrous for being so regular. The warm breezes of spring melt the winter ice producing flowing waters that green the earth. (Ps 147:18)”<sup>290</sup>

Andrea Hollingsworth points out how the Spirit of God related with the prophets and how the Spirit made use of them as his instruments. “The Spirit breathes/speaks powerfully through the voices of the prophets of Israel. The Spirit of the Lord rests on Isaiah and fills his mouth with everlasting words. (Isa. 59:21) The prophet Ezekiel is commanded by the Spirit to speak to the valley of dry bones; as he does so, the divine Spirit goes forth through his breath, voice, and lips, and the dry bones are brought to life. (Ezek. 37:1-

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bare am ursprünglichsten im Wind wie im Atem erfahren wird.“ (Hilberath, Bernd Jochen *Heiliger Geist – heilender Geist*, 93)

<sup>288</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 48

<sup>289</sup> Cf. Nauer, *Doris Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 98-101

<sup>290</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 45

10)''<sup>291</sup> The Israelites felt the presence of the Spirit of God in the people who were chosen by God to guide them. The Spirit has played a unique role in the lives of the individuals who were chosen to guide the people of God. The election of God and the anointing of the elected revealed the relational dimensions of the Holy Spirit. "The most that many would allow was that the Holy Spirit would come upon special individuals for special times, such as the seventy elders (Num 11:24-30), or on the waiting prophets of the Old Testament for their work in Scripture."<sup>292</sup> The act of anointing meant the bestowal of authorization through the Spirit to perform certain capacities. In the process of anointing, the Holy Spirit has a functional role of communicating the message of election and confirming the mission of the elected individual. "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah."(1 Sam 16:13) "And Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. . . . And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him to sanctify him." (Lev 8:10:12) But there is an exception in the election of Moses. Fire was the relational symbol for Moses to experience the presence of God in the bush. (cf. Ex 3: 1-14) "Fire is another cosmic symbol of the Spirit. There is no definite shape to fire, and its ever-changing form signifies something that is unto itself, mysterious."<sup>293</sup>

George T. Montague states that the Prophet Ezekiel explains that the meaning of the Spirit is understood to be the force which helped the elected individuals to lead a sanctifying life. "While the post-exilic prophets spoke of the spirit as the power by which the temple would be rebuilt, Israel's poets sang of the spirit, even of the Lord's 'holy spirit' as the holy inward presence of God's renewing grace enabling them to live as he would desire. In a special way the 'holy spirit' given to man is related to God's face or personal presence."<sup>294</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr affirms that it is the relationship with the Spirit of God (presence of the Holy Spirit) in the lives of covenant persons like Noah, Enoch, David, Joseph and many others that enabled them to live a sanctifying life.<sup>295</sup> The role of

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<sup>291</sup> Hollingsworth, Andrea *Spirit and Voice: Toward a Feminist Pentecostal Pneumatology*, 205

<sup>292</sup> Kaiser Jr., Walter C. *The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, 309

<sup>293</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 47

<sup>294</sup> Montague, George T. *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*, 366

<sup>295</sup> "... How could all of these old covenant persons have believed and been enabled to live sanctified lives if the Spirit of God did not dwell in them? Must we say that an Old Testament believer was able to please God spiritually and to be sanctified in the presence of God without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit? Did not Enoch please God? (Heb 11:5) Was not

the Holy Spirit was to remain as a relational link and assist them to fulfill the tasks assigned. The relational intervention of the Spirit of God in the lives of the Israelite people helped them to deepen their relationship with Yahweh.

### 3.2 The Relational Dimension of Holy Spirit in the New Testament

When we look at the relational role of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, we have more solid instances and incidents in which the role of the Holy Spirit is vividly described. “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:1, 2, 4) Pentecost can be interpreted as the Feast of Relationships because all those who were afraid after the death of Jesus, especially the disciples, all were strengthened as they came together. The community was united again. Their lost relationships with each other were regained through their relationship with the Holy Spirit. According to Marie-Lousie Gubler, “Pentecost – a (still buried?) Treasure: Feast of the revelation of God's life-giving Spirit, Feast of unity in diversity, Feast of understanding and change, Feast of different talents and charismas in the Church.”<sup>296</sup> Werner Neuer explains that the Holy Spirit is seen and taught in the New Testament as the Spirit *of truth*, the Spirit of freedom and as the Spirit of life, more than it unites Christians to form the new people of God.<sup>297</sup> The Holy Spirit helps people to relate with each other.

The people perceived the relational dimension of the Holy Spirit vividly in the Baptism of Jesus. The coming down of the dove and the words heard from

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Noah one who walked with God and who was righteous and blameless? (Gen 6:9) Did not Joseph resist temptation? (Gen 39:9) Was not Job one who turned away from evil, one who feared God and was blameless and upright? (Job 1:1) Did not David pray, ‘Do not take your Holy Spirit from me?’ (Ps 51:11) Did not the prophet Isaiah teach that the people ‘rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit’ (Isa 63:10), the same Lord who had ‘set his Holy Spirit among them?’ (Isa 63:11) Moreover, when the Lord chose Bezalel to be the chief craftsman on the tabernacle, did he not ‘fill him with the Spirit of God?’ (Ex 31:3: 35:31) Was not John the Baptist ‘filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth’ (which was also during Old Testament times, Lk 1:15), just as Elizabeth was ‘filled with the Holy Spirit?’ (Lk 1:41) Likewise, John the Baptist’s father Zechariah was ‘filled with the Holy Spirit and [he] prophesied.’ (Lk 1:67).” (Kaiser Jr., Walter C. *The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, 309)

<sup>296</sup> “Pfingsten – ein (ungehobener?) Schatz: Fest der Offenbarung des lebenspendenden Geistes Gottes, Fest der Einheit in Vielfalt, Fest des Verstehens und der Veränderung, Fest unterschiedlicher Begabungen und Charismen in der Kirche.“ (Gubler, Marie-Lousie *Pfingsten: Geburtstag der Kirche*, 77)

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Neuer, Werner *Geist und Heiliger Geist im Horizont des christlich-trinitarischen Gottesbegriffs*, 12

above remain as the solid foundation for the relational aspect of the Holy Spirit. God the Father establishes the relationship with the Son sending his Spirit on him at the time of Baptism. “And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove.” (Mk 1:10) In the New Testament, people experienced that God’s Spirit is often conceived as the divine voice breathing through a particular person to make God heard in the believing community. John the Baptist is filled with the Holy Spirit before the time of his birth (Lk 1:15) and gives voice to the cry of the prophet Isaiah, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (Luke 3:4)<sup>298</sup> St. Peter confirms that, “Holy Spirit will continue to guide us in such a way that God’s voice is still heard when we speak in his Name.” (1 Pet 4:11)

According to George T. Montague, the gift of the Holy Spirit helps in the building up of the community and in relating with others when the gift of knowledge is rightly used.<sup>299</sup> “A Christian liturgical greeting expresses this very beautifully: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Fellowship,<sup>300</sup> community, *koinonia* is the primordial design of existence, as all creatures are connected through the indwelling, renewing, moving Creator Spirit.”<sup>301</sup> St. Paul gives the building of the community in Corinth as an example in which the role of the Spirit is explained in the relational dimension. Community is formed when they the members relate well among each other. The Spirit unites the hearts and minds of the Corinthian people who were from different backgrounds.<sup>302</sup> According to St. Paul, the different gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the people are to build up the community. All the small and large services done by every one

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<sup>298</sup> “In the New Testament, John the Baptist is filled with the Holy Spirit before the time of his birth (Luke 1:15) and gives voice to the cry of the prophet Isaiah: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’ (Luke 3:4) The Spirit of the Lord anoints Jesus to preach and proclaim freedom and release from oppression (Luke 4:18-19), and the liberating words that flow from his lips are ‘Spirit and life.’ (John 6:63) After the resurrection, God’s Spirit falls in the form of tongues of fire in the upper room at Pentecost, filling the men and women present with power to voice loudly and clearly the good news of the risen Christ to all people. (Acts 2:1-13) Paul proclaims the message of Christ to the Corinthians through the Spirit’s power. (1 Cor. 2:4) He also warns the Christians in Thessalonica not to quench the Spirit by silencing the prophets (1 Thess. 5:19), and admonishes the Ephesians not to grieve the Spirit by using their voices in ways that tear each other down. (Eph. 4: 29-32)”(Hollingsworth, *Andrea Spirit and Voice: Toward a Feminist Pentecostal Pneumatology*, 205-206)

<sup>299</sup> Cf. Montague, George T. *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*, 151-152

<sup>300</sup> Cf. 2 Corinthians 13:14

<sup>301</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 44

<sup>302</sup> Cf. Montague, George T. *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*, 154

for the communities is important, and even the gift of healing is to serve the community.

The reception of the Holy Spirit [relationship with the Holy Spirit] was understood as the membership of belonging to the Christians. “All that we can conclude from this confusing evidence about the relationship of the Holy Spirit to baptism in the Acts is this: to become a Christian means to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and to receive the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)<sup>303</sup> Our identity is marked in baptism when we receive Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit guides us onwards and we inherit divine sonship (cf. Rom 8:16) because all those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God and heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. (cf. Rom: 8:14-17)

Another relational association for the people of the New Testament with the Holy Spirit was waiting for the promised comforter.<sup>304</sup> John speaks about this comforter very often in the gospel.<sup>305</sup> “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you.” (John 14:26) The Comforter is the guarantee of Jesus to his disciples so that the relationship may continue with him. Jesus himself is giving the Holy Spirit to the disciples. “And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” (John 20:22) “Luke makes it clear that the disciples experienced authentic faith in Jesus only at Pentecost, when their faith-act was accompanied by the gift of the Spirit. .... The Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning....God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 11:15-17)<sup>306</sup> “The Holy Spirit is guaranteed to the disciple as much as to the Master, but his function in discipleship is shown in the ability to witness fearlessly in the face of martyrdom. ‘When they bring you to trial and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.’” (Mk 13:11)<sup>307</sup> In the New

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<sup>303</sup> Cf. Montague, George T. *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*, 295

<sup>304</sup> Patrick Sherry shows three functions of the Holy Spirit in relation to creatures. The first role is to quicken, enliven and beautify things. The second role is to sanctify the intelligent being by communicating God’s love to them. The third role is the role of comforter. ( Cf. Sherry, Patrick *The Beauty of God the Holy Spirit*, 5-13)

<sup>305</sup> “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” (Jn 14:16); “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” (Jn 15:26 )

<sup>306</sup> Cf. Montague, George T. *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*, 293

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid*, 252

Testament people experienced the Holy Spirit more in the form of a person than as a power like in the Old Testament.

### 3.3 The Holy Spirit Experienced as the God of Today

#### 3.3.1 The Relational Dimension of the God of Today

The question of how we experience God today is very valid. How can we say that God is here or there? Jesus had promised that he would send his Counselor for us when his mission on earth is over. (cf. Jn 14:16) The ways and means of how we experience God today are very different. There are different accepted ways in which we believe that we can experience him. “Through the living interaction of these three authorities, scripture, tradition, and reason, God makes his presence and purpose known today to believers through the Holy Spirit.”<sup>308</sup> Karl Rahner tells us that, “Today’s experience of God is much clearer and more radical than earlier, a transcendent experience which de-divinises the world and lets God be God.”<sup>309</sup>

The disciples came to a new understanding of the presence and power of God in history through the transforming experiences of the Resurrection and Pentecost. They recognized the Spirit who was active in the world as the first fruits of a new creation.<sup>310</sup> Bruce G. Epperly writes that, “God can express much in his relationship with the world. A relational, non-competitive, and freedom-sharing God can always do new things, respond to surprises, and imagine innovative possibilities.”<sup>311</sup> Elizabeth Johnson makes it clear that whenever people speak of their experience of God or of God’s doing something in the world, they are referring to the Spirit of God who actually is there in every moment of our lives.<sup>312</sup> That is why Doris Nauer writes that, “Everyone may therefore count on meeting God as the Holy Spirit, i.e. as world-immanent power, everywhere in creation in a holistic manner.”<sup>313</sup>

Saint Pope John Paul II affirms in his encyclical that the self-communication of God to his creation is related with the presence of the Spirit of God in creation.

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<sup>308</sup> Hunt, W Boyd *Holy Spirit and Revelation Today*, 42

<sup>309</sup> „Die heutige Gotteserfahrung ist viel deutlicher und radikaler als die frühere eine Transzendenzerfahrung die die Welt entgöttlicht und so Gott - Gott sein lassen kann.“ (Rahner, Karl *Gottes Erfahrung heute*, 43-44)

<sup>310</sup> Cf. Hunt, W. Boyd *Holy Spirit and Revelation Today*, 35

<sup>311</sup> Bruce compares the idea of a non-competitive and freedom-sharing image of God with the idea that God enjoys our freedom and creativity. The relationship of God with the world depends on the creativity and freedom of which human beings make use. (Epperly, Bruce G. *Infinite Freedom, Creativity, and Love: The Adventures of a Non-competitive God*, 51)

<sup>312</sup> Cf. Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 42

<sup>313</sup> Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 98



“This [God’s salvific-self giving] biblical concept of creation includes not only the call to existence of the very being of the cosmos, that is to say the giving of existence, but also the presence of the Spirit of God in creation, that is to say the beginning of God’s salvific self-communication to the things he creates.”<sup>314</sup>

“The essence of the Holy Spirit consists precisely in that he is, as such ‘there for us’ – not because he would need us and we, therefore, could dispose of him [according to our whims], but because he wants to be there for us. He is the Presence of God for us and in us.”<sup>315</sup> Sallie McFague presents in her explanation of the world as God’s body that, “One implication of this model is that we meet God in the garden, on the earth, at home. We do not have to go elsewhere or wait until we die or even be ‘religious.’ We meet God in the nitty-gritty of our regular lives, for God is always present in every here and now.”<sup>316</sup> “God was [in the ancient religions] experienced as part of the world in the world, not as its cause and abyss which from the start cannot be equated to it.”<sup>317</sup>

According to Karl Rahner, the experience of the God of today is not anything new but must be the continuation of the God experience of earlier times. “If God exists and is understood correctly with what is meant with that word, if man in all his radical wandering in his history still remains a human, then it is unthinkable from the start that today there would be an experience of God which did not exist at all in earlier times. But on the other hand it is also self-understood that the situation of man today in his total self-realization, without which there is no experience of God, influences this experience very essentially, even more than the post fact reflection of it, as proof of God or whichever way it is called.”<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> John Paul II, “*Dominum et vivificantem*” No. 3

<sup>315</sup> „Das Wesen des Heiligen Geistes besteht gerade darin, dass er ‚an sich‘ ‚für uns‘ ist - nicht weil er uns nötig hätte und wir dann gar über ihn verfügen könnten, sondern weil er für uns da sein will: Er ist das Dasein Gottes für uns/in uns. (Hilberath, Bernd Jochen *Heiliger Geist – heilender Geist*, 87)

<sup>316</sup> McFague, Sallie *God’s Body, Our Home: Intimate Creation*, 44

<sup>317</sup> „Gott wurde doch als Teil der Welt erlebt in der Welt, nicht als ihr Grund und Abgrund, der von vornherein nicht mit ihr selbst verrechnet werden darf.“ (Rahner, Karl *Gottes Erfahrung heute*, 42)

<sup>318</sup> „Wenn Gott existiert und wenn richtig verstanden wird, was mit dem Wort gemeint ist, wenn der Mensch bei allem radikalen Wandern in seiner Geschichte eben doch immer Mensch ist, dann ist es von vornherein undenkbar, dass heute eine Gotteserfahrung gegeben wäre, die es früher schlechterdings nicht gab. Andererseits ist es ebenso selbstverständlich, dass die heutige Situation des Menschen in seinem totalen Selbstvollzug, ohne den es keine Gotteserfahrung gibt, auch diese Erfahrung sehr wesentlich mitprägt, sogar mehr als die nachträgliche Reflexion auf sie, Gottesbeweis oder wie immer genannt“ (Rahner, Karl *Gottes Erfahrung heute*, 18-19)

Betty L. Blanton names the experience of God today as the continuation of the Incarnation through us. We are the ones who have to make this experience of God possible for others because it is our duty. "It is our heritage of faith that reminds us of the act of God then in Jesus Christ. It is our call to obedience that demands of us now God's evocation in our present situation. We not only remember what happened two thousand years ago. We also call forth God's emergence into our dimension of experience by the creative love we have for one another. God has given us the power to evoke his presence. When we touch one another with care and creative, liberating love, God moves between and within us."<sup>319</sup> "The spiritual is not something tidy and distinct, another order of being. Instead, it is perfectly capable of intruding into everyday reality, as if part of this world. It is not just 'in here;' it is also out there, a presence, looming."<sup>320</sup> John R. Stacer writes that we can experience God in every one of us since we are created in his image and likeness and we each have something of the divine in us. A reverential attitude towards each person is helpful in this process. At the same time, "We should not always demand proof; we should be open also to the amusement and direct experience of God's presence. We should not be trapped in analysis; we should be open to a holistic experience."<sup>321</sup> Karl Rahner assures us again that, "This kind of experience of God is not the privilege of some mystics only, but is a given in each person, even though the power and clarity of the reflection rather varies."<sup>322</sup> Openness and readiness of individuals to find traces of working of the Spirit in their lives is part of the relational dimension of the God of today.

### 3.3.2 The Feminine Aspects of the Holy Spirit

When we analyze how we experience the Holy Spirit as relational, it becomes necessary to deal with the feminine aspects of the Holy Spirit. "The feminine imagery of the Holy Spirit (Ruach) keeps us firmly grounded in the awareness that the Spirit does not need to be a masculine being for Jesus to be born from the womb of Mary."<sup>323</sup> "First, if we look at Scripture, we notice that the Spirit is often associated with a voice. In the Hebrew Bible, ruach is a feminine noun

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<sup>319</sup> Blanton, Betty L. *God's Continuing Incarnation Through Us*, 37

<sup>320</sup> Kugel, L. James *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible*, 36

<sup>321</sup> Stacer, John R. *Divine Reverence for Us: God's Being Present, Cherishing and Persuading*, 445

<sup>322</sup> „Diese Gotteserfahrung ist nicht das Privileg einzelner Mystiker sondern in jedem Menschen gegeben, wenn auch Kraft und Deutlichkeit der Reflexion auf sie sehr verschieden sind.“ (Rahner, Karl *Gottes Erfahrung heute*, 25)

<sup>323</sup> Barton, Mukti *Gender-Bender God: Masculine or Feminine?*, 121

that speaks in both a divine and human breath...”<sup>324</sup> “The neuter word *pneuma* is used for spirit in the Greek language New Testament. But the pronoun found in those texts is not ‘it,’ since Christian theology regards the Holy Spirit as a person rather than an impersonal force; ‘he’ was the pronoun selected for the enabling power and earthly agent of God the Father.”<sup>325</sup> According to Rosemary Radford R  ther, considering the Holy Spirit as feminine makes the female side of God subordinate to the dominant image of male divine sovereignty.<sup>326</sup> Mukti Barton brings forth three feminine images of God: God as Mother, God as Mother Hen and God as Mother Eagle.<sup>327</sup>

Elizabeth Johnson makes us aware that in three languages we have three different genders for the Holy Spirit. “The Hebrew word for spirit, *ruach*, is of grammatically feminine gender. This point in itself is inconclusive, for a word’s grammatical gender does not necessarily indicate the maleness or femaleness of its object. Furthermore, the biblical Greek term for spirit, *pneuma*, is grammatically neuter, while the long-used Latin term, *spiritus*, is grammatically masculine.”<sup>328</sup> The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* gives the following definition: “The feminine gender of *ruach* as the creative spirit of God in Gen. 1:2 has led to speculative interpretations of the quickening spirit of God as feminine, to be represented as a mother. One may concur with the view that this text embodies the symbolism of divine creativity, but less easily with the identification of a personal sexuality.”<sup>329</sup>

Ephrem addressed the Holy Spirit as a mother because the image of the Holy Spirit as mother has been often used in the Acts of Judas Thomas and in the Armenian Version of Ephrem’s hymns. “The Holy Spirit is portrayed as a Mother because she is able to give birth from her womb. The relationship between being born from the Spirit and Christ’s suffering indicates the mutuality between the two and the importance of baptism which is symbolically the Spirit’s womb.”<sup>330</sup> “A pneumatology that affirms the Holy Spirit as the relationally mediated, diversely manifested, somatically experienced divine voice

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<sup>324</sup> Hollingsworth, Andrea *Spirit and Voice: Toward a Feminist Pentecostal Pneumatology*, 205

<sup>325</sup> Dart, John *Balancing out the Trinity: The Genders of the Godhead*, 147

<sup>326</sup> Cf. Ibid, 147-150

<sup>327</sup> Cf. Barton, Mukti *Gender-bender God: Masculine or Feminine?*, 142-166

<sup>328</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, 83; See also Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*, 82

<sup>329</sup> Botterweck, G.J. et al. (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 401-402

<sup>330</sup> Jensen, Jane Richardson *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as Mothers in Early Syrian Literature*, 36

is a pneumatology that is empowering. It succeeds in upholding feminist ideals of mutuality.”<sup>331</sup>

Jesus uses male and female characters in his parable and that is proof that God is also represented in feminine imageries and not only in masculine imageries in the New Testament. According to Mukti Barton, Jesus was not establishing God’s masculinity by addressing God “Abba.” She analyzes the three parables in Luke 15 to make her argument vivid. “Jesus uses male and female images to describe God’s love for the lost and the least. The first image is one of a shepherd who has lost one of his hundred sheep. He leaves all ninety-nine and searches for the lost sheep until he finds it. When he finds it, he takes it on his shoulder, comes home and calls his friends to rejoice with him for the lost sheep that has been found. Jesus says likewise when one sinner repents God rejoices in heaven. If God were solely like a man, Jesus would not have needed a female image to tell the second parable. This parable is about a woman who has lost her coin. She lights a lamp, sweeps the house until she finds her lost coin. She rejoices with her friends the way God rejoices in the company of angels over one sinner who repents.”<sup>332</sup>

Most of the time, the images of God that we have heard and read about remain as the foundation for our images and we automatically associate with those images that exist in our memory. Arthur E. Zannoni explains the normal understanding or the problem why our imagination is related with the male concept of God. “Because our tradition has overemphasized masculine images for God (king, father, shepherd, farmer), many Christians do not recognize the feminine images for God in the gospels. For example, when people hear the story of the man who sowed mustard seed, they know it is God (cf. Mt 13:31), but they often miss the parallel image that follows, where God is a woman, “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” (cf. Mt 13:33) Christians know that God is the shepherd in the wilderness who left his flock to search for one lost sheep (cf. Lk 15:3-7), yet they usually do not recognize God as the woman searching for her lost coin in the passage immediately following. (cf. Lk 15:8-10)<sup>333</sup> The gender of the Holy Spirit is a matter of discussion and debate. We have to see the work of the Holy Spirit beyond the gender issues. To obstruct

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<sup>331</sup> Hollingsworth, Andrea *Spirit and Voice: Toward a Feminist Pentecostal Pneumatology*, 209

<sup>332</sup> Barton, Mukti *Gender-Bender God: Masculine or Feminine?*, 151

<sup>333</sup> Zannoni, Arthur E. *Tell Me Your Name: Images of God in the Bible*, 67; See also Barton, Mukti *Gender-bender God: Masculine or Feminine?*, 155

the presence and gifts of the Holy Spirit because of gender issues would be a wrong attitude on our part. The feminine aspects of the Holy Spirit are really supportive for us in the relational dimension of the Holy Spirit because it enhances the God experiences of everyone.

### **3.3.3 The Unusual Relational Features of the Holy Spirit in Relationship**

The influences and the interventions of the Holy Spirit in relating with the people need not always be peaceful and appealing. The Holy Spirit can relate with the people in an unusual and unpleasant way. When we think of the Holy Spirit, usually what come to our mind are always the pleasant and comfortable images or inspirations of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people. The Holy Spirit is not only always creative and peaceful but can be destructive and angry. “An inspiration with its own weight, because spirit-enthusiasm does not automatically imply spiritual pacification and stabilization of the person, but can also cause irritation, uncertainty, destabilization and questioning of individually, collectively and structurally established facts, plausibilities and routines.”<sup>334</sup> The uncertainty and irritation the individual experiences does not remain on the level of irritation, but gradually it grows into a relationship with God.

The first intervention of the Holy Spirit in the history of human beings was at the time of creation. George T. Montague relates that, “The Spirit of God thus disposes the chaos to hear in obedience the word of God. Because the chaos has been readied by the Spirit, when God says, ‘Let there be light,’ there is light.”<sup>335</sup> The chaos of the Spirit remains as the preparatory ground for the creation of God with which the whole story of the relationship begins. When the people are rebelling against Moses, the Spirit makes them think about their relationship with him when Moses was their leader. The prophet Isaiah describes the story of the people and what happened when they fought against the Holy Spirit. “Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.” (Isa 63:10)

When the relationship of the Holy Spirit is broken with the leaders of the people, they become evil minded. The absence of the Holy Spirit in the people leads them to the works of the evil spirit. It is clear in the story of Saul. When

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<sup>334</sup> „Eine Inspiration, die es jedoch in sich hat, denn Geist-Begeisterung impliziert nicht automatisch spirituelle Befriedigung und persönliche Stabilisierung, sondern kann auch Irritation, Verunsicherung, Destabilisation und Hinterfragung individueller, kollektiver und struktureller Vorgegebenheiten, Plausibilitäten und Routinen bewirken.“ ( Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 98)

<sup>335</sup> Montague, George T. *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*, 67

the Holy Spirit was with him, he became the hero of the Israelites. (cf. 1Sam 10:1 anointing of Saul as King) But once he loses the relationship with the Spirit, he loses his goodness of heart and mind. “Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.” (1 Sam 16:14)

According to Jack van Marion, Jesus realizes the absence and presence of the Spirit in the person and reacts accordingly. Peter is telling Jesus that he should not go through the suffering and Passion. Jesus then rebuked Peter with, “Get behind me, Satan!” (cf. Mk 8:33) Jesus also says in his response to Peter’s acclamation that Jesus is the Christ, “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church.” (cf. Mt 16: 16-20)<sup>336</sup>

In the New Testament, the way the Holy Spirit builds the relationship with Saul is upsetting. (cf. Acts 9:1-31) It led him to total confusion and demanded a total change in his way of life exactly opposite to the way of life he had. His eyes were blinded. Complete conversion and the beginning of a new life was the effect of the intrusion of the Holy Spirit in the life of Saul. “When the Word of God with Jesus at its center enters our hearts, we must get ready for the Spirit of God to do a ruinous work in our lives. For example, when the Son of God stopped Saul, the raging persecutor of the early Christian Church in his tracks, Jesus brought him to his knees. The Son of God broke down Saul’s heart resistant to the gospel and he transformed Saul’s heart into one of love and obedience. Ruined by the Spirit of Christ, the old man called ‘Saul’ became the new man called ‘Paul.’ Could it be that God’s Spirit is doing a ruinous work in our lives?”<sup>337</sup> It is interesting to note the relational transformation Saul was experiencing in his life through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. George T. Montague is of the opinion that such a relational intervention of the Spirit is necessary for the cultivation of faith. “Such an unusual gift is obviously a passing and brilliant manifestation of the Spirit meant to lead others to faith or to confirm them in it.”<sup>338</sup>

We read about another unusual role of the Spirit in the temptation story of Jesus. The Spirit himself is leading the Son of Man to be tempted by Satan for forty days and nights. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” (Mt 4:1, 2-12) The temptations Jesus had were those of questioning his own existence. Jesus, who promised the Counselor to

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<sup>336</sup> Cf. Van Marion, Jack *The “Ruinous” Work of the Spirit*, 96

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*, 93

<sup>338</sup> Montague, George T. *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*, 151

his disciples, warns that when the promised Counselor comes, he will expose the guilt of the world. All will be judged according to their actions. (cf. Jn 16:8) With these words Jesus makes it clear that the work of the Spirit will not always be to convey messages or work miracles in the lives of the people but rather that the Spirit will function as judge.

Looking at the unusual relational approaches of the Holy Spirit enables us to better discern the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. We have to keep in mind that God uses his Holy Spirit sometimes to prepare us for a close relationship in an unusual way. God, who started the relationship with human beings from the moment of creation, continues to extend his invitation to build the relationship with today's world and people. The invitation of God to be in a relationship is as old as human history. The same God, who revealed his name to Moses, continues to reveal his care and love for his people through his relationship with them.

## **4. The Trinitarian God Experienced as Relational**

How do we experience the Trinitarian God as relational? In order to experience them, we have to know how the relationality of the Trinity functions. The relationality of the Trinity has two dimensions: the relationship among the Trinitarian persons themselves, and the relationship of the persons of the Trinity with creation. Richard Norris explains how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together in a relational way, "God sees and calls humanity in the Son and blesses and affirms it in that identity by conferring the life-giving Breath which is the Spirit."<sup>339</sup> This working together is clear in the promise of the counselor. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." (Jn 16:7) Again this relational way of working together is confirmed when Jesus tells the disciples, "But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me." (Jn 15:26)

When Jesus completed his mission on earth, Jesus was praying to his Father to glorify him. (cf. Jn 17:1-4) That brings together the Trinity in their relationship among Father, Son and Holy Spirit. "Because of their Relationality, there is in the Divine Persons a harmony of will, a community in action, a common focus

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<sup>339</sup> Norris, Richard *Trinity in Holy Spirit: Classic and Contemporary Reading*, 36

on what is wrought by them.”<sup>340</sup> “The fundamental meaning, however, always remains in metaphoric association: the community of the three Divine Persons is that, metaphorically, they can only be understood as ‘a team of dancers’ in a single dance.”<sup>341</sup> Nathan MacDonald follows the opinion of Karl Barth that, “The male-female relationship is analogous to the Trinitarian relationships of the persons of the godhead.”<sup>342</sup>

The three persons of the Trinity are present in the lives of every Christian from the moment when the sacrament of Baptism takes place, and it remains as the first Trinitarian experience for every Christian. “Yet the development would hardly have gone toward a teaching on the trinity, if the baptismal formula Matthew 28:19 ‘Baptize them in name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ would not have mentioned three equal entities for the one name of God. Therefore, at each baptism the task became evident with the recitation of this formula to unfold the understanding of this threefold name of God.”<sup>343</sup>

Erhard Kunz opines that God was not in need of creation so that he could relate with his creatures, but before creation itself he was already rich in relationship, i.e. Trinitarian relationship and the act of creation is an event of Trinitarian love. “The selflessness of creation only exists because the Creator, prior to creation, is selfless love, Trinitarian relationship.”<sup>344</sup> Describing God’s relation to creation in Trinitarian terms, Colin E. Gunton follows Irenaeus: “All of God’s acts have their beginning in the Father, are put into effect through the Son and

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<sup>340</sup> „Auf Grund ihrer Relationalität gibt es bei den göttlichen Personen eine Übereinstimmung des Willens, eine Gemeinschaft im Handeln, eine einheitliche Ausrichtung auf das, was von ihnen gewirkt wird.“ (Greshake, Gisbert *Der Dreieine Gott: Eine trinitarische Theologie*, 92)

<sup>341</sup> „Immer aber bleibt die Grundbedeutung bildhaft assoziiert: Die drei göttlichen Personen stehen in solcher Gemeinschaft, dass sie metaphorisch nur als ‚gemeinsame Tänzer‘ in einem gemeinsamen Tanz erfasst werden können.“ (Ibid, 94)

<sup>342</sup> Nathan MacDonald is using Barth’s *Exegesis of Genesis 1:27* to show that the relationship of male and female has similarities with that of Trinitarian relationship. He is explaining the *Imago dei* as a relationship to God and discusses the pros and cons of the criticism of Phyllis A. Bird towards the relational understanding of *Imago dei* by Karl Barth. According to “His account of the creation narratives takes place within the context of the rest of the Bible, and not in any alternative context. Thus the divine-human covenant that is centre stage elsewhere in the Bible is also the primary focus here.” (cf. MacDonald, Nathan *The Imago Dei and Election: Reading Genesis 1:26-28 and Old Testament Scholarship with Karl Barth*, 302-314)

<sup>343</sup> „Doch wäre die Entwicklung wohl kaum auf eine Trinitätslehre zugelaufen, wenn nicht die Taufformel Matthäus 28,19 „Tauft sie im Namen des Vaters und des Sohnes und des Heiligen Geistes“ gewissermaßen drei gleich geordnete Platzhalter für den einen Gottes-Namen genannt hätte. Bei jeder Taufe wurde so mit der Rezitation dieser Formel die Aufgabe laut, das Verständnis dieses dreifachen Namens Gottes zu entfalten.“ (Oberndorfer, Bernd *Man müsste sie erfinden*, 57)

<sup>344</sup> „Die Schöpfungs-Selbstlosigkeit aber ist nur gegeben, weil der Schöpfer im Voraus zur Schöpfung selbstlose Liebe, trinitarische Beziehung ist.“ (Kunz, Erhard, *Der dreieine Gott und die Gestalt der Liebe*, 57)



reach their completion in the Spirit. Put otherwise, God's actions are mediated: he brings about his purposes towards and in the world by the mediating actions of the Son and Spirit, his two hands."<sup>345</sup> We experience the relational dimension of the Trinitarian God first through the fact that we are created, because creation is an act of the Trinitarian love of God.

Gisbert Greshake explains the aspect of unity and differentiation in the Trinity and how it comes to fulfillment in their network of mutual relationship. "So it is that in view of the triune God relationship, being-in-relationship-with-the-other emerges as the highest form of unity. Put differently, the highest form of unity is the communication of many, is the unity that is in the mutual relations of many, and differentiation which takes place in a network of relationships, in joint interaction."<sup>346</sup> This mutual relationship (of unity and differentiation) leads to communion which is guided in a dialogical play of love.<sup>347</sup> Erhard Kunz writes that in their mutual relationship, the Trinitarian persons are dependent on each other. "The Trinitarian relationships are also characterized by the Persons' mutual dependence on one another. This shows in the historic [event of] dying. In the face of death, Jesus calls out for God his Father as his savior. He cannot exist in isolation; only the Father can save him from the threat of extinction."<sup>348</sup>

John Young presents the Trinity as the relational model of the community which we have to follow in building up other communities. "Today the importance of personality and of community is often stressed; but it is usually forgotten that the Trinity is the ideal expression of both, and should be the exemplar for our imitation."<sup>349</sup> Thomas A. Smail argues that when we fail in this mission, "The Imageo Dei is marred and defaced when in our relationships with one another we fail to reflect that which makes Father Father and that which makes Son Son and that which makes the Spirit the Spirit of the Father

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<sup>345</sup> Gunton, Colin E. *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes*, 77

<sup>346</sup> „So erweist sich im Blick auf den dreieinen Gott die Relation, das In-Beziehung-zum-andern-Stehen als höchste Form der Einheit. Oder anders: Die höchste Form der Einheit ist die Kommunikation vieler, ist die Einheit, die sich in den gegenseitigen Beziehungen vieler, und die Unterschiedenheit, die sich im einen Beziehungsnetz, im einen gemeinsamen Zusammenspiel vollzieht.“ (Greshake, Gisbert *Streit um die Trinität*, 536)

<sup>347</sup> Cf. Greshake, Gisbert *Der Dreieine Gott: Eine trinitarische Theologie*, 179, 216

<sup>348</sup> „Die trinitarischen Beziehungen sind auch durch wechselseitiges Angewiesensein der Personen geprägt. Dies zeigt sich in dem geschichtlichen Sterben. Angesichts des Todes ruft Jesus nach Gott, seinem Vater, als seinem Retter. Er kann nicht aus sich bestehen; nur der Vater kann ihn dem drohenden Untergang entreißen.“ (Kunz, Erhard *Der dreieine Gott und die Gestalt der Liebe*, 60)

<sup>349</sup> Young, John *Knowing the Holy Trinity*, 26

and the Son.”<sup>350</sup> Kunz Erhard instructs that we have hope for communion with the Trinity. “Man’s longing finds its fulfillment in the communion with the Triune God. Man must count on God giving him this fulfillment.”<sup>351</sup> Because our God gets involved in our lives, “The Triune God is God who acts in the ground of history...”<sup>352</sup> “The Trinitarian God is for Gebara”<sup>353</sup> the matrix underlying all relationships. The Triune God is a separate relationship, enclosed within himself, a relationship of two bodiless male egos, brought about through the Holy Spirit.”<sup>354</sup> For Christians, the life of Jesus is further testimony to the personal character of the God-with-us. In coming to experience how we are related to God, we characterize it as a personal relationship.<sup>355</sup> Stanley J. Grenz writes that, “... because God is triune — the Father, Son, and Spirit in eternal relationship — our quest to speak of the being and attributes of God actually constitutes an attempt to characterize the relational nature of God — God in relationship...But the relational God does not remain in isolation. Rather, from the internal divine dynamic our God enters into relationship with creation.”<sup>356</sup>

The relational dimension of the Trinitarian God remains as the foundation for all relationships. Plurality and differentiation in the persons of the Trinity are bridged in the mutual relationship and this urge for relationship is continued. That is why David Hartman writes that, “... the most striking characteristic of divinity in the Bible is the constant urge to project itself outside of itself and to be in relationship with another.”<sup>357</sup> “Because God is the loving harmony of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Christians can be confident that ‘God is love.’ That God is fundamentally triune reveals that harmonious relationships are of the essence of his being. The love of God is guaranteed to be everlasting (Jer. 31:3), because God is love.”<sup>358</sup> The relationship among the persons in the

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<sup>350</sup> Smail, Thomas A. *In the Image of the Triune God*, 22

<sup>351</sup> „Die Sehnsucht des Menschen findet ihre Erfüllung in der Gemeinschaft mit dem dreieinen Gott. Der Mensch ist darauf angewiesen, dass Gott ihm diese Erfüllung schenkt.“ (Kunz, *Erhard Der dreieine Gott und die Gestalt der Liebe*, 62)

<sup>352</sup> Sponheim, Paul R. *Closer to the Shifting Ground: The Rise of Relationship in God-Talk*, 228

<sup>353</sup> Ivone Gebara, Brazilian eco-feminist theologian

<sup>354</sup> „Der trinitarische Gott ist für Gebara die allen Beziehungen zu Grunde liegende Matrix. Der dreieinige Gott ist separate, in sich selbst eingeschlossene Beziehung zweier körperloser männlicher Egos zueinander, vermittelt durch den Heiligen Geist.“ (Rüther, Rosemary Radford *Der Gott der Möglichkeiten: Neue Überlegungen zu Immanenz und Transzendenz*, 417)

<sup>355</sup> Cf. La Cugna, Catherine M. *The Relational God: Aquinas and Beyond*, 647-663

<sup>356</sup> Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*, 77

<sup>357</sup> Hartmann, David *Living in Relationship with the Other: God and Human Perfection in the Jewish Tradition*, 145

<sup>358</sup> McIlroy, David H. *Towards a Relational and Trinitarian Theology of Atonement*, 14

Trinity and how they relate with each other provide us images for our relational experience with God.

## 5. The Multidimensional Experience of God

Human beings experience the care and love of God in different ways and means in their relationship with God. These relational experiences are based on the intervention of God in the lives of the people in unique ways. These are the paths which lead us to a multidimensional experience of God. Each explanation and contribution of the experience of God confirms the fact that we cannot limit or define the experience of God in a certain framework or in a certain system or hold the view that it is the sole way of experiencing God. According to Doris Nauer, talking about the Trinitarian God is important for multidimensional experience of God. “More and more people (including Christians and even theologians) suspect that the talk of a Trinitarian God is a speculative, incomprehensible, old-fashioned, historically outdated theological strategy, and therefore can be abolished. In my view, however, the paradoxical talk of a personal God who reveals himself to humanity in different ways, or, in different persons or dimensions, is the key to being able to experience God and think about Him in a multidimensional way.”<sup>359</sup>

The multidimensional experience of God includes all levels of life and relationship with the whole of creation. “We live, move and are in God when we let ourselves be enabled to moments of just relationship with other people and with our co-creatures on this earth.”<sup>360</sup> The ultimate underlying principle of all these multidimensional images of God in relationship is his unconditional and unchanging love. “In the same way we also find that our activities as believers should be an extension of our relationship with God. In reverse, all of the things that God does, acting as God, are expressions of some meaning of His relationship toward us. God does not just do things because He feels like doing

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<sup>359</sup> „Immer mehr Menschen (auch ChristInnen und selbst TheologInnen) vermuten hinter der Rede vom trinitarischen Gott eine spekulative, unverständliche, altmodische, historisch überholte und deshalb abschaffbare theologische Strategie. Meines Erachtens liefert jedoch genau die paradoxe Rede vom Einen personalen Gott, der sich Menschen auf unterschiedliche Art und Weise bzw. in unterschiedlichen Personen oder Dimensionen offenbart, den Schlüssel dafür, Gott multidimensional erleben und denken zu dürfen.“ (Nauer, Doris *Trinitarisch Erfahrbarer Gott: Theologisches Fundament pastoralen Handelns*, 87)

<sup>360</sup> „Wir leben, bewegen uns und sind in Gott, wenn wir uns befähigen lassen zu Momenten gerechter Beziehung mit anderen Menschen und mit unseren Mitgeschöpfen auf der Erde.“ (Rüther, Rosemary Radford *Der Gott der Möglichkeiten: Neue Überlegungen zu Immanenz und Transzendenz*, 418)

them on a whim. Every act of God is a purposeful expression of His love for us.”<sup>361</sup>

Theological foundations are based on the relational dimension of God in the Old Testament and how the people of God, especially the Israelites, named and described their experience of God in the desert and on their way to Promised Land; and in the covenants Yahweh made with their representatives like Noah, Abraham and Moses. The relational dimension of God brings not only the caring and loving face of Yahweh but also the angry God, who is disappointed in the failure of his chosen people and does not hesitate to punish them. In relationships with human beings, we experience the emotional side of God who expresses the affective side of his love and care, and at the same time frustration and disappointment at the way of life of his chosen people.

The Incarnation of Jesus made it possible for the people to experience Jesus as one among them who mingles with them in their daily lives. The invitation to have a relationship with him is extended to all types of people. He builds up a community with his disciples as the head who would lead them when his mission on earth is over. His relationship with his Father is the source of his strength for all his relationships. The way the people look at Jesus after the resurrection is different because they begin to experience the divine side of Jesus.

The experience of God continues in the relationship of the Holy Spirit with the individuals and in the manifestation of events. The ways and means of how the people in the Old and New Testament times experienced the Holy Spirit remain as the guiding star for all generations. The relational dimension of God receives an entirely different character with the feminine aspects of the Holy Spirit. The zenith of the relational dimensions we experience on the Trinitarian level are where we experience all three: Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a united way but with each functioning in an entirely different manner. The multidimensional experience of the relational dimension of God gives a solid foundation for the reason to analyze the anthropological foundations of the relationships of the human beings.

Carolyn Arends writes that God defines the relationship first then describes a life lived in its context.<sup>362</sup> Michael Klessman adds that, “Images of God reflect a feeling for life and relationships, they express how someone perceives and experiences life as such – and there are a multitude of possibilities and

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<sup>361</sup> Cf. Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 5

<sup>362</sup> Cf. Arends, Carolyn *Relationship That Leads to Life: Why God's Law is Good News*, 48

shades....”<sup>363</sup> Adrio König reminds us that a harmonious relationship both with God and with our fellow humans will enable us to have multidimensional experiences of God in our lives.<sup>364</sup> An integrated and holistic approach to the realities of life through the eyes of faith will enable us to experience the God who intervenes in our lives at different times and it remains as the foundation for multidimensional experiences of God.

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<sup>363</sup> „Gottesbilder spiegeln eine Lebens-und Beziehungsgefühl, sie bringen zum Ausdruck, wie jemand das Leben insgesamt wahrnimmt und erlebt – und da gibts es eine Vielzahl von Möglichkeiten und Schattierungen....“ (Klessmann, Michael *Gott hat viele Namen*, 256)

<sup>364</sup> Cf. König, Adrio, *Covenant Partner and Image: Deriving Anthropology from the Doctrine of God*, 38

### III. ANTHROPOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

#### 1. The Complexity of the Christian Vision of the Human Being

There is a question which has been asked in every generation: what is a human being? What are the elements that contribute to the image of the Christian human being? How do we come to know the Christian vision of a human being? In each era the questions are challenging and puzzling, and we cannot find a satisfactory answer for these questions. When we look at the picture of the human beings in the Old Testament, there is no systematically elaborated anthropology. What we see is not a balanced view of the image of the human being. At certain times, certain aspects of human beings are mentioned or given importance. Franz Gruber would say, “The question should really not be what is the human being, but rather how should the human person understand himself? How should he determine his being human? How should he live so that he can become that person, who he could be, who he would like to be, who he should be?”<sup>1</sup> When we try to find answers for the questions with regard to the human being, it will lead us to the Christian image of the human being.

The Bible is the best available source to refer to for the anthropology of human beings. According to Doris Nauer, “Christian anthropology can thus be understood in its deepest core only with the background of its Jewish roots. It is therefore necessary, as a prelude so to say, to present those in a very compact way, in order to develop from there the specifics of a Christian anthropology.”<sup>2</sup> Christoph Dohmen voices that, “The psalms reflect in their own unique way the biblical picture of the human being, since here people express their prime experiences in direct reference to God.”<sup>3</sup> The Psalmist himself wonders what is

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<sup>1</sup> „Sie (eine praktische Frage) lautet eigentlich nicht: Was ist der Mensch? Sondern: Wie soll sich der Mensch verstehen? Wie soll er sein Menschsein bestimmen? Wie soll er leben, damit er jener Mensch wird, der er sein könnte, der er sein will, der der sein soll?“ (Gruber, Franz *Was ist der Mensch (Psalm 8:5/I. Kant): Theologische Anthropologie im biotechnischen Zeitalter*, 57)

<sup>2</sup> „Christliche Anthropologie ist somit im tiefsten Kern nur auf dem Hintergrund ihrer jüdischen Wurzeln zu begreifen. Diese gilt es, sozusagen als Auftakt, stark verdichtet vorzustellen, um darauf aufbauend die Spezifika christlicher Anthropologie herauszuarbeiten.“ (Nauer, Doris *Christliches Menschenbild und Weihnachten: Mensch-Sein und Mensch-Werdung*, 18)

<sup>3</sup> „Die Psalmen stellen in ganz eigener Weise das Menschenbild der Bibel dar, weil hier Menschen ihre Urerfahrungen in direkter Anrede Gott gegenüber zur Sprache bringen.“ (Dohmen, Christoph *Zwischen Gott und Welt: Biblische Grundlagen der Anthropologie*, 11)

man that God is thinking of him (cf. Ps.144:3), and what is man that God cares for him and crowns him with glory and honor. (cf. Ps.8:4-5) Norskov Olson marks that, “In the biblical revelation, the first affirmation about man declares that, ‘God created man in His own image.’ (Gen 1:27) This is the original and most condensed summary of biblical anthropology.”<sup>4</sup>

In this anthropological foundation of relationship, our main concern is not to find out what the concept of a human being is, but to make the effort to look at certain aspects of a human being from the point of view of relationship. To find out what the relevant traits are for human beings in their relationships, we have to first look at the image of the human being, and what a human being is. Thomas Small would say that, “To be human, in the Christian perspective, means that we are made to reflect the glory of the Triune God; that we fall from the image when we cease to relate to the God who in all his three persons is freedom in love; that we find that image restored in our humanity in the incarnate Son through his spontaneous obedience comes into perichoretic relationship with his Father’s purposeful initiation and is filled with the Spirit’s creative power.”<sup>5</sup> Franz Gruber reminds us that, “A human person is – to speak in terms of classical philosophical language – nature and spirit, a thinking animal, an animal rationale.”<sup>6</sup> The Bible presents the image of the human person which is sometimes in contrast with the Greek concept of the human person.<sup>7</sup> Joseph Ratzinger formulates that, “Christ is the prototype of man. We cannot see in him the image of God in his eternal infinity, but we can see the image in which he chose to portray himself. From that point, we are no longer seeing an image, but God himself has shown us that image. Here he looks at us and speaks to us.”<sup>8</sup> Each statement about a human being highlights one special element or trait of human beings. It is difficult to define exactly what a human being is. The arguments and statements show the complexity of the Christian vision of a human being.

What is the first mention of human beings in the Bible? It is intimately linked with the creation story. George Augustin articulates that, “The basic under-

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<sup>4</sup> Olsen, Norskov V. *Man the Image of God*, 2

<sup>5</sup> Small, Thomas A. *In the Image of the Triune God*, 32

<sup>6</sup> „Der Mensch ist - mit den Begriffen der klassischen philosophischen Sprache gesprochen - Natur und Geist, ein denkendes Tier, ein animal rationale.“ (Gruber, Franz *Was ist der Mensch (Psalm 8:5/I.Kant): Theologische Anthropologie im biotechnischen Zeitalter*, 56)

<sup>7</sup> “Actually there were three general positions among the Greek philosophers: a materialist view man is simply matter; a dualist view held famously by Plato; and the Aristotelian position of man as essentially body and soul forming a single entity. This third position is in accord with the biblical understanding.” (Young, John *God Made Them Male and Female*, 28)

<sup>8</sup> Ratzinger, Joseph *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, 24

standing of man is based on the biblical expressions: 'Let us make man in our own image and likeness ... Then, God created man in his image.' (Gen 1:26-27) According to this biblical text man is a creature of God. As such he owes God his whole existence. Man stands like every other creature in dependence on God. And not only that, man finds himself in a unique relationship with God: God is the original image, man is the reflection."<sup>9</sup> "So, if one may make the general image of man the touchstone of our belief system, then the image of man in Scripture, more concretely of the New Testament revelation, becomes the explanation, even the center of the Christian world concept, since Sacred Scripture puts the world or rather creation in relation to man."<sup>10</sup> Erwin Dirscherl quoting the opinion of Thomas Aquinas tells that the creation of human beings can be understood under the genus of connectedness, of relationships.<sup>11</sup>

Albert Rainer affirms that, "Nowhere in the Old Testament does it become clearer than here (Psalms and Book of Job) how the God relationship belongs fundamentally to our humanness. Joy of life expresses itself in jubilant praise of God; need, worry, despair and hope in lamenting and pleading with God."<sup>12</sup> Humanness includes different layers of relationship too. The Christian vision of human beings is complex because it embraces many different and diverse aspects and elements about the existence of human beings: his relatedness with God, others, and nature, and special characteristics of being human. Though the Christian vision of the human being is multifaceted and varied, the study of the image of human beings will help us to draw elements which constitute the

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<sup>9</sup> „Das Grundverständnis des Menschen ist in den biblischen Aussagen begründet: „Lasst uns Menschen machen als unser Abbild, uns ähnlich.....Gott schuf also den Menschen als sein Abbild“ (Gen 1, 26-27) Nach dieser biblischen Aussage ist der Mensch ein Geschöpf Gottes. Als Geschöpf Gottes verdankt er Gott seine ganze Existenz. Der Mensch steht wie jedes andere Geschöpf in Abhängigkeit von Gott. Nicht nur das: Der Mensch steht in einer einmaligen Beziehung zu Gott: Gott ist das Urbild, er ist das Abbild.“ (Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 32)

<sup>10</sup> „Wenn man so schon allgemein das jeweilige Menschenbild zu einem Prüfstein der Weltanschauung machen kann, wird das Menschenbild der Bibel, hier näherhin das der neutestamentlichen Offenbarung, zur Erklärung, ja zur Mitte des christlichen Weltverständnisses, da die Heilige Schrift ausdrücklich die Welt oder besser die Schöpfung zum Menschen in Beziehung setzt.“ (Schnackenburg, Rudolf *Der Mensch - Mitte Christlichen Weltverständnisses (Kol 3:9-11)*, 185)

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Dirscherl, Erwin *Über spannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 68

<sup>12</sup> „Nirgends im Alten Testament wird deutlicher als hier (Psalmen und Hiobbuch), wie fundamental die Gottesbeziehung zum Menschsein dazugehört: Die Lebensfreude spricht sich aus im jubelnden Gotteslob, Not, Angst, Verzweiflung und Hoffnung im Klagen und Flehen zu Gott.“ (Albertz, Rainer *Mensch II: Altes Testament*, 470); See also: Dohmen, Christoph *Zwischen Gott und Welt: Biblische Grundlagen der Anthropologie*, 10



anthropological foundation of human beings from the view point of the relational character of the human being.

## 1.1 The Image of the Human Being in the Bible

### 1.1.1 Created in the Image and Likeness of God

When we look at the image of the human being in the Old Testament, the first fact with which we come into contact is the creation accounts in the book of Genesis. God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”...“God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (cf. Gen 1:26-27) Ian Barbour brings forth the uniqueness of the term image because, “The term ‘Image of God’ is used only in reference to human beings, suggesting an absolute line between humans and all other creatures.”<sup>13</sup> According to Adam Reiss, “The image may be a term for the immediate relationship between God and man.”<sup>14</sup> The term image itself hints of a special relevance for human beings.

What happened in the creation of human beings? Angelos Valliantos conveys that God created human beings by breathing into us the spirit of life. Human beings are endowed with God-given qualities and become God’s co-creator.<sup>15</sup> That means, “The creation of man in God’s image and likeness reveals to a greater extent that God has some special divine plan both for man and of man himself.”<sup>16</sup> The biblical statement that humanity is created “in the image of God” (Gen 1:27) indicates its potential for reflecting God’s purposes and the relation of human beings to God.<sup>17</sup> David Sacer states that, “The image of God simply means that the object bears a resemblance to God.”<sup>18</sup> William Barr presents that, “The image of God is focused in the freedom of the human creature to relate in self-giving to others.”<sup>19</sup> Robert Gay is of the opinion that being in the image of God means being relational.<sup>20</sup> Among the different definitions of the image of God, according to Nathan Jastram, to be like God is the most

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<sup>13</sup> Barbour, Ian G. *Nature, Human Nature, and God*, 50

<sup>14</sup> Reiss, Moshe *Adam: Created in the Image and Likeness of God*, 184

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Valliantos, Angelos *Creation, Koinonia, Sustainability and Climate Change*, 195

<sup>16</sup> Odigbo, Ferdinand Ogochukwu *The Image of God in Man as the Basis for the Reconciliation: Anthropol Theological Approach*, 36

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Barbour, Ian G. *Nature, Human Nature, and God*, 50

<sup>18</sup> Scaer, David P. *Man Made in the Image of God and its Relationship to the First Promise*, 21

<sup>19</sup> Barr, William R. *Life: Created in the Image of God*, 475

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Gay, Robert *Creation, Ecology and the Moral Life: How Should Catholics be Environmentalists?* 51

faithful to the Scriptural texts.<sup>21</sup> “Thus, the image of God is focused not simply in the relation of human beings, of man and woman, but in our lives together with others in giving and receiving, in receiving and giving, in love and service.”<sup>22</sup>

The distinctiveness of human beings is that they possess the image and likeness of God which raises the matchlessness of human beings. The uniqueness in the creation of human beings is that they are created not after their kinds, like the animals, but in the divine image.<sup>23</sup> A reflection by Luther created a twist in the traditional understanding of being made in the image of God.<sup>24</sup> Berry R. J. makes it clear that, “What makes us human is not genetic or anatomical; we are human because of God’s image in us.”<sup>25</sup> Humanness is given to the human being from the beginning. “That God created man in his own image and likeness would have been very difficult to understand or even to believe if God had not taken the same form as man, hence manifesting in a concrete manner the closeness and the connecting link between humankind and its Creator.”<sup>26</sup> When God took the same form as human beings, a close bond was sealed between the Creator and human beings.

Erwin Dirscherl explains that to be the image of God is the prerequisite for man to be in the likeness of God and both aspects are interwoven.<sup>27</sup> “Likeness says a direct relationship to the Logos who alone is capable of returning the human image to a correspondence of His own perfect relationship of knowledge and love of the Father.”<sup>28</sup> David Scaer affirms that, “Two words, image and likeness, are used to express the same phenomenon so that the importance of the divine-human similarity will certainly not be lost by the reader.”<sup>29</sup> Tertullian understands that God created man in his image and gave him the breath of life as his likeness. While the image can never be destroyed, the

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Jastram, Nathan *Man as Male and Female: Created in the Image of God*, 8

<sup>22</sup> Barr, William R. *Life: Created in the Image of God*, 483

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Anderson, Ray S. *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology*, 69

<sup>24</sup> “A major departure from the traditional understanding of the image of God in humanity as being a constituent of the human makeup occurred with Luther when he emphasized that being made in God’s image was not a human possession or a human constituent. It was more a relationship between human creatures and their divine creator, whereby they could “image” or mirror the divine being.” ( Mahoney, Jack *Evolution, Altruism, and the Image of God*, 679)

<sup>25</sup> Berry, R.J. *One Lord, One World: The Evangelism of Environmental Care*, 20

<sup>26</sup> Odigbo, Ferdinand Ogochukwu, *The Image of God in Man as the Basis for the Reconciliation: Anthropol-theological Approach*, 30

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Dirscherl, Erwin *Über spannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 65

<sup>28</sup> Maloney, George A. *Man: the Divine Icon*, 74-75

<sup>29</sup> Scaer, David P. *Man Made in the Image of God and its Relationship to the First Promise*, 21

likeness can be lost by sin.<sup>30</sup> God's image leaves behind the divine handprint in the life of the human being. The uniqueness of human beings includes special responsibilities also. "Therefore image can be taken to mean that man is, in a unique way, God's representative on earth. Likeness which is used along with image to describe humans is still more abstract. It may be understood as man representing God in a more peculiar way than any other creatures like animals and plants on earth."<sup>31</sup>

Why was the human being made in the image and likeness of God? There must be a divine plan behind this action. "The image of God in human beings therefore pertains to the total and concrete human person, who is indispensable in her or his place in the whole of creation...As a representative on earth, human beings take the place of God. Thus, the image of God in human beings consists precisely of their being put in charge of creation."<sup>32</sup> According to Christoph Dohmen, along with the function of representation, a human being receives qualities, talents and abilities which empower him to execute his representative responsibility.<sup>33</sup> "That the human person is made in the image of God is understood in the first creation story in Genesis, in a functional perspective: in order that they may reign... The human person is a representative of God and represents God precisely in his position of ruling over creation. He represents God's lordship through actively shaping and using the non-human nature within the framework of the order created by God."<sup>34</sup> Gregory Arby explains the image of God from the functional character of man. According to this functional character of the human being, his prime duty is to rule over the earth.<sup>35</sup> A. H. Konkel states that the understanding of being created in the image of God should not be limited to dominion alone because it has a larger function of representation.<sup>36</sup> Nathan Jastram argues that, "Therefore to be created in the image of

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html), Accessed on 18.08.2012

<sup>31</sup> Arby, Gregory *Christian Vision of Man*, 106

<sup>32</sup> Canceran, Delfo *Image of God: A Theological Reconstruction of the Beginning*, 12

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Dohmen, Christoph *Zwischen Gott und Welt: Biblische Grundlagen der Anthropologie*, 29

<sup>34</sup> „In der ersten Schöpfungserzählung der Genesis wird die Gottesbildlichkeit des Menschen funktional verstanden: - damit sie herrschen...- Der Mensch ist Repräsentant Gottes und er repräsentiert ihn gerade in seiner Herrscherstellung in der Schöpfung. Er repräsentiert Gottes Herrschaft, indem er im Rahmen der von Gott geschaffenen Ordnung gestaltend und nutzend gegenüber der außermenschlichen Natur tätig ist.“ (Laux, Bernhard *Von der Anthropologie zur Sozialethik und wieder zurück*, 101)

<sup>35</sup> Gregory Arby describes the human being created in the image and likeness of God in three different characters: substantive character, relational character and functional character (Cf. Arby, Gregory *Christian Vision of Man*, 109)

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Konkel, A.H *Male and Female as the Image of God*, 3

God is not the same thing as to have dominion, but to have dominion is associated with being created in the image of God.”<sup>37</sup>

The question may arise whether being created in the image and likeness of God is restricted to a particular class, race, colour, language group, nation, or gender of human beings alone. Bernhard Laux gives an answer to this question, “To say that God’s image is present in each person explains the basic similarity of all people. This applies regardless of the differences found among people, in their abilities and skills and in the different stages of their lives. This applies universally.”<sup>38</sup> More than that, this quality is assimilated into all levels of the relationships of human beings. “The image refers to man’s relationships. This includes the relationship of the man to the woman, of man to God, of man to the world around him, and of man to himself.”<sup>39</sup> “The passages that teach about the image of God generally mention both sexes and include a statement distinguishing the sexes with respect to the image of God. No passage denies that sexual distinctions can be made with respect to the image of God, saying, for instance, ‘There is neither male nor female for you are all created in the image of God.’ Therefore one must conclude that the image of God provides an appropriate framework from which to discuss not only the unity of male and female, but also the distinction between them. Because the biblical texts themselves link the image of God and the two sexes, theologians of the church have often placed their comments on the relationship between the sexes under the general heading of the image of God.”<sup>40</sup> The universal character of the image of God becomes clearer when we view human beings in their totality.

Paul Sands brings forth the dynamic occurrence of the image of God which comes into effect when human beings are turned toward God and one another. So human beings reflect the divine image not as solitary individuals but in their social relatedness.<sup>41</sup> “The likeness to God befits to humanity not as an abstraction; it befits not only to the first human being, but to every human being, as it is explained in Genesis 5:1-3 and Gen 9:6. That has consequences to the relationship of man to man. If every human person is representative of God, then everyone has – governing – dignity. This dignity of every human being is con-

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<sup>37</sup> Jastram, Nathan *Man as Male and Female: Created in the Image of God*, 24

<sup>38</sup> „Die Aussage der Gottesbildlichkeit der Menschen begründet die grundlegende Gleichheit aller Menschen. Sie gilt unabhängig von der Verschiedenheit der Menschen, von ihren Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen und von ihren Lebensstadien. Sie gilt universal.“ (Laux, Bernhard *Von der Anthropologie zur Sozialethik und wieder zurück*, 102)

<sup>39</sup> Overstreet, R. Larry *Man in the Image of God: A Reappraisal*, 58

<sup>40</sup> Jastram, Nathan *Man as Male and Female: Created in the Image of God*, 69

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Sands, Paul *The Imago Dei as Vocation*, 34

cretized in the relationship among human beings as a relationship of equality.”<sup>42</sup> Marshall Howard highlights man’s capacity for personal relationships as the result of being created in the image of God.<sup>43</sup> Created in the image and likeness of God remains as an unfringeable distinctive characteristic of human beings. This quality of the human being remains as the cornerstone for all further deliberations and analyses.

### 1.1.2 The Dignity of the Human Being

When we think about the dignity of the human being, we automatically have to think about what makes human being different from other creatures. What is the source of the dignity of the human being? The dignity of human beings derives from the image and likeness the human beings possess. Along with that, the special qualities human beings inherited make them unique and distinct from other creatures. “The fact of being an image of God has a basic existential effect on the perception of the humanness of man and his relationship to others. As an image of God each individual person in his unchangeable individuality and uniqueness is willed and accepted by God.”<sup>44</sup> In the opinion of Doris Nauer, all human beings possess equally the inviolable human dignity regardless of whether one is healthy or handicapped, belongs to a certain group, class system, profession or social status, religion, church or parish.<sup>45</sup> The dignity of human beings is meant for all those who have been created in the image and likeness of God.

Why are human beings not identical with the rest of the creation? Why did God create human being with special qualities? “The understanding of each individual person as an image of God signifies something decisive for the human na-

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<sup>42</sup> „Die Gottesbildlichkeit kommt nicht der Menschheit als Abstraktum oder nur den ersten Menschen, sondern jedem einzelnen Menschen zu, wie in der Auslegung von Gen 5:1-3, Gen 9:6 deutlich wird. Das hat Konsequenzen auch für das Verhältnis des Menschen zum Menschen. Wenn jeder Mensch Repräsentant Gottes ist, dann kommt jedem Menschen – herrschaftliche- Würde zu. Diese Würde eines jeden Menschen konkretisiert sich in der Beziehung der Menschen untereinander als Verhältnis der Gleichheit.“ (Laux, Bernhard *Von der Anthropologie zur Sozialethik und wieder zurück*, 101)

<sup>43</sup> Marshall Howard explains four different specific identifications of the image. (The first one is being invisible, and the second one is the being in the image of God refers to the way in which human beings have dominion over the world and its contents, the third one is that man resembles God in his holiness and righteousness. (Cf. Marshall, Howard I. *Being Human: Made in the Image of God*, 53)

<sup>44</sup> „Die Gottesabbildlichkeit des Menschen hat eine grundlegende existentielle Auswirkung für das Menschsein des Menschen und für seine Beziehung zu anderen. Als Abbild Gottes ist jeder einzelne Mensch in seiner nicht austauschbaren Eigenart und Einmaligkeit von Gott gewollt und bejaht.“ (Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 33)

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Christliches Menschenbild und Weihnachten: Mensch-Sein und Mensch-Werdung*, 21

ture of a person and for the relationship of people to each other: seen from God's view all people are of equal personal dignity. Thus, all people are basically on the same footing as equals. Therefore, each person possesses a non-exchangeable value of his own."<sup>46</sup> We have to respect the dignity and freedom of every individual which are the distinctive characteristics of being human. Karl Rahner speaks about, "The human person's self-referent indefinability that each attempt to define leads nowhere."<sup>47</sup> Reinhard Neudecker asserts that, "Dignity and individuality of man is also shown in God's individual care for each one."<sup>48</sup> "Each person, as he in fact is (in his or her originality), may consider and appreciate himself as a God-willed creature, unconditionally loved by him as a masterpiece and as a miracle, as absolutely unique, as an irreplaceable individual."<sup>49</sup> The dignity of the human being is comprehended in the non-exchangeable value of every individual.

Joseph Ratzinger formulates human dignity as the basis of all human rights. "Man has within him the breath of God. He is capable of relating to God; he can pass beyond material creation. He is unique. He stands in the sight of God and is in a special sense directed toward God. There is indeed a new breath within him, the divine factor that has been introduced into creation. It is most important to see this special creation by God in order to perceive the uniqueness and value of man and thereby, the basis of all human rights."<sup>50</sup> Saint Pope John Paul II asserted that the self-consciousness of the human being is that which distinguishes himself before God from the whole world of living beings.<sup>51</sup> Peter Harris explains that human beings can find their dignity and meaning only in their relation to God as Creator and not in competition with other people who are more talented, capable or beautiful than themselves.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> „Das Verständnis jedes einzelnen Menschen als Abbild Gottes bedeutet Entscheidendes für das Menschsein des Menschen und für die Beziehung der Menschen untereinander: Alle Menschen haben von Gott her die gleiche personale Würde. Somit stehen sich alle Menschen prinzipiell gleichwertig gegenüber. Deshalb gilt: Jeder Mensch hat einen nicht austauschbaren Eigenwert.“ (Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 33)

<sup>47</sup> „Karl Rahner spricht von der zu sich selbst gekommenen Undefinierbarkeit des Menschen, denn jeder Definitionsversuch führt letztlich ins Uferlose.“ (Dirscherl, Erwin *Über spannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 47)

<sup>48</sup> „Würde und Einzigartigkeit des Menschen zeigen sich auch darin, dass Gott sich jedem einzelnen ganz individuell zuwendet.“ (Neudecker, Reinhard *Mensch III: Judentum*, 475)

<sup>49</sup> „Als ein gottgewolltes Geschöpf darf sich nämlich jeder Mensch, so wie er ist, als ein von seinem Schöpfer bedingungslos geliebtes Meister-und Wunderwerk, als ein einmaliges Unikat, als ein unersetzbares Individuum betrachten und wertschätzen.“ (Nauer, Doris *Christliches Menschenbild und Weihnachten: Mensch-Sein und Mensch-Werdung*, 19)

<sup>50</sup> Ratzinger, Joseph *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, 77

<sup>51</sup> John Paul II *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, 150

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Harris, Peter *Environmental Concern Calls for Repentance and Holiness*, 15

Paul Sands argues that the dignity of human beings is derived from God so it can be sullied but not be lost. Equal dignity is promised to all people regardless of race, ethnic group, language or tribe.<sup>53</sup> Human dignity serves as footing for our rights and relations.

The possession of intellect and free will uplifts the dignity of human beings from among other creatures. Their ability to reason enables them to choose between right and wrong and evil and good. "Human dignity is that dignity belonging exclusively to human beings and lasting throughout their natural life by which they are due respect for the moral integration of their person."<sup>54</sup> Adrain Calderone warns that human dignity should not be confused with personal dignity which has been called ontological dignity. "Human beings are personal beings created in the image and likeness of God. That is, they are endowed with the gifts of intellect and free will. By virtue of this they possess a certain type of dignity in accordance with which their capacity as knowing and intending agents is respected. Humans, unlike, are treated as rational beings capable of making informed choices."<sup>55</sup>

Human beings are distinguished from other creatures just because of the fact that human beings share the world with other bodily beings, and are distinguished by their intellect, love and freedom. The ability for intrapersonal communication is also a distinct feature of human beings.<sup>56</sup> "In his commentary on Gen 1:26, concerning the creation of humanity in the 'image and likeness of God,' Augustine finds humanity's highest dignity<sup>57</sup> in the reasoning function of the soul. Reason enables human beings to rule over the earth as God rules over all things and enables humanity to contemplate God."<sup>58</sup> "Man is therefore like God in that he is intellectually aware of good and evil, but of

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Sands, Paul *The Imago Dei as Vocation*, 39

<sup>54</sup> Calderone, Adrian *Human Dignity*, 59; See also: "Being created in the image of God, man was endowed with personality, a fact that implies he is a moral, religious, and relational being with dignity, freedom, individuality, and creativity. These characteristics or abilities do not operate in a metaphysical void but are manifested in concrete actions and relationships." (Olsen, Norskov V. *Man the Image of God*, 123)

<sup>55</sup> Calderone, Adrian *Human Dignity*, 58

<sup>56</sup> Cf. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html), Accessed on 18.08.2012

<sup>57</sup> According to Ron Highfield there are three different ways human beings are said to possess dignity: as excellence of nature, as moral excellence and as belovedness. "But this issue does not arise when we think of our dignity as our belovedness. Developing this third understanding of human dignity, I want to suggest a radical idea: God bestows on us the same dignity that he bestows on himself, for God loves us no less than he loves himself. The Father loves us with the *very same* love with which he loves his beloved Son." (Highfield, Ron *Beyond the "Image of God" Conundrum: A Relational View of Human Dignity*, 30-31)

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 25

course at this point man has experience only of the good but not the evil. The ability to distinguish between good and evil also belongs to man's being like God, made in His image."<sup>59</sup> Intellectual abilities and reasoning capacities empower human beings to make prudent decisions when it comes into the question of good and evil.

Ron Highfield reminds us that Genesis states clearly that human beings possess special dignity because we are created in the image of God. But the Bible does not explain what the image of God means. "However, there is tendency in the history of Christian thought to locate the image of God in certain qualities that differentiate humanity from the animals and that enable human beings to rule over the rest of the creation: specifically, reason and free will."<sup>60</sup> Teresa Elizabeth shares the opinion of Yves Congar and states that human freedom, which is a hallmark of the dignity of the human being, cannot be understood as individual freedom of choice; but it is true freedom for true relationships of mutuality, relationships of active invitation to others and active receptivity to God.<sup>61</sup> The dignity of human beings is also underlined in their relationship to God which comes from their God-given freedom to make free decisions in their relationships.

### 1.1.3 Chosen as Covenant Partner

The dignity of human beings is increased when they are elected as the covenant partners of God. In other words, God selects a human being as his partner in the relationship. Horace Hummel explains that the image implies a relationship and man is in the image of God only when he fulfils his destiny as God's partner.<sup>62</sup> For Adrio König, two important concepts in Christian anthropology are image and covenant. He names the covenant as the basic relationship between God and humans.<sup>63</sup> "By this partnership, the awareness as people and the law of the Hebrews were strongly influenced. Israel sees itself as a people chosen by God as his own (Ex 19:5), separated from all other nations of the earth and holy, i.e. dedicated to God. (Lev 19:2, Deut 7:6) At the same time it sees itself put under a special law and called for a special mission."<sup>64</sup> Human beings have

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<sup>59</sup> Scaer, David P. *Man Made in the Image of God and its Relationship to the First Promise*, 23

<sup>60</sup> Highfield, Ron *Beyond the "Image of God" Conundrum: A Relational View of Human Dignity*, 21

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Elizabeth Teresa *The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 458

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Hummel, Horace D. *The Image of God*, 92

<sup>63</sup> Cf. König, Adrio *Covenant Partner and Image: Deriving Anthropology from the Doctrine of God*, 35

<sup>64</sup> „Von dieser Partnerschaft ist auch das Volksbewusstsein und das Rechtsempfinden der alten Hebräer maßgebend bestimmt. Israel versteht sich als ein Volk, das Gott sich zum besonderen



been prepared from the beginning to be the covenant partner of God. According to Malcom Jeeves, "... This distinctiveness in the human possession of the soul, but in the human vocation, given and enabled by God, to relate to God as God's partner in covenant, to join in companionship with the human family, and in relation to the whole cosmos in ways that reflect the covenant love of God."<sup>65</sup> God offers the human beings His relationship with them making them covenant partners.

Why did God create and elect human beings as his covenant partners? Walter Vogels explains beautifully that, "...God seeks out someone similar to himself. He desires a creature in whom he can recognize himself, his own mirror. God is not at all 'remote...unapproachable and inaccessible.' On the contrary, he wants a partner with whom he may be intimate, with whom he can communicate and build a relationship."<sup>66</sup> Michael Northcott says that the covenantal relationship between God and the people of God has a great effect in the cosmic covenant which has significance for the ordering of relations between God and God's people, for their society along with their relationship with the rest of the created world.<sup>67</sup> "Though God exercises providential care for all creatures, it is only with human beings that God enters into a covenant, to establish mutual rights and responsibilities."<sup>68</sup> As covenant partner of God, a human being is raised to represent the created world in a special relationship with Him.

We read in the Bible that God makes the first covenant with Noah as his covenant partner because he and his family found favor in the eyes of God. (cf. Gen 6:8) The covenant is with the family of Noah and the rainbow is the sign of the covenant. (cf. Gen 9:9,16-17)<sup>69</sup> "The flood in Genesis 7 and 8 recalls the watery chaos at the beginning of creation in Genesis 1, and the everlasting covenant of renewal that is announced here extends to every living creature. This covenant expresses the constancy of God's love for and commitment to all life,

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Eigentum erwählt (Ex 19:5) und aus allen Völkern der Erde ausgesondert hat, das also heilig d.h. Gott geweiht ist (Lv 19:2, Deut 7:6). Zugleich weiß es sich aber auch unter ein besonderes Gesetz gestellt und zu einem besonderen Dienst berufen." (Warnach, Victor *Mensch*, 150)

<sup>65</sup> Jeeves, Malcom *Changing Portraits of Human Nature*, 26

<sup>66</sup> Vogels, Walter *The Immanent Transcendent Creator of Gen 1*, 232

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Northcott, Michael S. *Ecology and Christian Ethics*, 37

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Ormerod, Neil *Creation, Grace and Redemption*, 42

<sup>69</sup> "The climax of the story is a special covenant that God initiates with Noah's family and their descendants, and, very importantly with every living creature – "all the birds and, the various tame and wild animals." (Gen.9:9-11, NAB) This new covenant underscores the inherent interconnection of humans with the rest of creation. The Noahic covenant is a symbol of the unbreakable bond of all creatures with their creator and with one another. The perpetual sign of this covenant is God's 'bow in the clouds' (Gen. 9:13, NAB) a reminder of the relationship God has not only with humans but also with all living creatures." (Clifford, M. Anne *From Ecological Lament to a Sustainable Oikos*, 58)

human and non-human alike. For our part, we as humans are called to live in our covenantal responsibility on behalf of all flesh.”<sup>70</sup> Later a particular covenant is sealed with Abraham and his descendants. Circumcision is the sign of covenant between Yahweh and Abraham. (cf. Gen 17:7-10) Abraham is represented as the covenant partner of God. The unique covenant with Moses on Mount Sinai is made for the whole of Israel. (cf. Gen 19-24) “If you (Israel) will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (cf. Gen 19:5-6) “Even though Scriptures testify to the fact that God had always been experienced as a covenant partner who is unshakably loyal to his covenant, it is also full of stories showing how individual persons or the whole of Israel are breaking it, since God granted all human beings the freedom to make their own decisions and consequently to turn against God.”<sup>71</sup> God always initiates covenantal relationships through his covenant partners. “In sum, God has taken the initiative and freely entered into relationships, both in creation and in covenant with Israel. But, having done so, God - who is other than world - has decisively and irrevocably committed the divine self to be in a faithful relationship.”<sup>72</sup> God as covenant partner is always devoted to his covenantal relationship.

According to Terrence Fretheim, the glory of Israel is being the covenant partner of God, that God gives the divine name to Israel, and that it elevates the dignity of the Israelite people because of a special bond with God. “Naming entails a certain kind of relationship. For God to give the name opens up the possibility for a certain intimacy in relationship, and admits a desire for hearing the voice of the other. (cf. Isa 65:1-2) A relationship without a name inevitably means some distance.”<sup>73</sup> Christopher Morse highlights the fact that God is the one who elects the covenant partners<sup>74</sup> and, “Covenantal texts reveal that the relationship, indeed an elective relationship, between God and Israel (or an individual) precedes the establishment of any covenant.”<sup>75</sup> Martha Kirkpatrick

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<sup>70</sup> Kirkpatrick, Martha “*For God So loved the World*”: *An Incarnational Ecology*, 199

<sup>71</sup> „Obgleich die Bibel Zeugnis davon gibt, dass Gott immer schon erfahren wurde als ein Bundespartner, der unerschütterlich zu seinem Bund steht, ist sie auch voll von Geschichten, in denen einzelne Menschen oder das ganze Volk Israel den brechen, denn: Allen Menschen wird von Gott die Freiheit zuerkannt, eigene Entscheidungen zu treffen und in der Folge sich auch gegen Gott zu wenden.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 65)

<sup>72</sup> Fretheim, Terrence E. *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation*, 22

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 17

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Morse, Christopher *Karl Barth on "Covenant Partners"*, 11

<sup>75</sup> Fretheim, Terrence E. *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation*, 15

tells that, “Humans and the rest of the natural world are radically interconnected in a covenantal relationship with God...”<sup>76</sup> To be chosen as the covenant partner of God implies a relationship with the rest of the creation.

An effect of being covenant partners, as Christopher Morse tells, is that we are called to become instruments of God’s own righteousness (right relatedness).<sup>77</sup> “This peculiar relationship between God and human beings opens the possibility of faith and trust in God as the realization of our humanity as creatures dependent upon their Creator.”<sup>78</sup> “At the center of this biblical faith is the conviction that as creatures we stand in covenantal relation to God, a reality that no human being or human institution can remove.”<sup>79</sup> From the covenants of God with human beings as his covenant partner, we can conclude that, “...Israel’s God is a relational God who has created a world in which interrelatedness is basic to the nature of reality; this God establishes relationships of varying sorts with all Creatures, including a special relationship to the people of Israel.”<sup>80</sup> Through the covenantal relationship with God, human beings experience intimate and caring relationships with God. Being the covenant partner of God, the human being has the responsibility to have right relationships with the entire created world because the relationship of God includes a special bond with everything He has created.

#### 1.1.4 Perishable Beings

On one hand, God created human beings in his own image and likeness and built a relationship with them making them part of his covenantal relationship. On the other hand there is another aspect of the human being which is contrary to the above mentioned qualities. In spite of all these characteristics human beings remain as human beings and are not elevated to the level of God. Human beings are often reminded of their transitoriness and fragility in the Bible. Beatrice Bowald writes that, “According to the understanding of the Hebrew Bible, human beings as well as animals and the rest of creation are subjected to transitoriness. Ecclesiastes for instance writes that humans and animals derive from dust. ‘Everything goes to the same place, everything comes from the dust, everything returns to dust.’ (Ecc 3:20-21)”<sup>81</sup> From the fact that human beings

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<sup>76</sup> Kirkpatrick, Martha “*For God So Loved the World: An Incarnational Ecology*, 202

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Morse, Christopher Karl Barth on “*Covenant Partners*”, 11

<sup>78</sup> Jersild, Paul *Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology*, 45

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 44

<sup>80</sup> Fretheim, Terence E. *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation*, 16

<sup>81</sup> „Nach dem Verständnis der hebräischen Bibel sind die Menschen wie die Tiere und übrige Schöpfung der Vergänglichkeit unterworfen. So schreibt denn beispielweise Kohelet, Mensch

are created from dust and will return to dust shows that human beings are perishable beings. “Humans might be described like sparkling crystals on a window-pane: extraordinarily complex and stunningly beautiful – in the next moment however dissolved into apparent nothingness.”<sup>82</sup> Human beings in themselves have perishable and imperishable qualities.

The Old Testament interprets human beings as perishable beings and shows the limitation of human beings in terms of death. God creates the human being from dust and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. (cf. Gen 2:5-7)<sup>83</sup> Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow. (Ps 144:4) If, however, God takes back a person’s breath, he will die and revert to dust. (Ps 104: 29)<sup>84</sup> We get another image of human beings which shows their mortality and perishability when we read the third chapter of Genesis. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Gen 3:19) According to Albertz Rainer, though God created human beings with all special qualities and privileges, they are also restricted by God with painful limitations of their existence.<sup>85</sup> The transitoriness and limitations of human beings reminds them that they are also like other creatures in their limitations of death and perishability.

Alexander Sand explains the transitoriness of human beings to be like other creatures as dependent on God. They have the freedom to make free decisions and the ability to differentiate between good and evil. But they are still dependent on God. “Scripture offers a clear expression for the dependence of man on God, since man is part of creation, taken from the earth (Gen 2:7) and like all created beings is transitory.”<sup>86</sup> Gerald Janzen is of the opinion that, “Taken as a whole, the Bible tells a story in which human beings have persisted in using their wisdom and power to betray the human vocation to be dust in God’s image.” According to him this theme runs through the fall in the Garden, the story

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und Tier stammten aus demselben Ort. Beide seien aus Staub entstanden und würden dorthin zurückkehren (Koh 3:20-21).“ (Bowald, Beatrice; Halter, Hans *Preist Gott mit eurem Leib 1 Kor 6:20*, 237)

<sup>82</sup> „Der Mensch beschreibbar wie ein funkelndes Eiskristall am Fenster: Außergewöhnlich komplex und atemberaubend schön – nächsten Moment jedoch bereits aufgelöst ins, scheinbare Nichts.“ (Nauer, Doris *Christliches Menschenbild und Weihnachten: Mensch-Sein und Mensch-Werdung*, 22)

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Albertz, Rainer *Mensch II: Altes Testament*, 464

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Christliches Menschenbild und Weihnachten: Mensch-Sein und Mensch-Werdung*, 19

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Albertz, Rainer *Mensch II: Altes Testament*, 468

<sup>86</sup> „Schriften verbindliche Aussage wird die Abhängigkeit des Menschen von Gott betont; denn der Mensch ist Teil der Schöpfung, ist von der Erde genommen (Gen 2:7) und unterliegt wie alles Geschaffene der Vergänglichkeit.“ (Sand, Alexander *Zum Menschenbild der Schrift: Sacramentum Mundi, Theologisches Lexikon für die Praxis*, 402)

of the tower of Babel and the golden calf, and is the result of the persistence of human beings.

What are the elements which include the imperfections and limitations of the human being? Doris Nauer analyses those elements of imperfections in the life of humans. "From the biblical-theological point of view imperfection, fragmentarity, fragility, brokenness, handicap, illness, incurability, suffering, transitoriness, aging and dying are all essentially inscribed in the essence of the human condition."<sup>87</sup> Through the limitations and perishability of human beings, they are reminded of the fact that though they have many similarities with God they are not God. Whatever they possess will pass away as Ecclesiastes 3.2 explains: "There is a time to be born and time to die." "Man's identity with the rest of the creation results from his earthly origins. (Gen 2:7) This cannot be part of the image of God. Nowhere are we told that the world or the dust of the ground is made like God."<sup>88</sup> Howard Marshall points out the fact though, "Human beings share the perishability and mortality of the animals and the rest of creation but nevertheless differ from the latter in that they were made for relationships with God and one another."<sup>89</sup> In our search to find the image of the human being in the Bible, the image of human beings as perishable makes a vital contribution. Though this image highlights the transitoriness and imperfections of human beings, it is necessary to avoid the one-sided view of human beings where we may picture only the positive and special qualities of being human.

### 1.1.5 Lost in Sinfulness and Guilt

The picture of the image of human beings that is depicted in the New Testament is entirely different from that of the Old Testament image of human beings. Sin entered into the lives of the people in the form of a breach in the relationship between creator and human being. "Sinfulness means that God recognizes the human being as a responsible being, and in his freedom bound to make decisions towards goodness; however, he (God) also allows the possibility that humans can deny him (as the Other) and even the fundamental relationship...."<sup>90</sup> Christoph Schwöbel tells that, "Sin is above all a breach of the rela-

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<sup>87</sup> „Aus bibel-theologischer Sicht sind somit der *conditio humana* Unvollkommenheit, Fragmentarität, Gebrechlichkeit, Gebrochenheit, Behinderung, Krankheit, Unheilbarkeit, Leid, Vergänglichkeit, Altwerden und Sterben als Wesenskennzeichen von Mensch-Sein essentiell eingeschrieben.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 66)

<sup>88</sup> Scaer, David P. *Man Made in the Image of God and its Relationship to the First Promise*, 22

<sup>89</sup> Marshall, Howard I. *Being Human: Made in the Image of God*, 60

<sup>90</sup> „...die Sündhaftigkeit heißt, dass Gott den Menschen als verantwortliches und gegenüber dem Guten sich verhalten sollendes Freiheitswesen anerkennt, aber auch die Möglichkeit zur

tionship between God the creator and his human creation.”<sup>91</sup> Victor Warnach opines that, “Through sin, as the disobedient turning-away from God’s call, the holy order of a world centred on man was decisively disturbed.”<sup>92</sup> Human beings freely deny the relationship of God through sin, as a result, the order of the world which was foreseen by God was disturbed.

What made human beings commit sin? Doris Nauer would say that human beings tried to become God and violated the rules of relationship. She writes that, “Despite the fact of being created in His image and likeness, Scriptures show unmistakably clearly that man is man and God is God. Once men begin to blur the lines by wanting to be God, God Himself stops their endeavor. Wanting to be like God leads to the loss of the paradisiacal state of life, as the illustrative story in Genesis 3, the expulsion from paradise teaches us.”<sup>93</sup> As a result, the breach in the relationship between human beings and God began.

Human beings are guilty when they violate one of the given rules or customs and cause damage to their fellow creatures.<sup>94</sup> “Biblically spoken sin enters in the lives of people when they misuse their freedom. Sin involves more than just guilt. People become guilty whenever they transgress a norm, a law or an agreed-upon rule of the game and thus harm their fellow creatures through acts or omissions. Sinful, however, become people whenever they negate their creatureliness by going beyond God-given boundaries and limits, and even by trying to usurp the place of God.”<sup>95</sup> For Erwin Dirscherl, “The questions about sin and guilt are connected with the question about evil. Evil deals with interrupting and breaking relationships. That evil can relate is the reason that humani-

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Verneinung des Anderen, zur Verneinung dieser Grundbeziehung zulässt;...“ (Gruber, Franz *Was ist der Mensch (Psalm 8:5/I.Kant): Theologische Anthropologie im biotechnischen Zeitalter*, 68)

<sup>91</sup> „Sünde ist vor allem die Verletzung einer Beziehung zwischen Gott dem Schöpfer und seinen menschlichen Geschöpfen.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 201)

<sup>92</sup> „Durch die Sünde als das ungehorsame Sich-Versagen gegenüber dem rufe Gottes wurde die heilige Ordnung des im Menschen zentrierten Weltalls einschneidend gestört.“ (Warnach, Victor *Mensch: Biblisch*, 149)

<sup>93</sup> „Trotz aller Ebenbildlichkeit wird in der Bibel unmissverständlich deutlich gemacht: Der Mensch ist Mensch und Gott ist Gott. Beginnen Menschen diese Grenze zu verwischen, indem sie Gott sein wollen, wird ihnen durch Gott selbst ein Riegel vorgeschoben. Sein-Wollen-wie-Gott führt zum Verlust des paradiesischen Lebenszustandes, wie in Genesis 3, Vertreibung aus dem Paradies, bildstark erzählt wird.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 65-66)

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Sorge um die Seele*, 121

<sup>95</sup> „Missbrauchen Menschen ihre Freiheit, dann kommt biblisch gesprochen die Sünde in ihr Leben. Sünde umfasst mehr als nur Schuld. Schuldig werden Menschen immer dann wenn sie eine Norm, ein Gesetz oder eine abgesprochene Spielregel übertreten und dadurch ihren Mitgeschöpfen in Form von Handlungen oder Unterlassungen Schaden zufügen. Sündig dagegen werden Menschen dadurch, dass sie ihr Geschöpfsein negieren, indem sie gottgewollte Grenzen und Begrenzungen überschreiten, ja sogar sich selbst an die Stelle Gottes zu setzen versuchen.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 67)

ty's evil came about universally in the moment when it appeared for the first time."<sup>96</sup> That is why Christoph Schwöbel states that, "In the 'fall' the human person has dislocated himself in the relational order of creation."<sup>97</sup> Victor Warnach tells that by the negative decision of Adam, sin entered into the world (Rom. 5:12), and along with it the conflict between God and man.<sup>98</sup>

Joseph Ratzinger highlights the damages the act of sin caused in the relationship between human beings and God. "The original trusting, living relationship with God, which at the same time strengthens and heals the relationships of human beings with each other, is torn asunder; the relation between them is disturbed; God is hidden from us. We hide ourselves from him, and because we have so thoroughly concealed ourselves from him, we cannot see him either."<sup>99</sup> More than that, the effects of sin can be seen in the inner conflict of human beings. They feel distance and alienation from God. "The dimensions of sin can be grasped in the light of those dimensions of the Imago Dei which are affected by sin. This fundamental alienation from God also upsets man's relationship with others (cf. 1 John 3:17) and, in a real sense, produces a division within himself between body and spirit, knowing and willing, reason and emotions. (Rom. 7:14 f) It also affects his physical existence, bringing suffering, illness and death."<sup>100</sup> Sin ruptures the harmony of the human being. From the relational perspective, the breach of relationship is also interpreted as death. In the story of the prodigal son (cf. Lk 15:11-32), a break of relationship is depicted as death. That is why the father says, "This son of mine was dead; but is alive now." (cf. Lk 15:24) What is meant is not physical death. But there was a break in the relationship between son and father. The son sought distance from the father. Alienation or seeking distance from the relationship is pictured as death.

Peter Zimmerling elucidates the fourfold alienation of human beings as the consequences of a breach of relationship. "The fall of man, basically a breakdown of relationships, led to a fourfold alienation of the human person. In Gen.

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<sup>96</sup> „Mit der Frage nach Sünde und Schuld ist die Frage nach dem Bösen verbunden. Das Böse hat mit der Störung und Zerstörung von Beziehungen zu tun. Die Relationalität des Bösen ist der Grund dafür, dass das Böse der Menschheit in dem Moment universal eingestiftet ist, wenn es zum ersten Mal erscheint.“ (Dirscherl, Erwin *Über spannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 75)

<sup>97</sup> „Im Fall hat sich der Mensch in der relationalen Ordnung des Geschaffenen disloziert.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 202)

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Warnach, Victor *Mensch: Biblisch*, 156

<sup>99</sup> Ratzinger, Joseph *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, 87

<sup>100</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html), Accessed on 18.08. 2012

3 it is described as how the relationship of the human person to God, to one's neighbour, to the world (to his environment) and finally to himself is damaged, collapses and is destroyed."<sup>101</sup> "Sin does not create a new reality, but it forces people to get into relationship with reality in a manner which is in contrast to the order of creation."<sup>102</sup> Wilfred Harrington explains the situation of human beings as if they experience a distance from God because of their sin.<sup>103</sup> Sebastian Athappilly explains how St. Paul describes the effects of sin: "Going beyond the sphere of ritual defilement, Paul affirms an objective separation or alienation of humanity from God and calls it 'sin.' In this light we try to understand the meaning, "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned." (Rom 5:12)<sup>104</sup> Human beings experience in all the levels of their relationship with God the consequences of the breach in that relationship.

Hartmut Rosenau asks why we commit sin. What could be the reason which leads us to sin again and again? Sin is the cause of a permanent crisis of identity of the human being. The human being tries for a reversion of the order of creation through one's own sin. (Rom 1, 18ff) The human being does not recognize God as the Creator but degrades him to the level of a mere creature.<sup>105</sup> In other words, the human person disregards the created order of God and human beings. "Sin is now being interpreted within the horizon of the Christ-event where the disturbed relationship with God is understood as men turning guilty, since they close themselves off from salvation and, therefore, from their own salvation through Jesus Christ."<sup>106</sup> Non-cooperation with the created order and degradation of the Creator can lead the human beings to commit sin.

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<sup>101</sup> „Der Sündenfall, im Grunde ein Beziehungszerfall, führte zu einer vierfachen Entfremdung des Menschen. Gen.3 beschreibt, wie die Beziehung des Menschen zu Gott, zu seinem Nächsten, zur Mitwelt und schließlich zu sich selbst zerfällt, geschädigt und zerstört wird.“ (Zimmerling, Peter *Die Bedeutung der Gemeinschaft für den Menschen angesichts der Postmoderne*, 219)

<sup>102</sup> „Die Sünde schafft keine neue Wirklichkeit, aber sie zwingt Menschen dazu, zur Wirklichkeit in einer Weise in Beziehung zu treten, die der geschaffenen Ordnung widerspricht.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 202)

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Harrington, Wilfred *The Tears of God: Our Benevolent Creator and Human Suffering*, 18

<sup>104</sup> Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 127

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Rosenau, Hartmut *Adam wo bist du? Aspekte theologischer Anthropologie: Anthropologisches und theologisches Fragen*, 189)

<sup>106</sup> „Sünde wird nun im Horizont des Christus-Ereignisses interpretiert, weshalb die Beziehungsstörung gegenüber Gott dahingehend verstanden wird, dass Menschen sündig werden, weil sie sich dem Heilsgeschehen, und damit ihrer eigenen Erlösung durch Jesus Christus verschließen.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 67)



The sinfulness of the human being, which is the effect of the original sin, forces the human being to sin again and again and to break the relationship with God. John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins because people were sinners. (cf. Mk 1:4) In that context it is apparent why Jesus states clearly in the beginning of his mission that he is more concerned about the sinners. (cf. Lk 5:32) Sebastian Athappilly quotes the texts of St. Paul and points out that human beings are in sinful situations because of the effect of original sin. "In Rom 3:9, Paul emphasizes the universal grip of sin. All are caught up in its grip. Paul also speaks of the grip of sin on every man. (cf. Rom 7:19f)"<sup>107</sup> Doris Nauer is of the opinion that, "To fall into sin is therefore a potentiality, inherent to humanity, which always finds an expression in a disturbed (troubled) relationship to God and fellow human beings."<sup>108</sup> The image of a human being lost in sinfulness and guilt points out the inner conflicts of being human and how human beings suffer when their relationship with God is broken and when they feel alienated from their fellow humans.

### 1.1.6 Redeemed for Relationship

God does not leave human beings in their sinfulness and guilt. The lost relationship has to be amended and regained. Jesus knows that we are sinners who need radical conversion. (cf. Mk 1:15) Hence he also called us to trust in God's mercy and forgiving love.<sup>109</sup> That is why Doris Nauer writes, "The center of Christian anthropology is therefore not the sinful, but the redeemed person."<sup>110</sup> Redemption means, according to Jose Maniparambil that, "God acquits the sinner (justification) and restored to a relationship God (Salvation)."<sup>111</sup> Redemption always foresees the cooperation of the human being with the grace of God.

Redemption is transformation which human beings experience through reconciliation with God. The sinful man is transformed into a new relationship with God through redemption. Sebastian Athappilly highlights how important the

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<sup>107</sup> Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 125

<sup>108</sup> „Sündig werden ist daher eine dem Mensch-Sein inhärente Potentialität, der immer auch eine Störung in der Beziehung zu Gott und den Mitmenschen zum Ausdruck bringt.“ (Nauer, Doris *Christliches Menschenbild und Weihnachten: Mensch-Sein und Mensch-Werdung*, 20)

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 33

<sup>110</sup> „In Zentrum christlicher Anthropologie steht daher nicht der sündige, sondern der erlöste Mensch!“ (Nauer, Doris *Christliches Menschenbild und Weihnachten: Mensch-Sein und Mensch-Werdung*, 20)

<sup>111</sup> Maniparampil, Jose *Story of the Cross: Heart of St. Paul's Spirituality*, 155

forgiveness of sins is in the mission of Jesus. "...The salvific mission of Jesus being closely linked with forgiveness of sins is very clearly brought out in the miracle stories of healing, in which the forgiveness of the patient is emphasized. (cf. Mk 2:1-12) Salvation as forgiveness means reconciliation with God and the peace that flows from it. (cf. Lk 7:50, Col.1:14-21, Eph 1:7)"<sup>112</sup> "Therefore all the helplessness he portrays is only to show the need we have for Jesus Christ. He says gratefully, 'Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom 7:25a) we have been liberated. Indeed a great transformation has come about in Jesus Christ and his gift of the Holy Spirit too effects a great transformation. (cf. Rom 8:15-17, Gal 4:4-6)"<sup>113</sup> "In order to find the true and essential characteristics of humanity, Paul did not look to his contemporaries but to Christ, for he alone embodied the authenticity of humanity."<sup>114</sup> Through the forgiveness of sins, relationships are redeemed and human beings are restored to relationship with God.

Affirming this fact of redemption, Sabin Scott makes us aware that it (redemption) is not just for human beings alone but for all of the creation. "Paul tells us in Romans 8:22 that creation is groaning as if in the childbirth, anticipating redemption and eagerly waiting for the children of God to be revealed. As God's children, we are a part of this good news for creation; a creation that until now has suffered due to our sin and greed. God's plan of redemption is intended as good news not just for us but for the environment as well. While only God can finally redeem the creation, we are his agents in bringing a foretaste of that redemption."<sup>115</sup> Joseph Francis agrees that, "He (Paul) is well aware of what a struggle the redeemed person still has to face. But he is not alone. They are the members of the Body of Christ; Jesus Christ himself is active in them. The father of our Lord Jesus Christ will not abandon them nor will the Holy Spirit stay far away from them."<sup>116</sup>

What are the fruits of redemption (salvation) human beings experience in the restored relationship? "Rom 3:21-28 explains the redemption brought by Jesus: man is saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Ch 5-8 explains the fruit of the redemption brought about by Jesus namely, baptism and the outpouring of Holy Spirit to guide the redeemed believer. The redemption brought by Christ is the victo-

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<sup>112</sup> Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 166

<sup>113</sup> Francis, B. Joseph *Response to St. Paul's View of the Redeemed*, 160

<sup>114</sup> Xavier, Aloysius *St. Paul's View of the Redeemed Humanity*, 150-151

<sup>115</sup> Scott, Sabin *Whole Earth Evangelism*, 28

<sup>116</sup> Francis, B. Joseph *Response to St. Paul's View of the Redeemed Humanity*, 160

ry over sin and death.”<sup>117</sup> According to Sebastian Athappilly though Paul conceived salvation as eschatological lying still in future, they are saved already in hope.<sup>118</sup> He continues that, “Salvation denotes positive fulfilment, perfection or competition: fulfilment of all wishes and desires, ambitions and intentions. Salvation has thus to do with wholeness, holiness, healing and health.”<sup>119</sup>

Schneider Stengel explains salvation and its fruits as the “principle for.” “Salvation history shows, according to the Pope’s (Pope Benedict IV) opinion, how ultimately God’s action is carried by the basic principle *for*: God is pure relationship aiming at salvation and redemption of man, who in his actions is always there *for* man, and ultimately *for* us becomes man himself in Jesus Christ.”<sup>120</sup> Joseph Francis writes that, “Paul would give them a new vision of the Redeemed humanity. The Body is not a prison. It is sacred; it is the temple of the Holy Spirit and has to be kept holy (1Cor 6:19)...the solidarity in Jesus Christ brings them life, joy, and peace. (cf.1Cor 15:42-49)”<sup>121</sup> “As St. Paul explains, by Christ’s atoning sacrifice we are all brought together nearer to God and to one another. The dividing walls of hostility are broken down. (cf.Eph.2:13-16)”<sup>122</sup> The human being enters into a new relationship with God through redemption, and they live in this redeemed relationship.

Aloysius Xavier brings our attention to Paul’s point that this redeemed relationship of the human being is neither centred on God nor on human beings alone. “His concern was rather with humankind in relation to God, with men and women in their relationship to each other, and subsequently to Christ as God’s response to the human plight. In other words, Paul’s anthropology is a form of individualism that defines persons as social beings by their relations. In the Pauline perspective, human beings are as they are by virtue of their relationship to God and his world.”<sup>123</sup> In the redeemed relationship, it is also clear how human beings regained their lost image due to sin. The only difference is

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<sup>117</sup> Xavier, Aloysius *St. Paul’s View of the Redeemed Humanity*, 151

<sup>118</sup> “But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20), If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3:15) (Cf. Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 159)

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 156

<sup>120</sup> „Die Heilsgeschichte zeigt nach Ansicht des Papstes, wie Gottes Handeln letztendlich vom Grundprinzip *Für* getragen ist: Gott ist reine Beziehung, der das Heil und Erlösung des Menschen will, der in seinem Handeln immer *für* die Menschen da ist und schließlich *für* die Menschen in Jesus Christus selbst Mensch wird.“ (Schneider-Stengel, Detelf *Die „Gottgewolte“ Pastoral zum Ansatz von Joseph Ratzinger*, 114)

<sup>121</sup> Francis, B. *Joseph Response to St. Paul’s View of the Redeemed Humanity*, 160

<sup>122</sup> Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 168

<sup>123</sup> Xavier, Aloysius *St. Paul’s View of the Redeemed Humanity*, 147

that this time they have been redeemed into a new image of God through Christ.

### 1.1.7 Justified and Graced into a New Relationship

The aim of the restoration of the relationship and the promise of the presence of God (grace) with human beings was to lead them to a new relationship with Christ. According to David McIlroy, “Christ died for sins once for all, the [one who was in right relationship with God] for [those who were not in right relationship with God], to bring you [back into right relationship with] God.”<sup>124</sup> The death of Christ brings back all the relationships into the creational order. “The central aspect of understanding justification as the conquest over the contradiction of sin is to be seen in the fact that justification places the human being into a non-contradictory relationship to God and the world.”<sup>125</sup> Justified means fully accepted by God unconditionally. That means amending the disordered relationship.

Alexander Sand explains how Jesus through his death and resurrection regained the lost relationship of human beings and make them just in the eyes of God so that they may live in the spirit of God. “Content-wise, St. Paul looked for a new understanding of man. (cf. Rom 7) Decisive for his opinion about man is his sermon on Jesus’ death and Resurrection, who had appeared in the world in the form of sinful flesh in order to overcome sin. (cf. Rom 8:3) By sending the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:4), the power of sin is broken in man so that he would not live according to “the flesh” (cf. Rom 8:9, I Cor 3:1, Gal 3:3 etc.), but in “the spirit.” Through faith in Christ and the power of the Spirit the evil powers are destroyed: sin, law and death.”<sup>126</sup> Robert Gay tells that the book of Genesis sets up a problem for us, since through our relationship with God the creation is damaged. The rest of the Bible gives a detailed description of how God restores the right relationship between humanity and creation. This resto-

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<sup>124</sup> McIlroy, David H. *Towards a Relational and Trinitarian Theology of Atonement*, 26

<sup>125</sup> „Ein zentraler Aspekt dieses Verständnisses der Rechtfertigung als Überwindung des Widerspruchs der Sünde ist darin zu sehen, daß die Rechtfertigung den Menschen in eine nicht-widersprüchliche Beziehung zu Gott und der Welt einsetzt.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 204)

<sup>126</sup> „Sachlich aber hat Paulus ein neues Verständnis des Menschen gesucht (cf. Rom 7). Entscheidend für sein Urteil über den Mensch ist seine Predigt vom Tod und der Auferweckung Jesu, welcher in Gestalt des Sündenfleisches in der Welt erschienen war, um die Sünde zu überwinden (Rom 8:3). Durch die Mitteilung des Geistes (Rom 8:4) wird im Mensch die Macht der Sünde gebrochen, so daß er nicht mehr „nach dem Fleische“ wandelt: Rom 8,9, I Cor 3:1, Gal:3:3 etc., sondern, „im Geiste“. Durch den Glauben an Christus und in der Kraft des Geistes sind die Unheilmächte: Sünde, Gesetz und Tod, vernichtet worden.“ (Sand, Alexander *Zum Menschenbild der Schrift*, 405)

ration reaches its fulfilment in the New Covenant through the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>127</sup>

The new relationship is solely dependent upon the grace of God and human beings have no right over it. Dupius J. Neuner reminds that, "This new personal relation to God is grounded totally on God's graciousness and remains constantly dependent on the salvific and creative working of this gracious God, who remains true to himself, so that one can rely upon him. Thus justifying grace never becomes a human possession to which one could appeal against God."<sup>128</sup> When human beings are made all right (justified) with God, then the relationship is restored through the grace of God. Franz Gruber tells, "...grace (pardon) means that God loves the human person as a unique individual and would like to lead him to a redeemed wholeness. This is the logic of the relationship between God and human, and in this the human person receives an identity, a name."<sup>129</sup> God gives his presence in human beings and assures us that the faithfulness of God is with us always. This is projected in our union with Christ. We find in the metaphor of the vine and the branches our union with Christ and our relationship to one another. Christ is the vine, we are the branches. (cf. Jn15:5)<sup>130</sup> St. Paul in his letters speaks about man's relation to God and to the world. According to Paul the world and man can be understood only from God through Christ.<sup>131</sup>

George Knight has a view that through the presence of God with us, the image of the human being has been restored and recreated in the image of Christ. (cf. Col 3:10-11; Rom 8:29 [conformed to the image of Son and first born among brethren]; 2 Cor 3:18 [changed into his Likeness]). Thus what is said in Gal.3:28 (There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.) is reiterated in Col 3:10,11 (You have come into the fullness of life in Christ) in relation to the

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<sup>127</sup> Cf. Gay, Robert *Creation, Ecology and the Moral Life: How Should Catholics be Environmentalists?* 52

<sup>128</sup> Neuner, Dupius J. *Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 847-848

<sup>129</sup> "...die Begnadung heißt, dass Gott den Menschen als je einmaliges Individuum liebt und zu erlöster Ganzheit führen möchte. Das ist die Logik der Gott-Mensch-Beziehung, und darin erhält der Menschen eine Identität, einen Namen." (Gruber, Franz *Was ist der Mensch (Psalm 8:5/I.Kant): Theologische Anthropologie im biotechnischen Zeitalter*, 68)

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 34

<sup>131</sup> Paul speaks about man's relation to the world and God in the following letters. (1 Cor 15:20-22, 45-49 and Rom 5:12-21) (Cf. Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 34)

image renewal in Christ.<sup>132</sup> Paul hence asks us to put off the old man and put on the new man, new nature, i.e. Christ. (cf. Col 3:9-10)<sup>133</sup> The Pastoral Letter of the American Bishops states that, “Man’s natural honor, however, has been enhanced by grace, conferred at creation, lost through sin, but restored through the incarnation and redemption of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When the Son of God took human flesh as an instrument of salvation, all human flesh was honored by His association with it.”<sup>134</sup>

The new redeemed and restored relationship of the human being with Christ is always in the process of growth. When the relationship with Christ has grown in its maturity then the believer grows to the level of St. Paul,<sup>135</sup> in which a person experiences total identification with Christ. “For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:38-39) When I am weak I am strong because of the grace of God and it is enough for me to have the grace of God. (cf. 2Cori 12:10) Leo Scheffczyk writes that, “Only in Christ is the original image of God and its likeness in the human person brought to its highest conciseness. Now this concept of the image, which is so important for the Christian concept of the human person, receives a Christological character (form). He, Christ, is, according to St. Paul, the true image of God, of the Father, God’s real image.”<sup>136</sup> The new image, which human beings receive through the restoration of the relationship, is the image of Christ.

Taking into account the context of Romans chapter 5, Sebastian Athappilly says that Paul reminds us about the extraordinary love of Christ towards us. Though we were sinners, he reconciled us. We are justified through his life and death. Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.<sup>137</sup> Franz Gruber states that, “The human person in his existence has been accepted and redeemed by God; he discovers his humanity when he recognizes and accomplishes unity in the differentiation of relationship to God, openness to the world

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. Knight, George W. *New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Male and Female with Special Reference to the Teaching/Ruling Functions in the Church*, 83

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 36

<sup>134</sup> Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops, 165

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Lamborn, Amy Bentley *Covenant Signs Abound*, 22-23

<sup>136</sup> Scheffczyk, Leo *Grundfragen christlicher Anthropologie*, 21

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Athappilly, Sebastian *Mystery and Destiny of the Human Person: A Theological Anthropology*, 128

and relationship to self.”<sup>138</sup> The lost relationship of human beings has been made all right with the grace of God and they begin to live in the grace of God.

## 1.2 The Holistic Image of Human Beings

In our attempt to figure out the Christian vision of the human being in the Bible, it is clear to us there is no image of human beings from which we can draw the different human images with which we have dealt and have found in the Bible. We can think of a mixture of different aspects. The human being is a synthesis of different poles of temporal and spiritual qualities. We cannot define images of human beings using one certain aspect alone. On one hand, human beings dignified and created in the image and likeness of God raise the level of human beings to another height. But on the other hand the limitations, the fragilities and imperfections of human beings show their transitoriness.

Another image of the human being is of those who are sinful and guilty but have been redeemed and saved by the blood of Christ. The redeemed image of human beings shows that they enjoy a relationship which had been made all right by the grace of God. Each element or trait of the human being constitutes its existence, and we cannot separate the human being from these characteristics. When we try to find an answer for the Christian image of a human being from the Bible, using one characteristic alone would show an imbalanced and incomplete image of the human being. That is why Erwin Dirscherl says that, “The Bible represents a holistic human image which is distinct from later philosophical and theological dichotomous (mind-body) or trichotomous (mind-spirit-body) concepts of man.”<sup>139</sup> Because of all the different traits of the images of the human beings we come across in Bible, there is a unifying element as a whole.

In order to arrive at a holistic image of the human being we have to view it from the point of wholeness. “One of the most important aspects of the Christian view of man is that we must see him in his unity, as a whole person. Human beings have often been thought of as consisting of distinct and sometimes

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<sup>138</sup> „Der Mensch ist in seiner Existenz von Gott angenommen und erlöst, er findet sein Menschsein, wenn er die Einheit der Differenz von Gottesbezogenheit, Weltoffenheit und Selbstbezogenheit aus dieser Anerkennung vollzieht (Stichwort: Begnadung).“ (Gruber, Franz *Was ist der Mensch (Psalm 8:5/I.Kant): Theologische Anthropologie im biotechnischen Zeitalter*, 66)

<sup>139</sup> „Die Bibel vertritt ein ganzheitliches Menschen Bild, das sich von späteren philosophischen und theologischen dichotomischen (Seele-Leib) bzw. trichotomischen (Geist-Seele-Leib) Konzeptionen unterscheidet.“ (Dirscherl, Erwin *Über spannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 60)

separable ‘parts,’ which are then abstracted from the whole.”<sup>140</sup> The wholeness of the human being embraces all the faculties of mind and body: both the positive qualities and unique characteristics of the human being as well as the limitations, fragilities and transitoriness. All show relatedness to history in all the relationship levels of the human being.

The foundation of the holistic image of human beings is that the human being is created in the image of God.<sup>141</sup> This is a very vital aspect in the holistic image because, “... that humanity’s being made according to the image of God, as described in the Genesis account of creation, applies not just to each individual human being, but to the human race as a whole.”<sup>142</sup> Wolfgang Reuter explains that the human being becomes aware of his identity, his freedom and personal dignity, as well as of his connectedness with others and with creation because man is drawn as the image of the triune God through creation.<sup>143</sup> Christoph Schwöbel upholds that, “The understanding of human personhood is thus defined by the relationship of the human person to the three-personal God in Christ.”<sup>144</sup> Ruth Padilla De Borst confirms the fact, “Created in the image of the God-community, we only live out our full humanity when we relate in a healthy manner to our Creator, to other human beings, and to the earth.”<sup>145</sup> According to Robert Sargent the holistic image of the human being is characterized by an interpersonal relationship with God in Christ.<sup>146</sup> That means, “The dynamic understanding of man’s image of God implies that all people possess the basic ability to reach complete happiness in the final communion with God. This common calling offered to all unites all peoples among themselves and obliges them to love each other.”<sup>147</sup> From the different components of the human being which constitute a holistic image of him, all point towards the main

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<sup>140</sup> Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God’s Image*, 203

<sup>141</sup> “The theme is seen as the key to the biblical understanding of human nature and to all the affirmations of biblical anthropology in both the Old and New Testaments. For the Bible, the *imago Dei* constitutes almost a definition of man: the mystery of man cannot be grasped apart from the mystery of God.”

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html) Accessed on 18.08. 2012

<sup>142</sup> Mahoney, Jack *Evolution, Altruism, and the Image of God*, 683

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Reuter, Wolfgang *Relationale Seelsorge: Psychoanalytische, kulturtheoretische und theologische Grundlegung*, 217-218

<sup>144</sup> Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 209

<sup>145</sup> De Borst, Ruth Padilla *Living Creation-Community in God’s World Today*, 65

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Sargent, Robert A *Discipleship of Wholeness in: Spiritual Life*, 131

<sup>147</sup> „Die dynamische verstandene Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen bedeutet, dass alle Menschen die grundsätzliche Fähigkeit besitzen, zur vollkommenen Glückseligkeit in der vollendeten Gemeinschaft mit Gott zu gelangen. Diese gemeinsame, allen Menschen geltende Berufung verbindet die Menschen untereinander und verpflichtet sie einander zu lieben.“ (Augustin, *George Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 37)



characteristic of the human being which is relational. The relational qualities and the different relatedness of the human being will be unfolded in the coming sections which helps us to understand the holistic image of the human being.

### 1.3 The Human Being as Relational

When we analyse the different components which constitute the Christian image of the human being, the relational character of the human being is the most important underlying element in all the images of him. What makes a human being a human being? The answer cannot be different than his relationship or the relational character of the human being. Hefner Philip affirms that, “If relationality is constitutive of our very being, then it is both our nature and our calling to live in relation.”<sup>148</sup> According to Thomas Smail, if God is understood relationally we have to understand the human being as relational too.<sup>149</sup> Because, “We have seen that human persons are created in the image of God in order to become partakers of the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet 1:3-4), and to share in the communion of trinitarian life and in the divine dominion over visible creation.”<sup>150</sup> That is why Paul Jersild says that what is central to our understanding of human nature is our capacity to relate to God as a covenantal partner, and to other humans as fellow creatures.<sup>151</sup> The question may arise of what happened to this relational character of human beings when they sinned. David McIlroy gives the answer that, “... God continued to relate to human beings even though human beings had ceased to relate to him. It is only because God continues to relate to us that we are sustained in being.”<sup>152</sup> The human being inherited its relational character from God.

To classify human beings as relational implies that they have to be in relationship with others. According to George Augustine, “Man does not exist in isolation before God but is community oriented. Man lives on different relationship levels: in relation to himself, in relation to God, in relation to other people.”<sup>153</sup> The Bible affirms that the human being is not an isolated individual but a person, an essentially relational being.<sup>154</sup> Wolfgang Reuter underlines this fact

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<sup>148</sup> Case-Winters, Anna *Rethinking the Image of God*, 819

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Smail, Thomas A. *In the Image of the Triune God*, 22

<sup>150</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html) , Accessed on 18.08. 2012

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Jersild, Paul *Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology*, 44

<sup>152</sup> McIlroy, David H. *Towards a Relational and Trinitarian Theology of Atonement*, 19

<sup>153</sup> Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 43

<sup>154</sup> Cf. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html), Accessed on August 18.08.2012

again. “As a relational being, man depends in his care for others and for himself on inter-personal communication, relationship and encounter.”<sup>155</sup>

Since the relational characteristic of human beings originates from the moment of creation, the relationship has become something like the second nature of the human being. Delf Canceran depicts relationship as one<sup>156</sup> of the characteristics needed in reconceptualising the image of God in human beings. Reinhold Boschki states that, “Relationships may come upon us, since we are by nature relational beings. Being human means relationships in time. Being human means to be in relationship: with self, with others, with the surrounding world, and especially with time.”<sup>157</sup> That means our relatedness needs to be seen in a historical and biographical framework of each human being because it is always in the process of development. Patrick Becker brings another perspective which tells us that, “Man cannot exist by himself alone, but needs for his life to be in relationship with God, the world, his fellow beings and with himself. It is not possible for a person not to live in these relationships. He may refuse to cultivate them, but he cannot deny them.”<sup>158</sup> Human cooperation is always needed and it needs a conscious decision to cultivate the relationships. Christoph Schwöbel makes clear once again the relational character of human beings. “Nearly all relationships, which constitute the qualities of being human, have become the basis of experiments, in order to determine what it really

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<sup>155</sup> „Als relationales Wesen ist der Mensch in seiner Sorge um den Anderen wie auch um sich selbst auf interpersonale Kommunikation, auf Beziehung und Begegnung angewiesen.“ (Reuter, Wolfgang, *Relationale Seelsorge: Psychoanalytische, kulturtheoretische und theologische Grundlegung*, 221)

<sup>156</sup> “In the biblical account of Genesis, we have recovered a twofold way in reconceptualising the image of God in human beings characterized by human responsibility and human relationship. These two related concepts -responsibility and relationship- are exemplified in our Christian understanding of creation exemplified by Trinitarian God. In the Trinity, there exists a divine difference in communion. This communion is characterized by relationship of respect, responsibility, and solidarity to the other persons, not based on hierarchy, opposition and exclusion in God.” (Canceran, Delfo *Image of God: A Theological Reconstruction of the Beginning*, 17)

<sup>157</sup> „Beziehungen können uns „heimsuchen“, da wir von unserer Grundverfasstheit her beziehungsoffene Wesen sind. Menschen sein heißt Beziehung in Zeit. *Mensch sein bedeutet „in Beziehung sein“ – mit sich, mit anderen, mit der umgebenden Welt und, in allem, mit der Zeit.*“ (Boschki, Reinhold *Beziehung als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik: Grundlegung einer dialogisch-kreativen Religionsdidaktik*, 66)

<sup>158</sup> „Der Mensch kann nicht für sich existieren, sondern lebt notwendig in Beziehung: mit Gott, der Welt, seinen Mitmenschen und mit sich selbst. Der Mensch kann keine dieser Beziehung nicht führen, er kann sich zwar der Beziehungspflege verweigern, nicht aber der Beziehung an sich.“ (Becker, Patrick *In der Bewußtseinsfalle: Geist und Gehirn in der Diskussion von Theologie, Philosophie und Naturwissenschaften*, 15)

means to be human.”<sup>159</sup> The relatedness of the human being is an inherent component of being human.

How does a human being live this relational character? In the opinion of Saint Augustine, human beings have to open themselves to God first and live with him. Then they will be able to renew their relationships to others, to the world and to themselves.<sup>160</sup> According to the relational anthropology which Christoph Schwöbel proposes, “... the metaphor of the kingdom of God points towards the form of the relationship between God and the human person, in which the relationship of God with humanity and the world is so fulfilling that humanity and world will find its true relationship to God. This process must then include every dimension of human relationships: the relationship to God, the relationship to other persons, to oneself and to the world.”<sup>161</sup> Wolfgang Reuter concludes that, “The relational image of God and the relational image of man are, in their analogy, so much inter-connected that the theological expressions about personhood and the inter-relational dynamic of the triune God will have far-reaching consequences for the personhood of man and his life in relationships.”<sup>162</sup> Being relational, a human being can find the true relationship only in God because the image of God and the relational image of the human being are interconnected.

Each fragment of the image of human beings we have discussed from the Bible always highlighted one particular aspect of the image of human beings. This particular image can be named after an extraordinary quality a human being possesses, the exceptional privilege a human being has been endowed with, the unusual fate the nature of the human has to bear, or uniqueness of a human being as the special creation of God. Since none of the images of human beings presented in the Bible can be used as “the image of human being,” we under-

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<sup>159</sup> „Fast alle Beziehungen, in denen das Menschsein besteht, sind so zur Grundlage von Versuchen gemacht worden, um zu bestimmen, was Menschsein bedeutet.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 193)

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Dirscherl, Erwin *Über spannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 67

<sup>161</sup> „..., verweist die Metapher des Reiches Gottes auf die Gestalt der Gott-Mensch-Beziehung, in der die Beziehung Gottes zur Menschheit und zur Welt so Erfüllung findet, dass die Menschheit und die Welt ihre wahre Beziehung zu Gott finden. Dieser Vorgang muss alle Dimensionen des relationalen Menschseins umfassen: die Beziehung zu Gott, die Beziehung zu anderen Personen, zu uns selbst und zur Welt.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 223)

<sup>162</sup> „Das relationale Gottesbild und das relationale Menschenbild sind in der Analogie derart miteinander verbunden, dass theologische Aussagen über das Personsein und die interrelationale Dynamik des dreieinen Gottes nun weit reichende Konsequenzen für das Personsein des Menschen und sein Leben in Beziehung haben.“ (Reuter, Wolfgang *Relationale Seelsorge: Psychoanalytische, kulturtheoretische und theologische Grundlegung*, 217)

stand the image of the human being from a holistic approach. The underlying characteristic that we can trace out in all the images of human beings is that the human being is relational because, “To be human is understood as being in relationship with others.”<sup>163</sup>

## 2. The Human Being in Relation to Oneself

### 2.1 The Psychological Dimension

After having looked at the complexity of the Christian human being in the Bible in order to find the anthropological foundation of the human relationship, we now try to analyse the different relational dimensions of a human being. The analysis we begin from is looking at the relationship of a human being to himself. How I think, how I observe, how I make a decision, how I feel; everything has a role in my relationship with myself. The ability to relate with myself remains as the foundation for my relational world and to be aware of my own being and actions are part of the psychological dimension of my relationship to myself. Wilfred Thielemann would formulate it as a fundamental question of our being. “The question of what consciousness is and what it implies belongs essentially to the question of a human being concerning himself.”<sup>164</sup> It is the core of every person. How does one relate with oneself? What are the elements which influence the relation of oneself in the psychological dimension?

The relationship with oneself is characterized in the Bible as the heart presenting the inner world of the human being. In the book of Sirach we read that God, after making tongue, eyes, ears and mind for thinking, filled them with knowledge and understanding, showed them good and evil and set his eye upon their hearts. (cf. Sir 17:6-8a)<sup>165</sup> The heart has been explained as the center of human actions. The behaviour of the people and their relationship is judged or evaluated according to the functions of the heart. Jesus tells that sin takes place in the heart, “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Mt.5:28) Peter compares the hidden person of the heart to the imperishable jewel of a gentle and

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<sup>163</sup> „Das Menschsein wird als In-Beziehung-Sein verstanden.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 193)

<sup>164</sup> „Die Frage nach dem was Bewusstsein ist und was es impliziert, gehört entscheidend zur Frage des Menschen nach sich selbst.“ (Theilemann, Wilfried *Unfreie Frei-Willigkeit: Seelsorge und Anthropologie*, 7)

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 132

quiet spirit because the person is very precious in God's sight. (1 Peter 3:4) "The heart is the seat of love, and that is why it symbolizes this until today. This idea can already be found in Paul, who in Romans 5:5 writes, that God's love has been poured into our hearts."<sup>166</sup> The heart is seen as the source of all life functions and feelings in the writing of Paul, and depending on the inner attitude of the person, the heart may be seen as blameless. (cf. 1 Thess 3:13) Furthermore, the heart is described as the hidden interiority and authenticity of the people. (cf. 1 Cor 14:25) Paul reminds us that he was speaking to them not to please them, but to please God who tests our hearts. (cf. 1 Thess 2:4) The Bible depicts how different insights into the inner world of the human being are connected with the different aspects of the heart.

The ability to relate with oneself is exemplified in the human being's capacity to adapt to the social environment and to assimilate what is necessary for growth. This ability is expressed in different ways and it is always in the process of development. "The human being can filter information from his environment and integrate it selectively in his system, through which he constantly develops."<sup>167</sup> The psychological disposition of the individual tremendously influences the social interaction of the individual. It allows the individual to build up his/her network of relationships. "The human being is endowed with fantasy, which enables him to take refuge into himself in the most adverse circumstances and survive in his own world. The human being is able to communicate with other people, have contact with others, link up socially, enter into close relations and actively mould them."<sup>168</sup> The psychological dimension of human beings brings them into relationship with themselves. Erwin Dirscherl explains how this relation to oneself takes place. According to him, "The ability to relate is not something added to the human person that happened to come about accidentally, but rather is part of the person as a relational being. This is apparent not only in the question about body and soul, where the phenomenon of unity in differences has been highlighted, but the relationship between I and self is also a relational event in time."<sup>169</sup> This ability to relate

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<sup>166</sup> „Dass das Herz Sitz der Liebe ist, weshalb es diese bis heute symbolisiert, diese Vorstellung findet sich bereits bei Paulus, der im Römerbrief 5,5 schreibt: Denn die Liebe Gottes ist ausgegossen in unsere Herzen.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 78)

<sup>167</sup> „Der Mensch kann Informationen aus seiner Umwelt filtrieren und selektiv in sein System integrieren, wodurch er sich permanent entwickelt.“ (Ibid, 80)

<sup>168</sup> „Der Mensch ist phantasiebegabt, weshalb er sich auch in widrigsten Umständen in sich selbst hinein flüchten und, in seiner Welt überleben kann. Der Mensch kann mit anderen Mensch kommunizieren, Kontakt aufnehmen, sich sozial vernetzen, enge Beziehungen eingehen und diese Aktiv gestalten.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 80)

<sup>169</sup> „Die Relationalität ist nicht etwas Nachträgliches, das zum Menschen akzidental hinzutritt, sondern der Mensch ist Beziehungswesen. Das zeigt sich nicht nur in der Frage nach Leib und

makes the human being the master of his relations and he has been given the freedom to opt for good or bad. “The human being is able to recognize himself as a self and a subject of his life. He can form his own identity, can realize himself and give meaning to his life. Man can establish moral guidelines for his actions, judge himself ethically, and weigh his actions morally through which he proves himself to be a being with conscience.”<sup>170</sup> The psychological dimension of human beings qualifies them to evaluate their own actions and relations.

In relating with oneself, the human being also experiences different poles in his life. There is an ongoing tension in the human being with regard to his moral actions, because humans have been given the ability to differentiate between good and evil. (cf. Sir 17:7) St. Paul explains this inner dichotomy in a better way: “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” (Rom 7.15) Reinhard Neudecker confirms this fact stating, “Part of the fundamental experience of man is the feeling of inner conflict.”<sup>171</sup> When these inner conflicts, tensions and struggles are not handled well, they can lead the human being to lose his human attributes like feeling, thinking, planning, reasoning, deciding, remembering and relating, etc. Such consequences can also generate physical sicknesses too.<sup>172</sup>

We cannot avoid the relationship with God and others, even in the area of the human being relating to himself. Reinhold Boschki is of the opinion that, “Relationship with others and relationship with oneself go parallel, influence and depend on each other.”<sup>173</sup> George Maloney tells that, “God has constituted man a total entity distinct from Himself with an *I* that will be complete only in relation through loving submission to a greater *Thou*.”<sup>174</sup> Each different relatedness of the human being is interrelated and interdependent from the other. The psy-

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Seele wo das Phänomen der Einheit in Unterschiedenheit aufgezeigt wurde. Auch das Verhältnis zwischen Ich und Selbst ist ein Beziehungsgeschehen in der Zeit.“ (Dirscherl, Erwin *Überspannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 73)

<sup>170</sup> „Der Mensch kann sich selbst als Ich und Subjekt seines Lebens erkennen. Er kann eine eigene Identität ausbilden, sich selbst verwirklichen und seinem Leben Sinn verleihen. Der Mensch kann sich moralische Leitlinien für sein Handeln erstellen, ethisch urteilen und sein Handeln sittlich abwägen, wodurch er sich als ein Wesen mit Gewissen ausweist.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 79)

<sup>171</sup> „Zu den Grunderfahrungen des Menschen gehört das Gefühl einer inneren Zerrissenheit“ (Neudecker, Reinhard *Mensch III: Judentum*, 475)

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 80-81

<sup>173</sup> „Beziehung zu anderen und Beziehung zu sich selbst gehen parallel, beeinflussen und bedingen sich gegenseitig.“ (Boschki, Reinhold *Beziehung als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik: Grundlegung einer dialogisch-kreativen Religionsdidaktik*, 139)

<sup>174</sup> Maloney, George A. *Man: The Divine Icon*, 8-9

chological dimension of the relationship to oneself illustrates the inner relational abilities of the human being but these capabilities are transmitted through the human body.

## 2.2 The Historical Dimension

The life of the human being is knit together with events that have taken place, which are taking place, and which will take place. “Man is a being in becoming, on the way to being himself. The results of his process of becoming are open.”<sup>175</sup> In the case of his relationship story we also see this trace of the historical dimension. All human beings are a part of history and each one has his own special history. “The Bible sees man not only as synchronized with the present but always also as diachronically connected, i.e., in view of the past as well as in view of the future.”<sup>176</sup> For Joseph Ratzinger, “Being human is being within all dimensions, not only in the present but also making the past and future of mankind present in each person.”<sup>177</sup>

Norskov Olsen convinces us that God meets man in historical acts<sup>178</sup> of redemption. When we consider a human as an historical being, his present, future and eternal destiny depends upon his relationship to God.<sup>179</sup> He continues by explaining what the elements are to be considered in the historicalness of God and man, “...we have to keep in mind some key words or basic concepts: a linear concept, contrary to a cyclical one; purpose, decision, action, and events; perception and value judgment morally based in God; a threefold time relationship of past, present, and future; a beginning and end; a three-dimensional relationship of God to man, man to man, and man to God.”<sup>180</sup> The historical dimension of the human being encompasses the historicalness of God and man along with the relationship history of past, present and future.

Bernhard Körner marks that, “God can act in history, and he does it. And it is important to voice it out very clearly.”<sup>181</sup> The Exodus story of the Israelites

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<sup>175</sup> „Der Mensch ist ein werdender Mensch, unterwegs zu sich selbst. Die Ergebnisse seines Werdeprozesses sind offen.“ (Schwarte, Johannes, *Dynamisierung des christlichen Menschenbildes*, 117)

<sup>176</sup> „In der Bibel wird der Mensch somit nicht nur als synchron in der Gegenwart vernetzt betrachtet, sondern immer auch als diachron vernetzt, d.h. sowohl mit Blickrichtung auf Vergangenheit als auch mit Blickrichtung auf Zukunft.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 92)

<sup>177</sup> Ratzinger, Joseph *Einführung in das Christentum*, 232

<sup>178</sup> Historical acts are the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Olsen, Norskov V. *Man the Image of God*, 124

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 123

<sup>181</sup> „Gott kann in der Geschichte handeln und er tut es. Und es ist wichtig, diese Möglichkeit klar zu benennen.“ (Koerner, Bernhard *Wie handelt Gott durch die Sakramente*, 440)

shows how God was present in their history and how he accompanied them as part of becoming their history. “It is of significance that prior to the announcement of the names I AM and Yahweh, God said to Moses, “I will be with you.” (Ex 3: 12) Among the Israelites the concepts of relation, so basic in all aspects of their lives, was constituted in the name I AM and the total Exodus experience as well as in the announcement of the appearance of the Messiah as Immanuel, “God with us.” (See Isa 7:14, Matt 1:23)<sup>182</sup> “It is the undeniable testimony of the New Testament that history, beginning with the creation of the world, culminated in the person and event of Jesus Christ. God moved directly and consistently into the midst of history.”<sup>183</sup> The presence of God in the lives of Israel was part of their history.

Our temporal condition plays an important role in the historical dimension of the relationship of human beings. Leo Scheffczyk explains how the human being becomes a historical being, “Out of this temporal condition – if consciously accepted by the human being and put into reality by the shaping of time – results in human history. This leads to the understanding of the human person as a historical being.”<sup>184</sup> He continues that, “The historicity of the human person includes dependence and bondage to tradition, to both good and evil.”<sup>185</sup> David McIlroy reminds us that most of the relationships are given to us because, “We also are created into a particular family and culture, and however much we may choose for ourselves when we are grown, the relationships we wish to cultivate, the major relationships in our youth are simply given to us.”<sup>186</sup> When we depend on these God-given relationships, we can cultivate them for our growth or decline it. Human beings become historical beings because in the process of development of relationships, certain relationships have been prearranged to the human beings as part of their history. Depending upon the experience the human being has in relationships from his past history, his relationship skills are developed or at the same time may block the growth of those skills. History is, “For a man an experience with an ambivalent quality, since to be tied into an individual and collective history (nation, family, life) may prove to be not only helpful and life giving but also as blocking and de-

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<sup>182</sup> Olsen, Norskov V. *Man the Image of God*, 125

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 127

<sup>184</sup> „Aus dieser zeitlichen Verfassung, wenn sie vom Menschen bewusst angenommen und als Auftrag zur Gestaltung der Zeit verwirklicht wird, ergibt sich die menschliche Geschichte. Sie macht den Menschen als geschichtliches Sein verstehbar.“ (Scheffczyk, Leo *Grundfragen christlicher Anthropologie*, 18)

<sup>185</sup> „Zur Geschichtlichkeit des Menschen gehört nämlich auch das Moment der Abhängigkeit und der Verhaftung an die Tradition im Guten wie im Bösen.“ (Ibid, 19)

<sup>186</sup> McIlroy, David H. *Towards a Relational and Trinitarian Theology of Atonement*, 16



structive.”<sup>187</sup> Temporal conditions influence the development of the relationship.

Time factors play a vital role in the historical dimension. All relationships take place within a time frame. “Everything that was said about the origin and foundation of human nature happened in time and meant a new beginning for the human person. Such a beginning in time refers essentially towards a sequence, towards a progress on a way, on which the human person was placed as a temporary being (a being in time).”<sup>188</sup> Reinhold Boschki highlights the influence of the time factor in the development of every relationship. “Relationships carry a time index, determining the youthful and general human relationships, particularly in view of the beginning, the duration and the end of a relationship. It also becomes evident how much a relationship is part of the constitution of man, be it children, youth or adults. There is no human being without relationships, without a healthy net of relationships there is no development in young age.”<sup>189</sup> All the relationships are formed within a time frame according to the way we handle it or react to it. To act in a timely way in the relationship is also a challenge. The influence of the time factor in the historicalness of relationships is inevitable.

According to David MacIlroy, since we are made in the image of the Triune God, relationships are important to our being and we are dependent on the created world. “It (relationship) is also given to us to be situated within creation, on the earth, at a particular time and place in history, and so we are dependent on our relationship to the created order.”<sup>190</sup> Erwin Dirschel points out another important aspect of the historical dimension in relationships which says the human being is not the master of action in this process. “The fact is that man is

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<sup>187</sup> „Eine für den Menschen wiederum ambivalent zu qualifizierende Erfahrung, denn: In eine individuelle und kollektive (Volks-,Familien-,Lebens-)Geschichte eingebunden zu sein, kann sich eben nicht nur als hilfreich und lebensförderlich erweisen, sondern auch als blockierend und destruktiv.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 92)

<sup>188</sup> „Alles was über den Ursprung und die Gründung des Menschseins gesagt wurde, erfolgte in der Zeit und bedeutete für den Menschen einen Anfang. Ein so betonter Anfang in der Zeit ist wesentlich auf eine Folge, auf einen Fortgang und auf einen Weg verwiesen, auf den der Mensch als zeitliches Wesen gestellt worden war.“ (Scheffczyk, Leo *Grundfragen christlicher Anthropologie*, 18)

<sup>189</sup> „Beziehung trägt zum einen stets Zeitindex, der die kindlichen und allgemein menschlichen Beziehungen beherrscht, und zwar im Blick auf den Anfang sowie auf den Verlauf und das Ende von Beziehungen. Zum anderen wird deutlich, wie sehr Beziehung zur Konstitution der Menschen gehört, was für Kinder, Jugendliche und Erwachsene gleichermaßen gilt. Ohne Beziehung gibt es kein Menschsein, ohne ein gesundes Geflecht an Beziehungen gibt es keine Entwicklung von jungen Menschen.“ (Boschki, Reinhold *Beziehung als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik: Grundlegung einer dialogisch-kreativen Religionsdidaktik*, Schwabenverlag, 71)

<sup>190</sup> McIlroy, David H. *Towards a Relational and Trinitarian Theology of Atonement*, 16

the one who is addressed reveals that he stands in relationship of responsibility towards God, himself, fellow beings and world. A person has neither the first nor the final word about the created world, but rather is the one addressed by God and the one who is enabled to give an answer. This answer takes place in a particular time and becomes history. The created world's gifts become the human person's task."<sup>191</sup> The relationships which are given to us by God and all other relationships each person develops in every time frame of one's life becomes part of the historical dimension of our own relationships. Psychological and historical dimensions of the relationships show us how relevant those factors are for the human being in his relation to himself. Human beings can unfold their relationships with others only when they have a solid foundation of a relationship with themselves.

### 3. The Human Being in Relation to Others

#### 3.1 The Bodily Dimension

Though the bodily dimension of relationship belongs to the human being in relation to oneself, I include bodily dimension in the relationship of human beings with others because the bodily dimension is a very necessary component in our relationship with others. God made the human being in an existential and tangible form which is the body, and a body gives a face to the relationship of human beings. Can we think of relating to others without the physical reality of our own bodies? How is a relationship with others even possible without a body? Victor Warnach articulates that, "The supportive moment for the human existence is flesh (body), receptive for life whose sole giver and sustainer is God."<sup>192</sup> Paul Jersild opines that, "Essential to our personhood and to our standing in a relationship is the fact that we are bodily selves; we cannot know ourselves and others in this world without our bodily nature."<sup>193</sup> Erwin Dirschel states that we live our relationship in our bodies because, "The human

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<sup>191</sup> „Wenn der Mensch der Angesprochene ist, zeigt sich schon, dass er in einer Beziehung der Verantwortung Gott, sich selbst, den Mitmenschen und der Welt gegenübersteht. Der Mensch hat nicht das erste und letzte Wort über die Schöpfung, sondern er ist der von Gott angesprochene und zur Antwort befähigte Mensch. Diese Antwort geschieht in der Zeit und konstituiert Geschichte. Die Gabe der Schöpfung wird zur Aufgabe für den Menschen.“ (Dirschel, Erwin *Über spannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 53)

<sup>192</sup> „Als das tragende Moment in der menschlichen Existenz ist das >Fleisch> bzw. der Körper für das Leben empfänglich, dessen alleiniger Spender und Erhalter Gott ist.“ (Warnach, Victor *Mensch: Biblisch*, 146)

<sup>193</sup> Jersild, Paul *Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology*, 44

person lives his freedom and responsibility in this relationship he cannot lord over. He is dependent on a God-given source born before his conceiving it, over which he is not lord. He lives in a created world that was given to him.”<sup>194</sup> The bodily dimension provides existence to human personhood which enables us to mould our relationships.

A relationship does not take place without a proper way of expression. Reinhold Boschki writes that, “At this point it becomes clear that the two elements cannot be separated: relationship to self-expressing itself in a physical way, and relationship to the outside and to others, also manifested in physical ways.”<sup>195</sup> How we greet others while using our facial expressions, how we shake hands and all our bodily movements help us to express ourselves better in our relationships. Franz Gruber would define the being human as, “The experience of corporality is a base experience of being human.”<sup>196</sup> We dialogue with the rest of the world through our bodily dimension. Our body is the vehicle of our communication and relationship. That is why Klaus Wiegerling says that, “The body does not only lead in to the world, it also leads out of the world.”<sup>197</sup> “The relationship to others is physically determined, since the body is the first that we perceive of the other when we get in touch with each other.”<sup>198</sup> The bodily dimension serves as the platform of expression for all the relationships of human beings.

We can say that the human body is elevated because of the fact that God became human like us in a human body. “If God really took on a human body, if Jesus really enjoyed bodily pleasures for which he was defamed as a glutton and drunkard (Mt 11:19), then one may deduce that the body has such an important role to play for a person that humanness and being enfleshed (Jn 1:14)

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<sup>194</sup> „In dieser unverfügbaren Bindung realisiert der Mensch seine Freiheit und Verantwortung. Er verdankt sich einem unvordenklichen Ursprung in Gott, über den er nicht Herr ist. Er lebt in einer Schöpfung, die ihm geschenkt wurde.“ (Dirscherl, Erwin, *Über spannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 63)

<sup>195</sup> „An dieser Stelle wird deutlich, dass sich beides nicht voneinander trennen lässt: die Beziehung zu mir, die sich zunächst leiblich ausdrückt und Beziehung zur Umwelt und zu anderen Menschen, die sich ebenso durch Leiblichkeit konstituiert.“ (Boschki, Reinhold *Beziehung als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik: Grundlegung einer dialogisch-kreativen Religionsdidaktik*, 74)

<sup>196</sup> „Die Erfahrung der Leiblichkeit ist die Urfahrung des Menschseins.“ (Gruber, Franz *Das entzauberte Geschöpf*, 85)

<sup>197</sup> „Der Leib führt nicht nur zur Welt, er führt auch aus ihr heraus.“ (Wiegerling, Klaus *Der Überflüssige Leib: Utopien der Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien*, 126)

<sup>198</sup> „Doch auch die Beziehung zum Anderen ist körperlich bestimmt, da der Körper das erste ist, was wir von Anderen wahrnehmen, wenn er oder sie in unsere Gegenwart tritt.“ (Boschki, Reinhold *Beziehung als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik: Grundlegung einer dialogisch-kreativen Religionsdidaktik*, 71)

belong positively together.”<sup>199</sup> St. Paul reminds the people in Corinth of how they have to treat their bodies because the body is the temple of Holy Spirit. “We give expression to our relationship to God in the way we treat our bodies, may this be in the life of the parish, may this be when we give glory to God. Use your body for the glory of God (cf. 1 Cor 6:19-20).”<sup>200</sup>

We read in the teachings of the Church how important it is to have the material world in which to exercise our relationship with other physical beings. “Persons created in the image of God are bodily beings whose identity as male or female orders them to a special kind of communion with one another.”<sup>201</sup> Alice von Hildebrand affirms that our life gives expression through our bodily activities because we are called and destined to relate with our bodies. “In a mysterious and amazing way, a human person is called, in every single bodily activity, to live up to his highly aristocratic title; in other words, man’s body has a dignity that should be expressed in every single bodily activity.”<sup>202</sup> Every action of human beings must be in agreement to the dignity of their bodies because it is necessary to exercise our stewardship of the physical universe. “The activities entailed by interpersonal communion and responsible stewardship engage the spiritual – intellectual and affective – capacities of human persons, but they do not leave the body behind. Human beings are physical beings sharing a world with other physical beings.”<sup>203</sup> Our body is part of all our actions and activities. We share our relationship with others in this physical world through our bodies.

### 3.2 The Social Dimension

God created Eve since he thought that it was not good for Adam to be alone. (cf. Gen.2:18) From the beginning of time itself God prepares humans to live together with others in a society. As social beings, humans cannot live in isola-

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<sup>199</sup> „Wenn Gott tatsächlich einen menschlichen Körper angenommen hat, wenn Jesus körperlichen Genüssen tatsächlich zugetan war, weshalb er sogar als Fresser und Säufer diffamiert worden ist (Mt.11:19), dann lässt sich schlussfolgern, dass der Körper für den Menschen eine so wichtige Bedeutung hat, dass Mensch-Sein und Im-Fleisch-Sein (John 1:14) positive konnotiert zusammengehören.“ (Nauer, Doris *Mensch-Sein vor und mit Gott*, 75-76)

<sup>200</sup> „Unsere Gottverbundenheit geben wir Ausdruck in der Art, wie wir mit unserem Körper umgehen, sei das im Gemeindeleben, sei das beim Lobpreis Gottes. „Preist Gott mit eurem Leib (1 Kor 6:20).“ (Bowald, Beatrice; Halter, Hans *Preist Gott mit eurem Leib 1 Kor 6:20*, 239)

<sup>201</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html), Accessed on 18.08.2012

<sup>202</sup> von Hildebrand, Alice *Two Souls, One Flesh: The Divine Invention of Man and Marriage is a Prodigious Mystery*, 25

<sup>203</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html), Accessed on 18.08.2012

tion, they learn to interact with others in the society in which they live. “The Christian concept of man, however, is that he is both personal and social...”<sup>204</sup> Don Brandt calls our attention to the fact that, “Being made in the image of God implies a relational existence to God, to each other and to creation.”<sup>205</sup> According to Joseph Spindelböck, “The community relatedness in a human person is not something that is added subsequently to his being (essence) (like an accident), but it belongs to his individuality and his personality that he exists in social relations.”<sup>206</sup> To be oriented to others is part of the existence of being human. George Augustine states that, “This community relatedness of the individual must be seen in a universal context, for man as a community-related being lives within a larger horizon of the whole of creation.”<sup>207</sup>

What does mean to be a social being? Why did God not want human beings to live alone? As answer Peter Zimmerling would say that, “The human person is a social being. He lives in relationships, and is placed in them without choosing them. It is in this that theology, philosophy and human sciences – except for a few loners – are in agreement with one another. Gen.2:18 states that it is not beneficial for man to be alone.”<sup>208</sup> Human beings come to know themselves better in their socialization. Peter Zimmerling continues to explain that the relationship of human being among themselves is a speciality of humans in contrast to other creatures.<sup>209</sup> In that sense we can say that, “... not only is the individual created in God's image, but also society at large is an image of the relationship between God and humanity, in which the individual alternates between the divine and the human role.”<sup>210</sup>

Human beings need to relate with others because they are called to live together, since being in a society makes human beings interdependent. David Hart-

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<sup>204</sup> Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops, 167

<sup>205</sup> Brandt, Don *God's Stewards: The Role of Christians in Creation Care*, 4

<sup>206</sup> „Der Gemeinschaftsbezug des Menschen ist nicht etwas, das zu seinem Wesen erst nachträglich hinzukommt (gleichsam als Akzidens), sondern gerade in seiner Individualität und Personalität ist der Mensch derjenige, der immer schon in einer sozialen Relation steht.“ (Spindelböck, Josef *Der Mensch als soziales Wesen*, 73)

<sup>207</sup> „Diese Gemeinschaftsbezogenheit des Einzelnen ist in einem universalen Kontext zu sehen. Denn der Mensch als gemeinschaftsbezogenes Wesen lebt im größeren Zusammenhang der gesamten Schöpfung.“ (Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 25)

<sup>208</sup> „Der Mensch ist ein soziales Wesen. Er lebt in Beziehungen und findet sich immer schon in ihnen vor. Darin sind sich Theologie, Philosophie und Humanwissenschaften - abgesehen von Einzelgängern - einig. Gen 2:18 stellt fest: „Es ist nicht gut dass der Mensch allein sei.“ (Zimmerling, Peter *Die Bedeutung der Gemeinschaft für den Menschen angesichts der Postmoderne*, 217)

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 219

<sup>210</sup> Cf. König, Adrio *Covenant Partner and Image: Deriving Anthropology from the Doctrine of God*, 38

mann makes it very clear how much we are in need of others in our relationships so that we can become real human beings. “You become a human being when you acknowledge interdependency, when you can say, ‘I need you.’”<sup>211</sup> In effect, that means no person in the universe is alone but is linked with others and called to form a community with them. If the human person does not enter into relations with another, he can neither live nor develop his gifts.<sup>212</sup> Delfo Canceran confirms this fact that human beings, being made in the image of God, can be better understood in their personal relationships with the rest of humanity.<sup>213</sup> “The human being has the fundamental and consistent tendency to reach beyond himself and to enter into relationship with others. When we turn toward others, we satisfy in reality our own deepest needs and become fully human in an all-encompassing way.”<sup>214</sup> From the point of view of the collective and individual aspects of the human being, Karl Rahner says that intercommunication and self-identity grow basically in the same relation.<sup>215</sup> Angelos Valliantos says that, “Every person is the measure of the other person’s existence. Society is a group of individuals in which everyone has a personal perspective equal to that of every other, and the right to participate is derived from this equality.”<sup>216</sup> Reinhard Neudecker formulates that “It (community) helps the individual to unfold himself and to satisfy his needs; it calms his fears, takes an interest in his troubles, offers protection and enables him to reach his religious goals....”<sup>217</sup> As a whole, living together in relationship with others help the entire growth of all human beings.

The social dimension of a relationship demands the willingness to accept dependence and creative contributions through taking initiatives and risks. Wolfhart Pannenberg is of the opinion that every individual acts, relates and contributes to the group in a diverse way. Each one also plays a different role in the group. The community binds them together.<sup>218</sup> “Human existence cannot be understood only in relationship to God. Human community is God’s purpose

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<sup>211</sup> Hartmann, David *Living in Relationship With the Other: God and Human Perfection in the Jewish Tradition*, 148; See also Barbour, Ian G. *Nature, Human Nature, and God*, 129

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Lumen Gentium, 46

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Canceran, Delfo *Image of God: A Theological Reconstruction of the Beginning*, 12

<sup>214</sup> „Der Mensch hat die grundlegende und beständige Neigung, über sich hinauszugehen und in Beziehung zu anderen zu treten. Wenn wir uns den anderen Menschen zuwenden, stillen wir in Wirklichkeit unsere tiefsten Bedürfnisse und werden in einem umfassenden Sinn Mensch.“ (Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 35)

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Rahner, Karl *Zum theologischen Begriff des Menschen*, 415

<sup>216</sup> Valliantos, Angelos *Creation, Koinonia, Sustainability and Climate Change*, 198

<sup>217</sup> „Sie hilft ihm, sich selbst zu entfalten und seine Bedürfnisse zu befriedigen, sie lindert seine Not und nimmt an ihr Anteil, sie bietet ihm Schutz und befähigt ihn, das religiöse Ziel zu erreichen....“ (Neudecker, Reinhard *Mensch III: Judentum*, 477)

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Pannenberg, Wolfhart *What is Man?*, 83

for humankind. The community of man and woman is the basic shape of community.”<sup>219</sup> Since a human being lives in a society, all the relations cannot be seen as human relations. Wolfhart Pannenberg explains that when each person allows another use human here instead because person is used too many times to be a person, only then will relations among human beings become human relations.<sup>220</sup> That means I have to respect the freedom of my fellow human beings and vice versa. Marcel Sarot states that, “The Bible conceives of the relationship between God and humanity primarily in terms of the relationship between God and God’s chosen people. God’s relationship with human beings is not a relationship with individuals, but with a community.”<sup>221</sup> To a certain extent, the fulfillment of human existence depends on his social relationships.

We cannot finish the discussion about the social dimension of human beings in relation to others without highlighting their relationship to God because there is a connecting link between both of them which knits them together. Peter Schmid is bringing out the inseparable link between the image of God and man which is specific to Jewish-Christian understanding. “The relationship with God and the relationship with people are inseparably linked (cf. the parable of the last judgment, Mt 25) and, similarly, the relationship with others and the relationship with oneself. (cf. the commandment of love of neighbour, Mt 22: 39) And these are relationships shaped on the image of God, who himself is relationship, who enters into relationship with people and creates relationship among them.”<sup>222</sup> Ruth Padilla De Borst is quoting the examples of Jeremiah and the Israelites like in the story of Noah, where God is teaching them the ABCs of community where the relation to God, God’s people and God’s land are given the same importance. The three relationships are interconnected and a breach in one relationship will affect the other two relationships.<sup>223</sup> Marcel Sarot opines that the relationship between God and humanity is not a relationship between two individuals but between two communities: humanity and

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<sup>219</sup> Harrington, Wilfred *The Tears of God: Our Benevolent Creator and Human Suffering*, 17

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Pannenberg, Wolfhart *What is Man?* 84

<sup>221</sup> Sarot, Marcel *Trinity and Church: Trinitarian Perspectives on the Identity of the Christian Community*, 37

<sup>222</sup> „...Die Beziehung zu Gott und die Beziehung zu Menschen ist untrennbar verbunden (vgl: das Gleichnis vom Weltgericht, Mt 25), die Beziehung zu den anderen und die Beziehung zu sich selbst ebenso (vgl: das Gebot der Nächstenliebe, Mt 22, 39). Und sie sind Beziehungen nach dem Bild Gottes, der selbst Beziehung ist, in Beziehung zu den Menschen tritt und unter den Menschen Beziehung stiftet.“ (Cf. Schmid, Peter. F. *Der Mensch ist Beziehung: Personalität aus sozialpsychologischer und philosophischer und philosophisch-anthropologischer Perspektive*, 238-239)

<sup>223</sup> Cf. De Borst, Ruth Padilla *Living Creation-Community in God's World Today*, 59

Trinity (*community of God*).<sup>224</sup> Marie Luise Gubler compares the relationship among the faithful to the relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. She says if the faithful remain in the relationship and love each other, they can make the Trinitarian relationship visible on earth through their lives.<sup>225</sup> In order to live this communion with God and others in community relationship, human beings have to treat others as cooperators of God in their relationships.<sup>226</sup> Human beings experience the Trinitarian relationship in the social dimension of relationships because society at large is in the image of God.

George Augustine repeats that, “The God of relationship places the individual into a deeper relationship with others. Man does not stand alone before God, but lives in a community on which he is dependent. Man is irrevocably called, and yet he relates to many others. Each person has a unique and irreplaceable meaning for others and thus for the community. Inexchangeable- the prefix is never separated from the base word- uniqueness and community relatedness do not exclude one another but relate to each other directly.”<sup>227</sup> The social dimension of human beings in their relation to others highlights the interdependence of the human being, and the impact and need of relationship with others in our daily lives.

### 3.3 The Contextual Dimension

Human beings in the process of relating with themselves realize the role of their counterpart in the relationship. As social beings, humans realize that what makes them whole is their relationships with others. Erwin Dirscherl states that, “The outspoken human person, is not only a being created by God’s breath and word, but is also a person who is spoken to and charged with re-

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<sup>224</sup> Cf. Sarot, Marcel *Trinity and Church: Trinitarian Perspectives on the Identity of the Christian Community*, 37

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Gubler, Marie-Louise „Wer sagt, er sei im Licht, aber seinen Bruder hasst, ist noch in der Finsternis...“(1 John 2:9), 225

<sup>226</sup> Wakareaga, John B.K. *Responsible Stewardship of the Environment: Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*, 132; See also Gubler, Marie-Louise *Wer sagt, er sei im Licht, aber seinen Bruder hasst, ist noch in der Finsternis...“(1 John 2:9)*, 228 „Wer sich das Bild einer Gemeinschaft erträumt, der fordert von Gott, von den andern und von sich selbst die Erfüllung. Er tritt, als Fordernder in die Gemeinschaft der Christen, richtet ein eigenes Gesetz auf richtet danach die Brüder und Gott selbst.“

<sup>227</sup> „Die Beziehung zu Gott setzt den Einzelnen in eine tiefere Beziehung zu Anderen. Der Mensch steht nicht allein vor Gott, sondern er lebt in einer Gemeinschaft, auf die er angewiesen ist. Der Mensch ist einer, der unvertretbar berufen ist, und doch hat er mit vielen anderen zu tun. Jeder hat eine einzigartige und unvertretbare Bedeutung für die Anderen und somit für die Gemeinschaft. Unverwechselbare Einzigartigkeit und Gemeinschaftsbezogenheit schließen sich nicht aus, sondern haben unmittelbar miteinander zu tun.“ (Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 25)



sponsibility.”<sup>228</sup> This fundamental characteristic of interacting with others is fulfilled in their relationships to others. Bernhard Laux reminds us of the fact that, “Humans are dependent on each other, and their lives are only possible and can only succeed to the extent that they live in relationship with others.”<sup>229</sup> The biblical interpretation method “Sitz im Leben” we use to understand the contexts of biblical texts reminds us of the importance of the contextual dimension. The relationship with others takes place in different social contexts. In this process of relationships with others, the context of every relationship is important for the human being.

Why is the contextual dimension significant for the human being in relation to others? Context has to be understood as the situational environment of the relationship. All the social, cultural, ecological, political, religious situations and circumstances of a society are part of the contextual dimension of the relationship and it will have influence in the relationships of the human being with others. Human beings live in a society with different social contexts. According to changing social contexts, the patterns of relationships change. We meet our fellow human beings and form relationships with others in a particular context. At the same time, being human is part of certain situations and contexts. Christoph Schwöbel explains that the guiding feature for every attempt to define the purpose and structure of the human existence is necessary to understand the fact the people exist in specific social relationships with other people.<sup>230</sup> Josef Spindelböck argues that, “The human person is a supporter and member of the community in the sense that everything else is built on him, since a community exists of its members. He is the ‘creator’ of all the social arrangements, since they depend on his social nature as well as on his free initiative, and they do not arise from some anonymous forces or contingencies.”<sup>231</sup> Contextual dimensions help us to understand the influence of special situations and circumstances in our relationships.

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<sup>228</sup> „Der Mensch ist nicht nur jener, der durch Gottes Atem und Wort geschaffen wird, der ausgesprochene Mensch, sondern er ist auch der angesprochene und der beanspruchte Mensch.“ (Dirscherl, Erwin *Über spannende Beziehungen nachdenken: Der Mensch als Geschöpf, als Ebenbild Gottes und seine Ambivalenz als Sünder*, 51)

<sup>229</sup> „Menschen sind- wie bereits dargelegt- aufeinander angewiesen. Ihr Leben ist nur möglich und kann nur gelingen, indem sie in Beziehung leben.“ (Laux, Bernhard *Von der Anthropologie zur Sozialethik und wieder zurück*, 109)

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 193

<sup>231</sup> „Der Mensch ist Träger der Gesellschaft in dem Sinn, dass sich auf ihn alles übrige aufbaut, da die Gesellschaft nur in ihren Gliedern besteht. Er ist „Schöpfer“ aller gesellschaftlichen Einrichtungen, da diese von seiner Sozialnatur sowie von seiner freien Initiative abzuleiten sind und nicht irgendwelchen anonymen Kräften oder Zufälligkeiten entspringen.“ (Cf. Spindelböck, Josef, *Der Mensch als soziales Wesen*, 82)

The human being is affected by the situational contexts in his relationships with others in his daily life. One situational context (cf. Gen 4:2-8) in the life of Cain changed his relationship pattern with his brother Abel and also his attitude towards others. "In the social context, humans are social beings who need others and need interpersonal care, and yet experience great difficulties in getting along with one another, as it is symbolized in the biblical story of Cain and Abel."<sup>232</sup> If we look at the life of Peter in the Gospel, we notice that according to the situation, his relationship towards Jesus is affected or changed. The one who says Jesus is the Son of God (cf. Mt 16:16), denies Jesus in front of a servant girl at the end (Mk 14:66-72), and it is the same Peter who was ready to die for Jesus. (cf. Lk 22:33) The life contexts of human beings determine to a certain extent how relating with others in their relationships are dependent on their social-economic environmental contexts.

### 3.4 The Cultural Dimension

The human being is a cultural being as well as a social being. The cultural dimension of a relationship is unavoidable when we analyze the relationships of human beings with others. Human beings endure heavy cultural influence, and this influence is visible in their social relationships. Can we define what the elements are that constitute culture? The cultural dimension of a relationship is observed in many elements such as environment, traditions, values, morals, ethics, norms, customs, religious practices, music, art, politics, etc., which are existing at a particular time. According to Klaus Wieglerling, "The body is itself the first expression of culture."<sup>233</sup> Culture can include everything that has to do with the environment of the human beings and the society in which they live. It belongs to the nature of the human being to intervene in the given world and to establish a culture within the given context.<sup>234</sup> Culture includes a variety of elements and values which are assimilated into the relationships of human beings.

Religious traditions and customs that exist in a society play an important role in the cultural dimension of the relationships that human beings have with others. These traditions produce opportunities for relationships that create the pos-

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<sup>232</sup> „Die soziale Kontextualität: Menschen sind soziale Wesen, die Mit-Menschen und zwischenmenschliche Für-Sorge brauchen und dennoch große Schwierigkeiten damit haben, miteinander auszukommen, wie bereits die biblische Geschichte um Kain und Abel versinnbildlicht.“ (Nauer, Doris *Christliches Menschenbild und Weihnachten: Mensch-Sein und Mensch-Werdung*, 22)

<sup>233</sup> „Der Leib ist selbst der erste Ausdruck der Kultur.“ (Wieglerling, Klaus *Der überflüssige Leib: Utopien der Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien*, 127)

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 141

sibility of community as the goal and most exalted expression of life together.<sup>235</sup> The celebration of the Feast of Passover (cf. Ex 12 :1-11) among the Israelites explains to us that cultural constructs were very much a part of their relationships. The parents of Jesus also followed the religious traditions of their time; that is why they went to the Temple to present Jesus according to the law of Moses. (cf. Lk 2:22-24) Eric Rust would name the relationship of God with the Israelites as a moral bond because the relationship between God and the Israelites was not meant for one generation alone but for all the generations to come. The relationship with God had become part of the existence of the Israelites. From that point of view he concludes that, "He (God) was related to Israel by a moral bond which set him over them in a personal relationship."<sup>236</sup> Peter Schmid writes that we cannot think of human beings without mentioning and thinking of the society in which they live and the norms and customs of it.<sup>237</sup> According to Klaus Wiegerling, "As a psycho-physical entity, the body is disposed not only genetically but also culturally. Certain faculties receive preference culturally (for cultural reasons) and are trained accordingly."<sup>238</sup> The cultural factors of our life situations affect our lives and our relationships.

The sociological environment is a vital part in the development of relationships with every human being. It is intimately interconnected with the traditions and customs that exist in every society which are passed on to the coming generations. Bernhard Laux opines that, "Society therefore is essentially characterized by a normative dimension in the order of relationships. It is under the claim to meet the natural and cultural conditions of human existence, and thus the needs and abilities of the people and to serve human life."<sup>239</sup> Joel Green affirms the influence of the sociological environment in the developing process of how human beings relate among themselves. "Because we are social beings, the stories we tell about ourselves, through which we construct our sense of self, are woven out of the threads and into the cloth of the stories present to us in our social world and communal traditions."<sup>240</sup> As every society has its own traditions and norms of human relationships among each other, it also has its own

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<sup>235</sup> Jersild, Paul *Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology*, 45

<sup>236</sup> Rust, Eric C. *Covenant and Hope*, 184

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Schmid, Peter F. *Der Mensch ist Beziehung: Personalität aus sozialpsychologischer und philosophischer und philosophisch-anthropologischer Perspektive*, 229

<sup>238</sup> „Als psychophysische Entität ist der Leib nicht nur genetisch, sondern auch kulturell disponiert. Bestimmte Vermögen erhalten kulturell einen Vorzug und werden entsprechend ausgebildet.“ (Wiegerling, Klaus *Der überflüssige Leib: Utopien der Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien*, 126)

<sup>239</sup> Cf. Laux, Bernhard *Von der Anthropologie zur Sozialethik und wieder*, 109

<sup>240</sup> Green, Joel B. *Doing Repentance: The Formation of Disciples in the Acts of the Apostles*, 5

distinctive marks which would characterize the relationship of the human being. Christoph Schwöbel presents it as, “Freedom and sociality as the distinctive features of human personhood characterize the relationship of the human person to nature as a cultural activity.”<sup>241</sup>

In order to understand the human being in his relation to others, according to Christoph Schwöbel, we have to distinguish human beings from their cultural existence. The elements which shape and influence the relationships of human beings are highlighted in the cultural existence. “Other branches of anthropological research consider the cultural existence of people as the royal road for the understanding of the human person as a being that by nature is a cultural being. Here the use of symbolic forms of communication, which shape the relationship of the human person to nature and to forms of social organizations, is understood as the point, from where to look upon the relational existence of the human person.”<sup>242</sup> Culture has to do with symbols. Symbols communicate certain traditions and customs which are being practiced in a society. Culture is a powerful embodiment of values and it influences us enormously in our behaviour. Most of the time, the guiding factor for the pattern of relationships for the human being with others owes its birth from his socio-cultural environment. The cultural dimension of the relationship of humans in their relation to others unfolds the values, customs, traditions and other different elements which shape the relationships of human beings.

## 4. The Human Being in Relation to Nature

### 4.1 Nature as a Creation of God

When we look at the different relationships of human beings, the question automatically arises about what role nature plays in our relationships. How did God relate with nature? How do we relate with nature? God created nature before he created humans and began a relationship first with nature. In the creation accounts we read that God created the world along with the living and

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<sup>241</sup> „Freiheit und Sozialität als die unterscheidenden Merkmale menschlichen Personseins prägen die Beziehung des Menschen zur Natur als kulturelle Aktivität.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph, *Gott in Beziehung*, 218)

<sup>242</sup> „Andere Richtungen anthropologischer Forschung betrachten die kulturelle Existenz von Menschen als den Königsweg zum Verständnis des Menschen als eines Wesens, das von Natur aus ein Kulturwesen ist. Hier wird der Gebrauch von symbolischen Kommunikationsformen, die das Verhältnis der Menschen zur Welt der Natur und Formen ihrer Gesellschaftsorganisation prägen, als der Punkt verstanden, von dem aus die relationale Existenz des Menschen gesehen werden sollte.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph, *Gott in Beziehung*, 192-193)

non-living beings in the first six days. (cf. Gen 1:1-26) Jonathan Sack says according to Genesis 1, "Creating the universe, God made a home for human beings."<sup>243</sup> Sallie McFague goes one step further and explains the God-world relationship in the terms of the world as God's body.<sup>244</sup> Rosemary Ruether writes that the Hebrew world even depicts the relationship between God and the world in the form of a personal relationship (I – You Relationship).<sup>245</sup> Terrence Fretheim writes that this relational God of the Old Testament is not first and foremost the God of Israel. The opening chapters of Genesis explain the universal activity of God which includes creating, grieving, judging, saving, electing, promising, blessing, covenant making, and law giving. God was in relationship to the world before there was an Israel.<sup>246</sup> According to Beatrice Bowarld, in the eyes of God a good creation is not something that human beings alone possess, but rather they share it with animals and the rest of creation.<sup>247</sup> Therefore, "...God is present and active wherever there is a world. God does not create the world and then leave it, but God creates the world and enters into it, lives with it, *as God*."<sup>248</sup> God is happy in his relationship with the created world.

God really enjoys his relationship with nature and this we can see from the different Biblical elements we come across, especially in Psalms. "God delights in the animals, plants, mountains and rivers, which God created, and they answer his joy with praise and jubilation. Nature, which God creates, is alive and enters into a living relationship with God."<sup>249</sup> "He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Si'rion like a young wild ox. The meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy." (Ps 29:6, 65:13) Again we read that God takes possession of the earth and its inhabitants. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." (Ps 24:1) Yahweh leading Israel through

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<sup>243</sup> Sacks, Jonathan *To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics Responsibility*, 151

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Mc Fague, Sallie *God's Body, Our Home: Intimate Creation*, 36-45

<sup>245</sup> Cf. Ruether, Rosemary Radford *Der Gott der Möglichkeiten: Neue Überlegungen zu Immanenz und Transzendenz*, 416

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Fretheim, Terrence E. *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation*, 18

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Bowald, Beatrice; Halter, Hans: *Preist Gott mit eurem Leib 1 Kor 6:20*, 236

<sup>248</sup> Fretheim, Terrence E. *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation*, 22

<sup>249</sup> „Gott erfreut sich an den Tieren, Pflanzen, Bergen und Flüssen, die Gott erschafft, und sie erwidern diese Freude mit Preis und Jubel. Die Natur, die Gott schafft, ist lebendig und tritt in eine lebendige Beziehung zu Gott.“ (Ruether, Rosemary Radford *Der Gott der Möglichkeiten: Neue Überlegungen zu Immanenz und Transzendenz*, 416)

the Red Sea (cf. Gen 14) is interpreted by Elizabeth Johnson as a relationship of God with the world.<sup>250</sup> God is presented as perfectly in tune with nature.

Terence Fretheim again makes us aware that the relationship of God with every creature is special and the texts in Bible confirm this fact. "...God has established a special relationship with each and every creature, a relationship to which the Bible witnesses in numerous texts. One thinks of the repeated promise that God makes with 'every creature' following the flood (Gen 9:10, 15-17; see 8:1), or the commitment God has made with respect to the salvation of the animals. (For example, Ps 36:6; Isa 11:6-9; 65:25)"<sup>251</sup> More than that, "...nature is of God's own relationship to water and vegetation, a relationship that is prior to any creaturely relationship."<sup>252</sup> It is important to note that after the creation of the birds and animals, God is telling them to be fruitful and multiply. God blesses the animals.<sup>253</sup> By their very existence the animals are blessed by God and give him glory: "Bless the Lord, all you birds of the air. All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord." (Dn 3:80-81) Animals are the creatures of God, and, according to the Scriptures, he surrounds them with his providential care. (cf. Mt 6:26) In addition, the harmony which man must establish, or restore, in the whole of creation includes his relationship to the animals.<sup>254</sup> The special bond of God with everything that has been created by God has a very unique role in nature.

If we ask the question whether human beings are the center of creation, William Greenway would say that, "We humans are not at the center of the seven days of the creation narrative. This particular narrative is not about establishing the pre-eminence of humans, but about proclaiming the pre-eminence and love of God who would have all creatures live blessed lives in a perfectly delightful world...."<sup>255</sup> Though human beings are not the center of the creation account, God puts human beings in relation to nature. Robert Gay explains that we have a relationship with God in two aspects: "...the lives that we lead are as creatures within creation, but creatures that have very special, particular relationship with God. These two relationships are also intertwined and are not mutual-

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<sup>250</sup> Cf. Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Holy Wisdom: Image of God's Saving Presence*, 6

<sup>251</sup> Fretheim, Terence E. *Preaching Creation: Genesis 1-2*, 76-77; See also Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, And Creator Spirit*, 38

<sup>252</sup> Fretheim, Terence E. *Preaching Creation: Genesis 1-2*, 82

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Greenway, William N. A., Jr *To Love as God Loves: The Spirit of Dominion*, 25-28

<sup>254</sup> Cf. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html), Accessed on 18.08.2012

<sup>255</sup> Greenway, William N. A. Jr *To Love as God Loves: The Spirit of Dominion*, 31

ly exclusive...’’<sup>256</sup> From this point of view, David McIlroy would say that the command given by God not to eat from the forbidden tree was meant for the human beings so that they enjoy a right relationship with the rest of the creation.<sup>257</sup>

What is the role of human beings when they are considered one of the creatures? Alexander Sand explains the relational role of the human being as one of the creatures. “Thus the concept of man in the Old Testament is oriented to this world in the sense that man belongs totally and indivisibly to this world, that he should seek and find in this world the fulfillment of being, an existence, however, supported by God’s power and oriented toward God’s laws.”<sup>258</sup> “All creatures of God together constitute a community in relationship. More particularly, human beings are understood, not as isolated creatures of God, but as part of a global community.”<sup>259</sup> The fact that nature and everything in nature are creations of God invites human beings to link with nature as God related with nature. The relationship of God with the whole of creation and creatures encourages all humans to live in a relational harmony with the rest of creation.

## 4.2 Jesus and Nature

How did Jesus deal with nature? What kind of relationship of Jesus with nature can be understood from his teachings and parables? God the Father bestowed on his only begotten Son the gift of bodily existence, a fully human nature: You have prepared a body for me. (cf. Hebr 10:5) With the bodily constitution Jesus enters into a lively interrelation with the surrounding natural world like we do. The gift of bodily existence constitutes dependence: how can Jesus breathe if there was no air to fill his lungs? How could he be healthy if air is polluted or even toxic? The same applies to water: Jesus experiences hunger and thirst. (cf. Jn 4.6-7) How can he survive as a human being without drinking clear and healthy water? Christina Gschwandtner points out that, “Christ certainly knew what it meant to live on and from the land. His parables about farmers and shepherds are clear evidence of that.” (cf. Mt 13:1-23; Jn 10:1-18; Lk 15:3-7)<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Gay, Robert *Creation, Ecology and the Moral Life: How Should Catholics be Environmentalists?* 50

<sup>257</sup> Cf. McIlroy, David H. *Towards a Relational and Trinitarian Theology of Atonement*, 18

<sup>258</sup> „Das Menschenverständnis der AT ist also diesseitig bestimmt in dem Sinne, daß der Mensch ganz und ungeteilt zu dieser Welt gehört, daß er in dieser Welt die Erfüllung seines Daseins suchen und finden soll, eines Daseins aber dass durch Gottes Kraft erhalten und durch Gottes Satzung geordnet ist.“ (Sand, Alexander *Zum Menschenbild der Schrift*, 403)

<sup>259</sup> Fretheim, Terence E. *Preaching Creation: Genesis 1-2*, 78

<sup>260</sup> Gschwandtner, Christina M. *Sharing our Weakness: Christ, Creation, and Fallenness*, 172

Sometimes questions arise regarding the kind of food Jesus ate. With regard to food, Jesus nourished himself like any other human being. That means Jesus used natural products for his nourishment. “And like us, Christ required food. ... This food had to be produced and consumed and disposed of. Surely there were times that Christ was hungry or had a stomach ache or desired a particular food. We know he fasted and feasted, ate bread and drank wine.”<sup>261</sup> Edmund Marshall describes what kind of food Jesus might have eaten. According to him different types of meat along with fish were also a part of his diet like any other people of his time. “Again Jesus had no compunction about eating creatures which had previously been alive. He helped his disciples catch more fish, he prepared a fire for cooking fish, he performed a miracle to help five thousand people have a meal including fish. He regularly observed the Jewish feasts, which automatically involved the eating of lamb, and in his parable of the prodigal son he spoke warmly of the father who killed the fatted calf for a feast.”<sup>262</sup> The stories and parables we read from the New Testament tell us that Jesus also nourished himself from the fruits of the earth and from the labour of his hands.

The relationship Jesus had with nature is shown in nature’s revelatory quality. Nature speaks to Jesus because it is a medium through which God the Father reveals himself and his wishes. All of nature has a revelatory quality. Following the wish of God the Father Jesus approaches the Jordan, queues up with the penitents, and when his turn comes, he argues with John the Baptist that the whole process determined by his Father has to be fulfilled. Ferdinand Nwaigbo presents us with an interesting observation: the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan before he began his public ministry (Mt 3:13-17), “Underlines the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in His relationship with the entire creation. When Jesus Christ was baptized, He made the whole creation Holy and Sacred and equipped it with the divine presence...”<sup>263</sup> Consequently the whole of nature and especially water acquires the dignity of revealing a divine presence. Nature as a whole and in its particular parts becomes charged with symbolic meaning. “He (Jesus) sees the earth as a symbol of the divine and the sacred: lilies of the field, mountains, forests and water bodies. ... He climbed on the mountain and taught His disciples from the scenery. He understood perfectly well the interrelationship between human beings and their environment.”<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Gschwandtner, Christina M. *Sharing our Weakness: Christ, Creation, and Fallenness*, 172

<sup>262</sup> Marshall, Edmund *Jesus and the Environment: How Green is Christianity?* 3

<sup>263</sup> Nwaigbo, Ferdinand *Jesus, Justice and Ecology: An African Perspective*, 356

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*, 354



From this understanding, the revelatory quality of creation follows the intended and respectful use of all created reality. The relationship of Jesus with nature was always respectful of nature and its fruits. He always advised the people to relate with nature in a responsible way and to learn from the environment. “Christ’s parables speak tellingly of a close observation of nature. He blesses food, uses it to feed people, and even makes sure that none of it is wasted. Even when miracles are reported, they do not usually constitute abuse of nature. Christ stills the storm, grants peace to the waves. Christ multiplies food without exploiting the ground. Christ speaks of careful husbandry and of punishment on those who think they own the vineyard and can keep all its fruits. He points to flowers and birds as examples of life in the kingdom.”<sup>265</sup> Jesus is pointing out that the value of the plants and trees is to enrich and nourish human life or provide decorative beauty. That is why he is cursing the fig tree which did not bear any fruit. (cf. Mt.21:19)<sup>266</sup> Why did Jesus make use of nature for his teaching? Jesus adapted himself to his listeners who were from an agricultural society. Jesus used many elements of nature to which his listeners could easily associate and relate in their daily lives because nature and the environmental elements were part of their relationship. Edmund Marshall describes that, “Jesus was clearly a student of creation. His parables show how much notice he took of nature, the parable of the sower, the parable of the wheat and tares, the parable of the mustard seed. He spoke of the beauty of the lilies, far surpassing even the opulent clothing of King Solomon, and then he told of God’s love for the smallest sparrows, which are worth only two for a penny.”<sup>267</sup> Jesus was able to cultivate a better relationship with nature and the environment through his preaching and teaching.

Elizabeth Johnson confirms this fact that, “He (Jesus) himself lives in tune with the natural world, knowing about growing seeds and harvests, clouds and sunsets, fig trees and weeds, sheep and mother hens. His disciples are instructed to learn lessons about their relationship to God from the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. (Mt 6:25-33)”<sup>268</sup> He also used these natural themes to confront his listeners so that they may better grasp the message of his teaching. “Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow and reap and store in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than the birds? And four verses later he repeats the message: if that is how God clothes the grass in the fields, which is there today and tomorrow is thrown on the stove, will He

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<sup>265</sup> Gschwandtner, Christina M. *Sharing our Weakness: Christ, Creation, and Fallenness*, 172

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Marshall, Edmund *Jesus and the Environment: How Green is Christianity?* 3

<sup>267</sup> Ibid

<sup>268</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 8

not all the more clothe you?”<sup>269</sup> Life and growth of natural things brings the message of Jesus to his listeners better because they themselves are in relation with this natural world. The relationship of Jesus with nature teaches us to relate to the world as Jesus did. For Sallie McFague, “Jesus Christ is the lens, the model, through whom Christians interpret God, the world and themselves.”<sup>270</sup> According to Marshall Edmund, Jesus calls us to live in harmony with the whole of creation so that we can serve the human race as a whole and approach the kingdom of God on earth.<sup>271</sup>

### 4.3 Steward and Caretaker of Nature

What kind of relationship towards nature did God expect from human beings? How does the Bible explain human beings in relation to nature? After the creation, God appointed humans in charge of his creation which puts the human being in relation to nature. Sabin Scott writes, “In Genesis 2:15, Adam is placed in the garden to serve (abad) and protect (shamar) it. Throughout the Old Testament we are reminded that, ‘The Earth is the Lord’s,’ and that our role is one of stewardship – temporary caretakers who will one day be called to account for how well we have discharged our duties.”<sup>272</sup> Valliantos Angelos states that when Adam and Eve are invited to give names to the creatures of God, humans enter into a relationship with the whole of creation because naming implies relationship.<sup>273</sup>

Our relationship with nature comes into expression through our responsibility as stewards and caretakers of nature. We relate with nature when we begin to take care of it. “We are not asked to look after a world that is only a ‘thing;’ we are required to be God’s agents in managing a world that he created, redeemed and sustains.”<sup>274</sup> Stewardship involves a rapport with nature on the part of the human being. When God put human beings in charge of his creation, what kind of attitude did he expect from them? “Our stewardship is only proper if it acknowledges that all things exist through God. As stewards of creation, we are serving the Lord our God, and will have to give an account of our stewardship when we are judged.”<sup>275</sup> Our attitude should be one of service because as care-

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<sup>269</sup> Marshall, Edmund *Jesus and the Environment: How Green is Christianity?* 3

<sup>270</sup> Mc Fague, Sallie *God’s Body, our Home: Intimate Creation*, 42

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Marshall, Edmund *Jesus and the Environment: How Green is Christianity?* 4-5

<sup>272</sup> Scott, Sabin *Whole Earth Evangelism*, 28; See also Berry, R.J. *One Lord, One World: The Evangelism of Environmental Care*, 21

<sup>273</sup> Cf. Valliantos, Angelos *Creation, Koinonia, Sustainability and Climate Change*, 197

<sup>274</sup> Berry, R.J. *One Lord, One World: The Evangelism of Environmental Care*, 21

<sup>275</sup> Gay, Robert *Creation, Ecology and the Moral Life: How Should Catholics be Environmentalists?* 51; See also Neudecker, Reinhard *Mensch III: Judentum*, 478

takers of creation we are doing our duty for God. Aruna Gnanadason describes stewardship as our responsibility to care for the earth so that the earth does not lose its integrity.<sup>276</sup> “Stewardship is not centred on humanity alone, since it includes responsibility to God and concern for the welfare of other creatures.”<sup>277</sup> Walter Vogels tells us that, “The human person, the image of God himself, is there on earth to continue God’s work and to be a steward over God’s creation.”<sup>278</sup>

Stewardship implies different tasks too. One of the important assignments human beings received from God was to be fruitful and multiply. This task shows the intimacy of human beings with creation. The God-given dominion of human beings over all of creation is interpreted by Betty Blanton as being responsible for the care of creation.<sup>279</sup> Andrew Gabriel states that this caretaking or stewardship of creation is not the result of the fall. Adam and Eve were given the responsibility for creation that continues after the fall.<sup>280</sup> “The responsibility of man for and in the world, according to Gen 2/3, results in the first place from his qualifications. ... The real mandate for man’s responsible dealing with God’s creation can only be seen in view of the essential content of the garden story. Just like God planted the garden in order to offer it to man, so man must pass it on to continue this work in dealing with it as God’s creation.”<sup>281</sup> Through responsibly dealing with the created world, human beings are called to fulfil the mandate given them by God.

To be stewards of the entire creation means to develop respect towards nature and to all the animate and inanimate beings. Frederic Kelly reminds us that, “Without this fundamental respect for nature and for himself as part of nature,

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<sup>276</sup> Cf. Gnanadason, Aruna *Yes, Creator God, Transform the Earth! The Earth as God's Body in an Age of Environmental Violence*, 167

<sup>277</sup> Barbour, Ian G. *Nature, Human Nature, and God*, Fortress Minneapolis, 2002, 124

<sup>278</sup> Vogels, Walter *The Immanent Transcendent Creator of Gn 1*, 233; See also [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html), Accessed 18.08.2012

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Blanton, Betty L. *God's Continuing Incarnation Through Us*, 31

<sup>280</sup> Cf. Gabriel, Andrew K. *Pneumatological Perspectives for a Theology of Nature: The Holy Spirit in Relation to Ecology and Technology*, 197

<sup>281</sup> „Die Verantwortung des Menschen für und in der Welt ergibt sich nach Gen 2/3 folglich in erster Linie aufgrund seiner Ausstattung. Als Wesen, das Gut und Böse erkennen und damit unterscheiden kann, ist er gleichzeitig auch in die Entscheidung gerufen, er kann sich nicht mehr indifferent verhalten, sondern jede seiner Handlungen ist eingebunden in diese Erkenntnis. Den wirklichen Auftrag zum verantwortlichen Umgang mit der Schöpfung Gottes kann der Mensch nur im Blick auf das Wesentliche der Gartengeschichte wahrnehmen. So wie Gott den Garten angepflanzt hat, um diesen dann dem Menschen zu übergeben, damit er dieses Werk weiterführe, hat der Mensch auch mit der Welt als Schöpfung Gottes weiter umzugehen.“ (Dohmen, Christoph *Zwischen Gott und Welt : Biblische Grundlagen der Anthropologie*, 38)

man could ultimately destroy himself.”<sup>282</sup> Martha Kirkpatrick suggests a covenantal approach to nature.<sup>283</sup> According to Scott Hahn, God wants us to have a very unique attitude towards world. He tells us that God wants us to view world as a “macrotemple.” The world was formed to be a place for God’s indwelling presence and the human being is supposed to worship by taking care of the world.<sup>284</sup> This attitude is fitting with the traditional Christian view of the world because, “Christian tradition views the world as the place where God meets humanity.”<sup>285</sup> “The realization of our mutual kinship with the living earth leads us to encompass nature in the command to love one’s neighbor as oneself.”<sup>286</sup> Dieter Wyss presents earth or nature as a partner in the relationships of human beings.<sup>287</sup> A respectful attitude towards nature assists the human being in keeping up the so-called “sacredness of nature.”

As stewards and caretakers of nature, human beings are called to protect the dignity of nature. Ruth Padilla says that the earth repressed or abused in any way conceals God’s glory. “When we protect, preserve, and conserve nature, we free it from the bondage of our own sin and allow it to live out its vocation: we enable it to sing the praises of its Creator. When we stop consuming uncontrollably and instead care responsibly for earth, air, water, and all their inhabitants, we contribute to God’s enjoyment of his creation.”<sup>288</sup> Human beings have to make use of nature in such a way that brings delight about the created world to God. “All things in nature contain a sacred secret which refers to their intimate relationship with their Creator. Creation is nothing more than a transportation of the creative mind of God. To transvalue nature is to be transported back to the mind and heart of the Creator. Everything in nature bears the signature of God. Nature, therefore, is neither a window nor an object, but a metaphor; not a sign but a sacrament.”<sup>289</sup> Nature reveals the creative mind of God and human beings have to understand their stewardship under this aspect. Dermot Lane persists that to care for the earth we have to recover the bond between the human and natural world. That means rediscovering the unity between the story of humanity and the story of the cosmos.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Kelly, Frederic Joseph, *Man before God: Thomas Merton on Social Responsibility*, 231

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Kirkpatrick, Martha “*For God So loved the World*”: *An Incarnational Ecology*, 197

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Hahn, Scott *A Father who Keeps His Promises: God’s Covenant Love in Scripture*, 52

<sup>285</sup> Valliantos, Angelos *Creation, Koinonia, Sustainability and Climate Change*, 199

<sup>286</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, And Creator Spirit*, 67

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Wyss, Dieter *Beziehung und Gestalt: Entwurf einer anthropologischen Psychologie und Psychopathologie*, 56

<sup>288</sup> De Borst, Ruth Padilla *God’s Earth and God’s People: Relationships Restored*, 14

<sup>289</sup> De Marco, Donald *From Creatures to Creator*, 55

<sup>290</sup> Cf. Lane, Dermot A. *The Cry of the Earth*, 154

In the Bible we read that the relationships of people with God had its effects on nature. According to Mathew Farrelly, it is interesting to note that, "Surveying covenant history, it becomes apparent that the relationship between human beings and the land is crucial. The ecological state of the land is dependent on Israel's relationship with Yahweh; the land responds to both the sinfulness and holiness of God's people."<sup>291</sup> Robert Gay restates this fact. "The account of the fall which follows shows how sin not only affects the relationship between humans and God, but also the relationship between humans and the whole of creation."<sup>292</sup> Tensions in the divine-human relations are projected in the physical environment.

Sabin Scott espouses that there is a close correlation between the behavior of human beings and the health of the earth. "The ground is cursed as result of Adam's sin. Later, in the story of the flood, human sin results in the destruction of most of life on earth. What is spared is saved through the active participation of Noah. In Jeremiah 12:4 and many other passages, we see the land and its creatures' sufferings as a direct result of sin."<sup>293</sup> Mary Mills states that relations between God and the human being is tied into one single set of relations in which earth achieves its perfect cultivation. But disruption in this relationship order is pictured in the flood stories.<sup>294</sup>

Human and nonhuman orders are deeply interconnected and interrelated.<sup>295</sup> When human beings act contrary to the natural order given by God, it affects other creatures and the earth. The ground puts forth thorns and thistles for Adam (Gen 3:17); the flood is a violent convulsing of the creation that is explicitly linked to cosmic and human violence (Gen 6:11-13); the story of Sodom and Gomorrah tells of an ecological disaster because of human wickedness (see Gen 13:10-13; 19:24-28); the plagues are adverse ecological effects because of the anti-creational behavior of Pharaoh and his minions (Ex 7-11); and the prophets again and again link human sin to adverse cosmic effects. (cf. Jer 4:22-26, Hos 4:1-3)<sup>296</sup> The disruption in the created world and the change in the physical environment due to the mishandling of nature reveals to us how important it is for human beings as stewards to have a right relationship with

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<sup>291</sup> Farrelly, Mathew *A Covenant with the Earth*, 29

<sup>292</sup> Gay, Robert *Creation, Ecology and the Moral Life: How Should Catholics be Environmentalists?* 50

<sup>293</sup> Scott, Sabin *Whole Earth Evangelism*, 28

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Mills, Mary E. *Images of God in the Old Testament*, 10

<sup>295</sup> Cf. Fretheim, Terrence E. *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation*, 16

<sup>296</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 19

nature. Anna Case Winters excellently presents the relationship of human beings with nature. According to her it is not only a relationship dependant upon nature but, “We are in and of the natural world.”<sup>297</sup> Being the steward and caretaker of nature, the human being develops a reverential relational approach towards nature which ensures the harmony of all creatures with the created world.

## 5. The Human Being in Relation to God

### 5.1 The Spiritual Dimension

When we go through the different relational dimensions of the human being, more than any other relationship his relationship to God stands unique and indisputable. Why is our relationship to God essential for human beings? What is the starting point for a relationship of human beings with God? The spiritual dimension of the relationship follows from the creation of the human being in the image and likeness of God. Peter Zimmerling tells that, “He (human being) is standing, first of all, in relationship to God the Creator. The human person, according to Gen. 1 is called to be ‘Imago Dei,’ and as such to be a responding counterpart of his creator.”<sup>298</sup> “What man really is, i.e. what constitutes him in his essence, discloses itself only if man is seen in his relationship to God. The core message of Judeo-Christian anthropology is, therefore, that man has to be understood ‘coram Deo’ (before God). It is obviously a profoundly theocentric picture of man.”<sup>299</sup> George Augustin adds that, “A fundamental openness to God belongs to the basic nature of the human person. As a spiritual being, a person transcends himself infinitely towards the mystery which reveals itself as the absolute cause of his existence, and as the measure of the ethos of his conscience. God is the personal ‘from where and where to’ of the human personhood. Before Him man has to give an account for his doing good or evil.”<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Case-Winters, Anna *Rethinking the Image of God*, 815

<sup>298</sup> „Er steht erstens in Beziehung zu Gott, dem Schöpfer. Nach Gen 1 ff. ist der Mensch berufen, als Imago Dei seinem Schöpfer antwortendes Gegenüber zu sein.“ (Zimmerling, Peter *Die Bedeutung der Gemeinschaft für den Menschen angesichts der Postmoderne*, 218)

<sup>299</sup> „Das, was den Menschen wirklich, d.h. in seinem *Wesen* ausmacht, erschließt sich also erst, wenn der Mensch in seiner Gottesrelation gesehen wird. Der Kernaussage jüdisch-christlicher Anthropologie besteht deshalb darin, dass der Mensch *coram Deo* (vor Gott) zu begreifen ist, weshalb wir es mit einem zutiefst *theozentrischen* Menschenbild zu tun haben.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 111)

<sup>300</sup> „Zum Menschsein des Menschen gehört unbedingt die grundsätzliche Offenheit für Gott. Der Mensch als geistiges Wesen überschreitet unendlich sich selbst auf das Geheimnis hin, das sich ihm als der absolute Grund seiner Existenz und als Mass seines Ethos im Gewissen vermittelt. Gott ist das personale Von- woher und Woraufhin des menschlichen Personseins. Vor

According to Hans Küng, to be human means to be oriented to God<sup>301</sup> and Sorgen Kierkegaard would say that it is the God-relationship that makes a man a man.<sup>302</sup>

Why we should have a relationship with God? According to Doris Nauer there are three reasons why human beings must have a relationship with God: human beings are God's image and covenant partner; God can be experienced in Jesus Christ, and through Christ all human beings are part of a universal history of salvation; God as Holy Spirit is present in the world and man can experience Him.<sup>303</sup> "Man in his personal and social essence is totally related to God. Only through his relationship to God does he attain his ultimate self-realization as a person and social being, since he is made by God with an all-transcending openness which only in relation to God will find its full and final fulfilment."<sup>304</sup> By nature, the human being is directed towards God for the completion of his self-realization.

In the Old Testament, the human being is always pictured in relation to God from the moment of creation; whether it be the different stages of salvation history or the relation of the human being to the world and nature.<sup>305</sup> "In creating humanity, God made people with whom he could interact and with whom he could share his own life. The important spiritual aspect of our nature comes out in our relationships."<sup>306</sup> God created human beings so that an interaction between them can take place. Bernhard Och says that, "The creation of human beings in the image of God is not a statement about the nature of humanity, but rather a description of their unique position vis-à-vis God: humankind is created so that something can happen between them and God."<sup>307</sup> Among all the creatures, only the human being is personally addressed by God. (Gen 1:28-30, 2:17) Everything in the world was created for human beings. That means the main concern of God was human beings.<sup>308</sup>

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ihm hat der Mensch sein Tun des Guten oder Bösen zu verantworten." (Vgl: Rom 2,14-16) Augustin, Georg *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 36

<sup>301</sup> Cf. Barr, William R. *Life: Created in the Image of God*, 482

<sup>302</sup> Cf. Waltke, Bruce K. *Reflections from the Old Testament on Abortion*, 9

<sup>303</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 135

<sup>304</sup> „Der Mensch ist von seinem personalen und sozialen Wesen her ganz auf Gott verwiesen. Er gelangt nur durch die Beziehung zu Gott zur letzten Selbstverwirklichung als Person und soziales Wesen, denn er ist von Gott mit einer alles transzendierenden Offenheit ausgestattet, die nur in der Beziehung zu Gott ihre volle und endgültige Erfüllung findet.“ (Augustin, Georg *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 31)

<sup>305</sup> Cf. Warnach, Victor *Mensch: Biblisch*, 145

<sup>306</sup> Jeeves, Malcom *Changing Portraits of Human Nature in: Science and Christian Belief*, 25

<sup>307</sup> Och, Bernard *Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation*, 228

<sup>308</sup> Cf. Warnach, Victor *Mensch: Biblisch*, 146

Human beings can be understood only from the spiritual dimension of our relationship with God. Saint Pope John Paul II was of the opinion that the definition of man is based on his relationship with God.<sup>309</sup> “Within himself man always remains an unbreakable riddle; but in a faith-filled participation of the divine cognition and will, man discovers his innermost being and essence.”<sup>310</sup> Reinhold Boschki states that, “The religious mystery is, in the first place, the mystery of our God relationship.”<sup>311</sup> Adam Reiss repeats the fact that the meaning of the human being made in the image (of God) is their spiritual quality or faculty.<sup>312</sup> In the opinion of Peter Harris, whether we live the relationship with God or not, we need the spiritual dimension of the relationship with God so that, “Creation itself becomes more fully understood as we ourselves enter more completely into a renewed relationship with God.”<sup>313</sup> Ron Highfield draws our attention to the fact that through the spiritual dimension of relationship with God, human beings becomes part of the infinite dignity of Father, Son and Spirit.<sup>314</sup>

In the opinion of Doris Nauer, “The spirit-dimension opens human beings up to a new horizon of [spirit-filled] experiences. This new horizon is good for human beings because, by knowing the ‘surplus of their existence,’ they can live here and now in a relaxed and serene way, and draw energy for their lives from their relationship with God.”<sup>315</sup> Human beings begin to experience a new dimension of God’s experience. For Gestrich Reinhold, the spiritual dimension leads the human being to a multidimensional experience of the presence of the hidden God as personal transcendence. He enlightens that, “...In the realm of religion, the subconscious can be verified as a collective, more elevated, cosmic unconscious, as a spiritual super-consciousness, as a feeling of something ‘bigger-than-life,’ as the presence of God hidden in the depth, as personal inner

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<sup>309</sup> John Paul II *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, 135; See also 151

<sup>310</sup> „In sich selbst bleibt der Mensch stets ein unlösbares Rätsel; aber im gläubigen Mitvollzug des göttlichen Erkennens und Wollens erschließt sich sein innerstes Sein und Wesen.“ (Warnach, Victor *Mensch, Biblisch*, 145)

<sup>311</sup> „Das religiöse Geheimnis ist in erster Linie das Geheimnis der Gottesbeziehung.“ (Boschki, Reinhold *Beziehung als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik: Grundlegung einer dialogisch-kreativen Religionsdidaktik*, 168)

<sup>312</sup> Cf. Reiss, Moshe *Adam: Created in the Image and Likeness of God*, 185

<sup>313</sup> Harris, Peter *Environmental Concern Calls for Repentance and Holiness*, 13

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Highfield, Ron *Beyond the “Image of God” Conundrum: A Relational View of Human Dignity*, 29

<sup>315</sup> „Die Geist-Dimension des Menschen eröffnet somit einen Erfahrungs-Raum, der ihnen *gut tut*, weil sie unverkrampft und gelassen im Wissen um das ‘Mehr ihrer Existenz’ im Hier und Jetzt leben und aus ihrer Gottesbeziehung *Kraft* für ihr Leben schöpfen können.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 136-137)



transcendence.”<sup>316</sup> “Shalom, wholeness and well-being in all of our social, ecological, political, agricultural and economic relationships is rooted in a restored relationship with God...There can be such wholeness, such creation-wide shalom, only if God enters into our conflict-ridden, distorted, oppressive and broken reality with initiatives of grace.”<sup>317</sup> To regain a holistic relationship with all dimensions of human life is possible through the interaction of grace in our lives. The spiritual dimension of the human being in relation to God unveils the God-relatedness of human beings because this God-relatedness is the foundation for all the relationships of human beings.

## 5.2 The Human Being as God-Bearer

The spiritual dimension of a human being in relation to God makes us conscious about our relationship with God. Since we are spiritual beings, we are also the God-Bearers in this world because we received the breath of life (cf. Gen 2:5-7) from God. Our relationship with God is not a static relationship but it is a dynamic and active relationship. That means that in the process of a relationship changes can take place in the lives of human beings. The first sign that we become the God-Bearer of God is that our relationship with God transforms our lives. “A right relationship with God leads to changes in our understanding of right and wrong behaviour and it is an ongoing call to change our relationships with other humans. As we are being transformed more completely into the image of Christ, it is essential that we have a relationship with God.”<sup>318</sup> For David McIlroy, to have faith in Christ means to be rightly related to Christ.<sup>319</sup> Werner Jeanrod explains how this transformation takes place in the human person. “The special relationship between God and man, called faith, is based on God’s will to reveal himself to his creature and becomes in the yes to God of the faithful a living and dynamic reality and transforming power.”<sup>320</sup> Through this transformed relationship, the human being is empowered to fulfil his role as the God-Bearer.

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<sup>316</sup> „Im Bereich des Religiösen lässt sich das Unbewusste erkennen als kollektives, höheres, kosmisches Unbewusstes, als geistiges Überbewusstsein, als Ahnung von etwas ‘Größerem-als-das-Leben’, als verborgene *Gottesanwesenheit im Tiefenbereich*, als persönliche innere Jenseitigkeit.“ (Gestrich Reinhold *Die Seelsorge und das Unbewusste*, 225)

<sup>317</sup> Walsh, Brian and Keesman, Sylvia *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*, 42

<sup>318</sup> Arby, Gregory *Christian Vision of Man*, 108

<sup>319</sup> Cf. McIlroy, David H. *Towards a Relational and Trinitarian Theology of Atonement*, 26

<sup>320</sup> „Die besondere Beziehung zwischen Gott und den Menschen, die wir Glauben nennen, gründet also in Gottes Willen, sich seinen Geschöpfen mitzuteilen, und wird im Ja der Gläubigen zu Gott lebendige und dynamische Wirklichkeit und transformative Kraft.“ (Jeanrod, Werner G. *Offenbarung und trinitarischer Gottesbegriff: Leitbegriffe theologischen Denkens?* 105)

To be a God-Bearer means that human beings can have a close and personal relationship with God. This personal way we experience our loving relationships with God is what makes a human being a person. Mark Scott writes, “When God seeks and creates fellowship with us he confers upon us the ability to be persons by reciprocating God’s love: Man is not a person, but he becomes one on the basis that he is loved by God and can love God in return.”<sup>321</sup> The metaphor of the vine and branches (cf. Jn 15:1-2) teaches us that this love will enable the human beings to grow to a higher level of intimate relationship with God the Father. “The statement that God is love means that at the most foundational level of His being, God has a commitment toward relationships.”<sup>322</sup>

What is the role of the human being as a God-Bearer? The human being is seen as the representative of God to continue his works in this world. “Especially in the second creation story (Gen 2:4b-25), the idea of cooperation between Creator and creature is central...God formed human beings in order to continue God’s work of ‘giving’ names to the co-creatures of the human beings (Gen 2:19).”<sup>323</sup> Malcom Jeeves tells us that this representative character has to be in all the levels of our relationships. Our spirituality concerns our relation to the natural world, to other people and to our natural environment. However, one aspect which is of importance is the quality of care that the human family is called upon to exercise with regard to creation. Acting as God’s representatives, humans are called to model the personal character of God.<sup>324</sup> Being the representatives of God on earth, human beings transmit the spiritual and divine qualities of God in all the levels of their relationships.

To be a God-Bearer anticipates that our relationship with God is the foundation for all our relationships. Christoph Schwöbel confirms that the relationship of God with the human being is the key to understanding all relationships. “Since the relationship of the human person to God is the fundamental relationship that determines the being of a person in the totality of his relationships in every respect, the resistance against this relationship affects all his relationships (his whole being-in-relationship).”<sup>325</sup> Gregory Arby tells us that it is our relationship with God that brings the true image into effect. From the relational point

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<sup>321</sup> Cf. Scott, Mark M. *God as Person: Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on Divine and Human Personhood*, 168

<sup>322</sup> Cf. Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 5

<sup>323</sup> Gregersen, Niels Henrik *The Creation of Creativity and the Flourishing of Creation*, 406

<sup>324</sup> Jeeves, Malcom *Changing Portraits of Human Nature*, 25

<sup>325</sup> „Da die Beziehung des Menschen zu Gott die grundlegende Beziehung ist, die das ganze Sein des Menschen in allen seinen Beziehungen und in allen seinen Aspekten bestimmt, betrifft der Widerspruch gegen diese Beziehung das Ganze In-Beziehung-Sein des Menschen.“ (Schwöbel, Christoph *Gott in Beziehung*, 205)

of view, “The realization of the image of God comes to its effect only in and through the relationship....The characteristics that sustain the image of God in humans are the relationships which man enjoys in his day to day life.”<sup>326</sup> We have been given the freedom to maintain our relationship with God which motivates us to relate with God in a personal way.

The relationship of the human being with God is an indispensable element in the lives of every human being. According to Leo Scheffczyk, all the knowledge of the human person is interrelated with the knowledge of God and there is no knowledge of God which does not elevate the nature of the human person.<sup>327</sup> George Augustin reminds us that, “...only if you know God, do you know man. When speaking about man, we must also speak about God. The humanness of man is only understandable in the light of his relationship to God.”<sup>328</sup> Human beings become the relational God-Bearer when the foundation for all their relationships flow from their relationships with God. They transform their lives and they become the representatives of God for the entire creation. All of the questions about the humanness of mankind are understandable only in their relationship with God, which makes the human being a God-Bearer.

## 6. The Multidimensional Relationality of the Human Being

The anthropological analysis of the relationships of human beings provides us with the idea that the Christian vision of the image of the human being and relationship of the human being cannot be easily defined. The complexity of the Christian image of the human being shows that we cannot limit that image from just one perspective alone. We have to put the different images of the human being into the Bible in order to arrive at one conclusion. “The human being is as a person necessarily open in vertical dimension toward God from whom he receives his being and existence, and at the same time in the horizontal dimension towards others with whom he can enter into manifold relation-

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<sup>326</sup> Arby, Gregory *Christian Vision of Man*, 107

<sup>327</sup> Cf. Scheffczyk, Leo *Grundfragen christlicher Anthropologie*, 16

<sup>328</sup> „... nur wer Gott kennt, kann auch den Menschen kennen. Wenn wir von dem Menschen reden, müssen wir von Gott reden. Das Menschsein des Menschen ist nur im Licht seiner Beziehung zu Gott verständlich.“ (Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 31)

ships.”<sup>329</sup> Hartmut Rosenau says that the question we read in Ps. 8 (verse 5: What are human beings that you spare a thought for them?) makes apparent the idea that being human cannot be understood in isolation as a substance or a thing. Different factors are interwoven in the development of the human being. The essence of the human being is very much influenced and formed by relationships, by circumstances and by relations.<sup>330</sup> This thought encourages us to look at the relationships of the human being from a multidimensional relationality.

According to Edward Denis, “In the Bible we find human persons understood as unique individuals with their own importance and dignity before God, but not as self-contained and isolated individuals. The scriptural view is that human beings are fundamentally relational and constituted by relationships. They are part of a community, a people called by God.”<sup>331</sup> Along with their uniqueness and qualities, like being created in the image and likeness and the covenant partner of God, the Bible also explores the transitoriness and limitations of human beings. They are elevated from their sinful nature to a redeemed relationship through their relationship with Jesus. When we put together the different relational images of the human being, we reach a holistic image of them which is unveiled as a synthesis of different images, and in which each quality complements the human being and which leads to a holistic image.

Human beings begin their relationships first with themselves which is constituted of both a psychological and bodily dimension. The historical dimension highlights the fact that each relationship takes place in a particular time, which becomes the history of the relationship of the human being to himself. “Man does not exist in isolation before God but is community oriented. Man lives on different relationship levels: in relation to himself, in relation to God, in relation to other people.”<sup>332</sup>

Human beings become real only in relationship to others. Without the social dimension of relationships, a human being will be incomplete. Bevil Bramwell states that, “The global view is centered on the fact that relationship is funda-

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<sup>329</sup> „Der Mensch ist als Person notwendigerweise zugleich offen in vertikaler Richtung für Gott, von dem er Sein und Existenz empfängt, und in horizontaler Richtung für die anderen Menschen, mit denen er in vielfältige Beziehungen treten kann.“ (Ibid, 34)

<sup>330</sup> Cf. Rosenau, Hartmut *Adam wo bist du? Aspekte theologischer Anthropologie: Anthropologisches und theologisches Fragen*, 183

<sup>331</sup> Edwards, Denis *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology*, 135

<sup>332</sup> „Der Mensch existiert nicht isoliert vor Gott, sondern er ist gemeinschaftsbezogen. Der Mensch lebt auf verschiedenen Beziehungsebenen: in Beziehung zu sich selbst, in Beziehung zu Gott und in Beziehung zu anderen Menschen.“ (Augustin, George *Christliche Lebensführung unter dem Zuspruch Gottes*, 43)

mental to being human. Man is made in the image and likeness of God. (Gen. 1:26-27) And relating to others in love is one of the most important ways which image the glorious God because God's very nature is loving relationship."<sup>333</sup> Each relationship is part of a context and influence of the norms and traditions of the environment where the individual situation is explained in the cultural dimension.

In becoming the steward and caretaker of nature, the human being is called to live in relation with nature. The responsible usage of nature for the development of the entire creation demands respect for nature on the part of the human being. Benedict Ssettuuma reminds us that, "Each human person is a network of relationships. When we recognize that we are intrinsically related to God, to one another and to nature, and that when we relate to creation in a hostile way and we are turning against ourselves, then we need to change. For our own good, we should befriend Mother Nature because we are dependent on her and for her to nourish us. She certainly needs our protection and nurturing."<sup>334</sup> "God loves creation and sets a relational order of mutuality and interdependence deep within the created order that reflects God's own relational being."<sup>335</sup>

God and the human being have a very distinctive and irreplaceable relationship. We cannot think of human beings without their relationship with God because we are spiritual beings. Mark Scott explains that, "God does not wish to be God without us, nor does he wishes for us to be without him, according to Barth. The central identity of God – i.e., the Godhead of God or what makes God, God – is the fact that he loves. God's love expresses itself through the desire to seek and create fellowship with humanity."<sup>336</sup> Ruth Padilla would use another expression and say that, "Home for humanity is where God is."<sup>337</sup> The interrelatedness of divine and human relationship is visible throughout the Bible. Human beings need to be in relation with God, others and with themselves for their integral development.<sup>338</sup> Paul Jersild is very much convinced that, "Our relationship to God embraces our relations with other human beings, and this reality is the foundation for who we are. Relationships are indispensable to our nature and identity as human beings, for we become who we are by being

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<sup>333</sup> Bramwell, Bevil *The Jubilee Year and Relationships*, 29-30

<sup>334</sup> Ssettuuma, Benedict *Friendship: An Effective Tool for Mission*, 76

<sup>335</sup> Northcott, Michael S. *Ecology and Christian Ethics*, 41

<sup>336</sup> Scott, Mark M. *God as Person: Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on Divine and Human Personhood*, 181

<sup>337</sup> De Borst, Ruth Padilla *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Community Restored*, 50

<sup>338</sup> Cf. Becker, Patrick *In der Bewußtseinsfalle: Geist und Gehirn in der Diskussion von Theologie, Philosophie und Naturwissenschaften*, 16

in relationship.”<sup>339</sup> Edward Denis tells us human beings made in the image of God are to be understood as persons-in-mutual-relationships rather than as dis-engaged subjects.<sup>340</sup>

All these deliberations, discussions, arguments and statements which we read in the endeavor of finding the entire picture of the human being’s relationships lead us to the conclusion that a human being has a combination of relationships which is a multidimensional relationality. That means we cannot reduce any relational dimension of the relationships of human beings. Each fragment foresees the other dimension and complements it. Each relational dimension provides an integrative link to the next level of relationship. The human beings in relation to themselves, to others, to nature and to God are the essential elements of the anthropological foundation of relationships which enables them to form an integral multidimensional relationality in their daily lives.

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<sup>339</sup> Jersild, Paul *Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology*, 44

<sup>340</sup> Cf. Edwards, Denis *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology*, 135

## IV. TOWARDS A RELATIONAL PARADIGM FOR PASTORAL CARE

### 1. Linking with Oneself

#### 1.1 Relational Self-Identity

The theological and anthropological foundation of a relationship provides the basis needed to develop different elements which constitute and make relational pastoral care possible. The first and foremost aspect in this area is having a relationship with oneself. The whole question of relationship depends on the self-image every individual has. What should the individual do to develop a self-image? How can individuals relate with themselves comfortably? Before the individual begins a relationship with others, it is very necessary that he/she has a healthy and sound relationship to himself/herself. Linking with oneself begins with finding out one's own identity of who one is. Michael Klessman affirms that, "Philosophical and theological anthropology emphasize that being in relationship represents an essential element of personal existence. Man is a being who lives from and through relationships, since identity can only begin and grow through relationship: Others let me know who I am. Others attribute value and meaning to me, or overlook me and devalue me. Others let me feel I am unique or replaceable at any time."<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to explain the different steps necessary for the relational pastoral care concept. It is not an attempt to analyse psychologically the whole area of self-identity, self-esteem, self-acceptance and self-love. I will be dealing with these concepts mainly from the point of view of relationship alone, and that is why I use the terms relational self-identity, relational self-esteem, relational self-acceptance and relational self-love. "What a person *is*, is not merely *that* a person relates; rather, that a person *relates* expresses fundamentally what a person *is*. Expressed otherwise, the value of relationships can be affirmed only when the identity of the persons that relate is postulated."<sup>2</sup> To

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<sup>1</sup> „Philosophische und theologische Anthropologie betonen, dass In-Beziehung-Sein ein wesentliches Merkmal personaler Existenz darstellt. Der Mensch ist ein Wesen, das von und durch Beziehungen lebt, weil Identität nur über Beziehungen entsteht und wächst: Andere schreiben mir Wert und Bedeutung zu – oder übersehen mich, werten mich ab. Andere lassen mich spüren, dass ich einzigartig bin – oder jederzeit ersetzbar.“ (Klessman, Michael *Seelsorge*, 35)

<sup>2</sup> Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 308-309

begin the process of linking the individual with oneself, the individual has to find the answer for the question of who he or she is.

In order to answer who an individual is the individual has to explore his/her relationships. To relate to oneself, a person has to be aware of his/her own identity because, "Identity is basic to all life in creation. It is by identity that one distinguishes one from the other. It is identity that defines one's form, outlook and relationship."<sup>3</sup> Identity gives definition to the individual. We may ask the question if it is necessary to relate to oneself in a healthy manner. Is our existence so much linked with our relational self-identity? James Beck and Bruce Demarest answer this question, stating that, "Relating to oneself in an appropriate, God-honoring manner is a necessary and valid part of human existence."<sup>4</sup> "If identity is the way nature has prescribed for its inhabitants their rightful place in creation, then the quest for identity propels the creature to find contexts in which it can find its true identity. True identity can be defined as that identity that gives width and space for the creature's full potential in a situation."<sup>5</sup> Relational self-identity is a process of finding an answer for the question of who I am from the relationship to oneself.

Relational self-identity shows one's relation with oneself because it is the individual who defines his/her self-identity in his/her own way and as he/she feels comfortable and confident. This self-defining self-identity provides the basic ground for the individuals to explore in their world of relationships. Since identity is self-defined, it speaks about the person and how the person perceives him or herself. Cormac Burke affirms that in the self-defined identity, "... I should feel good and I should have a high self-esteem. In other words, the unconditional self-esteem I am entitled to, and the inviolate sense of personal identity and self-worth that are mine, are totally 'self-defined' according to my feelings or preferences of this moment or the next."<sup>6</sup> It is according to one's own values that the individual assesses oneself. "Our separate identities, like fingerprints, make all of us unique individuals, identifiable one from one another."<sup>7</sup> To link the individual with himself/herself, this self-assessment is necessary in the relational self-identity.

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<sup>3</sup> Wesley, Arun Kumar *Serendipity and The Joy of Discovering Oneself in the Quest for Identity*, 190

<sup>4</sup> Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce, *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 393

<sup>5</sup> Wesley, Arun Kumar *Serendipity and The Joy of Discovering Oneself in the Quest for Identity*, 201

<sup>6</sup> Burke, Cormac *Self-Esteem: Why? Why Not?* 14

<sup>7</sup> Peck, Scott M. *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, 53



Is relational self-identity a finished product? The answer is no. Relating with oneself is also a process because relational self-identity is a way of becoming and is a process. To arrive at what a person is supposed to become needs time for development. "According to Erikson, successful identity development enables individuals to proceed more effectively with the subsequent life tasks of intimacy, generativity, and integrity."<sup>8</sup> That means an individual does not automatically possess a relational self-identity, but rather it is moulded through different time periods. "Each person is something. But, more importantly, he or she is becoming something, becoming someone a little or a lot different from what he or she was a day or a week or a year earlier. ... it is more to the point to say, 'I am someone with potential, I am what I can come to be...'"<sup>9</sup> The individual progresses in his/her relational self-identity according to the environment of his/her life situation.

Can we think of a relational self-identity without reference to the society the individual lives in? Society or social environment is the medium for us to confirm our self-identity. "Having a sense of identity is an individual's experience, of course. Yet the identity experienced has to be the same as that experienced by a set of fellows. Identity is 'what-we-are' basically; 'what-I-am' is simply the person's feeling that he makes one particular variation on that as a contributor to it. But an identity is social in more than just the shared consciousness."<sup>10</sup>

Relational self-identity is vital for the individual to play the role that is assigned to his/her in the society. Knowing one's own relational self-identity is very much linked with our relationship with others. "Therefore to know oneself is not to isolate oneself but to relate with the other. To find one's identity is thus to bridge the relationship with the other by taking one's own bearings – from a perspective of the other-in-relation, knowing one's limitations, strengths and weaknesses – for complementarity, inclusivity, interdependency and integrity in reality."<sup>11</sup> In the relationship with others, the individual can experience himself/herself from others' point of view and see that whether that confirms his/her own self-image or not.

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<sup>8</sup> Poll, Justin B; Smith, Timothy B. *The Spiritual Self: Toward a Conceptualization of Spiritual Identity Development*, 129

<sup>9</sup> Burke, Cormac *Self-Esteem: Why? Why Not?* 14

<sup>10</sup> Falding, Harold *Made in the Likeness of God, or the Religious Realization of Human Identity; or Religion Without Illusion*, 148

<sup>11</sup> Wesley, Arun Kumar *Serendipity and The Joy of Discovering Oneself in the Quest for Identity*, 191

Katherine Clarke argues that relational self-identity is greatly linked with embeddedness. “Embeddedness defines the context of our relatedness by giving meaning and limits to all our relationships.”<sup>12</sup> How does this embeddedness take place and how does it contribute to the relational self-identity of the individuals? She explains how it happens in the life of the individual. “When we feel part of something greater than ourselves, we feel embedded. Embeddedness has to do with our social existence because we are part of a social context.”<sup>13</sup> Because, “By being part of the worlds we inhabit, and through their being part of us, we organize our identity and our relationships to others. Our embeddedness is a ground from which we operate relationally.”<sup>14</sup>

What happens when the individual is not conscious of his own relational self-identity? One of the difficulties for many people in relating to themselves is that they do not know their own identities. When the individual is not aware of what he/she is, does not know who he/she is, is confused about himself/herself, then it is diffused self-identity. The wrong perception of who one is, or lack of clear and accurate image about oneself, can also lead the individual to develop wrong relational self-identity under which the relationship suffers or get stuck. The inability to relate with oneself may lead the individuals to counteridentification, which is the opposite of identification. Relationship takes place through idealization and identification. “Counteridentification is another aspect of this dimension of relatedness. All of us have people in our lives who embody qualities we do not want for ourselves. We counteridentify with those people in what can be an intense form of relatedness.”<sup>15</sup> If someone is content and satisfied in their counteridentification, then it stagnates the growth of the person and also his/her ability in developing his/her relationship skills.

Relational self-identity is defined as my relationship with myself. This relational self-identity is also subject to change and development as the social situations and environments take different turns. “Thus, it is a quest for an identity-in-relation. As relationships change and widen, identity ‘changes.’ As situations demand, identity gets transformed or sharpened with changes in perspective, relationality and in points of reference. The search for identity is thus a process in life, a continued effort, develops new relationships, widens horizons of understanding, and crosses borders of distinction.”<sup>16</sup> Helping the individual

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<sup>12</sup> Clarke, Katherine M. *Dimensions of Human Relationship*, 9

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 10

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 9

<sup>16</sup> Wesley, Arun Kumar, *Serendipity and The Joy of Discovering Oneself in the Quest for Identity*, 191

to find his/her own relational self-identity is the first step to link with herself/himself. The relational self-identity of the individual leads him/her to find out his/ her relational self-esteem.

## 1.2 Relational Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is vital in the process of finding ways to link with oneself. Relational self-esteem is part of relational self-identity. The individual begins to relate when he/she has the conviction that he/she is unique and different from others. According to Nathaniel Branden, relational self-esteem has profound influences in all the aspects of our existence.<sup>17</sup> Relational self-identity and relational self-esteem are very much interrelated. Without a proper self-identity the individual cannot have healthy and sound self-esteem. Self-identity provides the foundation for self-esteem. "An individual's evaluation of how well he or she stands with reference to this aspect of the ideal self is related to self-esteem."<sup>18</sup> How far is relational self-esteem of the individual a determining factor for one's own relationship? To arrive at the answer of this question we have to define what self-esteem is and how self-esteem has been evaluated from the relational point of view.

What is the foundation of one's relational self-esteem? How do we measure self-esteem? Is it measured or determined on the achievements, good grades, and good performance of the individual? Defining self-esteem is difficult according to Christoph Mruk, because each definition tends to focus on and emphasize different aspects of self-esteem.<sup>19</sup> Self-esteem is difficult to define because it depends on the conceptualization of the self-esteem and varieties of other qualities of self-esteem such as self-love, self-confidence, self-acceptance (or rejection), self-satisfaction, self-evaluation, self-appraisal, self-worth, sense of adequacy, personal efficacy, sense of competence, self-ideal, congruence, ego, or ego strength.<sup>20</sup>

Self-esteem can be defined as the competence of the individual in areas of life or it can be defined as an attitude or feeling concerning a sense of worth or one's worthiness. Or, "Self-esteem is a relationship between these two factors.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Baumeister, Roy F.; Campbell, Jennifer D.; Krueger, Joachim I.; Vohs, Kathleen D. *Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles*, 3

<sup>18</sup> Smith, Christopher B.; Weigert, Andrew J.; Thomas, Darwin L. *Self-Esteem and Religiosity: An Analysis of Catholic Adolescents from Five Cultures*, 52

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Mruk, Christopher J. *Self-Esteem Research, Theory, and Practice: Toward a Positive Psychology of Self-Esteem* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), 23

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Hayes, David M.; Fors, Stuart W. "Self-Esteem and Health Instruction: Challenges for Curriculum Development," <http://www.questia.com>, Accessed on 09.04.2013

In this view, it is only an individual's competence at dealing with the challenges of living in worthy ways that gives rise to healthy, positive, or authentic self-esteem."<sup>21</sup> "Self-esteem is the lived status of one's competence at dealing with the challenges of living in a worthy way over time."<sup>22</sup> Nathaniel Branden bases his definition of self-esteem on a philosophical foundation. He is of the opinion that, "Human beings have a fundamental need to feel worthy but may only achieve that goal by acting competently, which is to say rationally, when making decisions. Competence, in this case, means facing reality directly and then making rational decisions, which are those that allow an individual to solve problems realistically."<sup>23</sup> Self-esteem can be defined as an attitude of the individual or how an individual evaluates or judges one's own worth.<sup>24</sup> Carol Saussy criticizes the definitions of self-esteem to be lacking in critical analysis of the structure of meaning in a person's life. Studies on self-esteem must include the antecedents and components of self-esteem.<sup>25</sup>

For those who are studying (students) their self-esteem, they identify with their performance in one subject or area. "A person who believes she is good in math, for example, is referred to as having high self-esteem in that domain. Conversely, a person who perceives himself as inept in social situations is said to have low self-esteem in that area of life."<sup>26</sup> Self-esteem is measured according to the performance of the individuals either in studies or in social life. When the individual has a good perception of self-esteem then it is reflected in his/her relationships. "Whether self-esteem has to do with an abiding sense of worthiness as a person or the experience of being able to solve problems competently, or both, self-esteem is intensely personal, in part because it says something about who we are and how we live our lives."<sup>27</sup> Whatever may be the result (success or failure) in dealing with the problems of life, it has a meaning for the individual and it is his/her relational self-esteem.

How is the relationship with oneself connected with one's self-esteem? The individual's relational self-esteem is radiated in his/her relationship to himself/herself and others. "It is necessary for the individual to have good self-

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<sup>21</sup> Mruk, Christopher J. *Self-Esteem Research, Theory, and Practice: Toward a Positive Psychology of Self-Esteem (4th Edition)*, 1

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Mruk, Christopher J. *Self-Esteem Research, Theory, and Practice: Toward a Positive Psychology of Self-Esteem (3rd Edition)*, 33

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ibid, 30

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Saussy, Carroll *Faith and Self-Esteem*, 131

<sup>26</sup> Suls, Jerry (ed.) *Psychological Perspectives on the Self*, 28

<sup>27</sup> Mruk, Christopher J. *Self-Esteem Research, Theory, and Practice: Toward a Positive Psychology of Self-Esteem (3rd Edition)*, 17

esteem because it helps him/her to interact with people confidently and to improve interpersonal relations. High self-esteem might well make a person more likable insofar as people may prefer to interact with confident, enterprising individuals and to avoid interacting with people who suffer from self-doubts and insecurities.”<sup>28</sup> The attempt to define and measure self-esteem has enabled the study of the relationship between self-esteem and other important psychological variables which are vital in the daily lives of human beings. “Self-esteem has strong positive correlations with hope and optimism, as having a bright outlook in life facilitates persistence towards goals and can thus enhance one’s self-worth and self-competency.”<sup>29</sup>

William Bukowski and Lorrie Sippola explain how low and high self-esteem influences children especially in their relationships with friends. They believe that development of self-esteem depends on the quality of friendships too. Those who have high or low self-esteem manage their friendships differently. Low self-esteem boys and girls put the needs of their friends first rather than their own and endured prolonged association with high-risk peers.<sup>30</sup> Anastasia Victoria Ho and Tick Sim argue that supportive relationships with parents positively influences the self-esteem of the individual, much like that in which the self-worth of a person is dependent on whether one believes that he or she is loved by God. Belief in God’s love has been seen as a contingency of self-worth.<sup>31</sup> According to Carrol Saussy, “The experience of being genuinely accepted and cherished as a child is the most essential ingredient in adult self-esteem.”<sup>32</sup>

What happens to the individual when he/she has high or low relational self-esteem and how it is projected in his/her relationships? High self-esteem can lead the individual to treat the others in the relationship as inferior, and low self-esteem can lead the individual to have a sense of insecurity and inferiority in his/her relational world. “Thus, high self-esteem may refer to an accurate, justified, balanced appreciation of one’s successes and competencies, but it can also refer to an inflated, arrogant, grandiose, unwarranted sense of conceited

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<sup>28</sup> Baumeister, Roy F.; Campbell, Jennifer D.; Kruegger, Joachim I.; Vohs, Kathleen D. *Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?*, 15-16

<sup>29</sup> Ho, Anastasia Victoria L.H.; Sim, Tick N. *The Development and Validation of a God-Centered Self-Esteem Scale*, 36

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bukowski, William M.; Sippola, Lorrie K. *Friendship and Development: Putting the Most Human Relationship in Its Place*, 96

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ho, Anastasia Victoria L.H.; Sim, Tick N. *The Development and Validation of a God-Centered Self-Esteem Scale*, 37

<sup>32</sup> Saussy, Carroll, *Faith and Self-Esteem*, 133

superiority over others. By the same token, low self-esteem can be either an accurate, well-founded understanding of one's shortcomings as a person or a distorted, even pathological sense of insecurity and inferiority."<sup>33</sup> As a result of lack of self-esteem, many people suffer from guilt feelings of not being worthy to live.<sup>34</sup> He/she is excluded from life and it is his/her subjective feeling.

Extremely high self-esteem can lead the person to narcissism which is self-defeating and harmful toward others. This attitude is associated with a sense of superiority over others, feeling that he/she knows better than others, that he/she is better than other people in every area, or is expecting special treatment just because of who he/she is.<sup>35</sup> Another possible drawback of high self-esteem for individuals is that they are content with what they have been given by God and they think it is good. It can be any good quality or weakness too. When the individual is content with one's weakness, it is not supportive for the growth of the individual.<sup>36</sup>

The inability to believe in one's self-worth leads students to low self-esteem. "Low self-esteem has often been invoked as a possible cause of poor school performance."<sup>37</sup> Academic performance is very much connected with relational self-esteem because performance in a subject is influenced by the belief in oneself, which is the consequence of self-esteem. What happens when the individual lacks a sound self-esteem? How does it affect his/her relational world? "At one end of the human behavioural continuum, for instance, low self-esteem is often mentioned in regard to various mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and learning problems. We can also find self-esteem more toward the middle of the spectrum in terms of many of the more ordinary problems of living, including difficulties dealing with failure, losses, and other setbacks that are sure to challenge most of us during the course of our lives."<sup>38</sup> The inability to deal with problems and failures points out the inability of the individual to link with oneself.

An individual who is aware of his/her worth and unique talents relates with himself/herself positively and constructively because of his/her relational self-

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<sup>33</sup> Baumeister, Roy F.; Campbell, Jennifer D.; Kruegger, Joachim I.; Vohs, Kathleen D. *Does High Self-esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?* 2

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Viscott, David S. *The Language of Feelings*, 105-127

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Burke, Cormac *Self-Esteem: Why? Why not?* 12

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ibid, 8-19

<sup>37</sup> Rosenberg, Morris; Schooler, Carmi; Schoenbach, Carrie; Rosenberg, Florence *Global Self-Esteem and Specific Self-Esteem: Different Concepts, Different Outcomes*, 151

<sup>38</sup> Mruk, Christopher J. *Self-Esteem Research, Theory, and Practice: Toward a Positive Psychology of Self-Esteem (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*, 27

esteem. Different mental dispositions can empower his/her relationality with himself/herself. Cormac Burke states, “We should be happy with the different talents God has given us, I should appreciate my talents, I should ‘love’ and appreciate myself.” In this view personal development appears to begin with what each one is or has. Growth in self-esteem is then the sign and test of true development, “I am of worth because I am me, I am unique.”<sup>39</sup> Relational self-esteem enhances the relationship of the individual with oneself. A positive and constructive attitude towards oneself can direct the individual to relational self-acceptance.

### 1.3 Relational Self-Acceptance

Relational self-identity gives the individual an idea of who one is in reference to one’s relational world, and relational self-esteem indicates the worth and value of the individual. The next step in relationship growth with oneself is self-acceptance. Being content with what each individual is and at the same time accepting it is crucial for the expansion of the individual’s relationship. Self-acceptance means to be content with oneself in addition to one’s strengths and weaknesses. It is important for the individual to accept him or herself before he or she begins to relate with others. Because depending upon the capacity of the individual to accept himself/herself, his/her relationships will improve or will be productive. When an individual accepts oneself then the individual can accept others easily and is able to receive input from others. “The acceptance of the other corresponds to the innate demand and desire in man for acceptance and confirmation.”<sup>40</sup>

Relational self-acceptance has to be in a realistic way where the individual has to see one’s talents, capacities, abilities and also one’s weaknesses, limitations and deficiencies. It is a realistic view of oneself. According to Michael Klessman, a conscious and accepted relationship with oneself helps the individual to relate with others in deep relationships.<sup>41</sup> “The dynamic glory of personal existence consists in the relationship between men, each of whom, in accepting the other, helps to achieve each other’s personal fulfilment.”<sup>42</sup>

How does this relational self-acceptance take place? How it is linked with the relationship of the individual with oneself? John Cowburn narrates well the

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<sup>39</sup> Burke, Cormac *Self-Esteem: Why? Why not?* 17

<sup>40</sup> Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 118

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Klessman, Michael *Seelsorge*, 46

<sup>42</sup> Mundackal James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 158

inner dynamism of self-acceptance and confirms that, “In its primary form acceptance is an immediate consent to something which is judged to be good, and self-love is in essence acceptance of this kind. It is a person's being in favour of his own existence, as opposed to wishing that he had never been born, or wanting to die soon so as not to have to put up with himself any longer; and it is a person's being, in general, in favour of his own nature, as opposed to wishing that he was radically different.”<sup>43</sup> The individual finds his/her own existence as good and is content with it. This contentment is projected in his/her relationality.

Is relational self-acceptance connected with acceptance from outside oneself? The individual looks for acceptance from outside oneself. Searching for acceptance from outside has two implications that the individual must be ready to accept: what others tell about and what others think about the person. Acceptance does not happen with reflection and meditation alone but in the relatedness of the individual with others. “By his very nature, man hungers and thirsts for a ‘yes’ from his fellowmen, which is the key to the actualization of his human existence.”<sup>44</sup> How can we help people to accept themselves? What are the ways that promote a person's self-acceptance? Carlin Flora makes us aware that we all depend to a certain extent on others and how they evaluate or see us in order to help us accept ourselves. “The ability to intuit how people see us is what enables us to authentically connect to others and to reap the deep satisfaction that comes with those ties.”<sup>45</sup> Acceptance from others escalates the individual's relational self-acceptance. It is an affirmation for the individual of how one feels and thinks about oneself. The individual's self-awareness assists one toward better self-acceptance. That means, “...knowledge of and trust in one's own motives, emotions, preferences, and abilities.”<sup>46</sup> Self-awareness facilitates the individual to relate with oneself realistically. Carlin Flora states that, “You evaluate yourself much more critically when you are self-aware, because you are focused on your failure to meet internal standards.”<sup>47</sup> A critical attitude towards one's own potentialities is the result of self-awareness.

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<sup>43</sup> Cowburn, John *Love*, 26

<sup>44</sup> Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 118

<sup>45</sup> Flora, Carlin *Metaperceptions: How Do You See Yourself?* [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com), Accessed on 26.08. 2013

<sup>46</sup> Wright, Karen *Dare to Be Yourself: Being True to Oneself is Not for the Faint of Heart*, [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com), Accessed on 24.08.2013

<sup>47</sup> Flora, Carlin *Metaperceptions: How Do You See Yourself?* [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com), Accessed on 26.08. 2013



Helping the individual to be authentic is another means which can lead the individual to develop relational self-acceptance. Karen Wright shows the connection between authenticity and self-awareness. To be authentic means that to be true to oneself and to be realistic. “It requires acting in ways congruent with your own values and needs, even at the risk of criticism or rejection. And it's necessary for close relationships, because intimacy cannot develop without openness and honesty.”<sup>48</sup> Authenticity of the individual affects his/her relatedness. When one is not honest in relating with oneself, the same self-deceptive formula will be carried over to other relationships. To be genuine means to be authentic in the relational world of the individual.

What happens to individuals who are not able to accept themselves as who they are? Can they be positive and productive in their relationships with themselves? The inability to accept what each individual is shows the inability of the individual to relate to oneself. Wrong understanding or a false image about oneself may lead the individual to self-denial. “Partial self-rejection, or the refusal by a person to accept some aspect of himself, involves a partial non-coincidence of a person as subject with himself as an objectively real being: the image in his mind of himself as he wants to be does not match the image he has of himself as he actually is. This makes for tension, discontent and hostile envy.”<sup>49</sup> When he/she is not competent to accept himself/herself as he/she is, withdrawing from relationships and inhibitions happen in making relationships. Relational self-acceptance assures a safe ground to build up the relationship of the individual with himself/herself. Self-awareness and being content with oneself prompts the individual to be authentic in his/her relationships. Relational self-acceptance presupposes relational self-love.

## 1.4 Relational Self-Love

Relational self-identity reveals the individual as who he/she is in relationships, relational self-esteem shows the individual what he/she is and what he/she is capable of, and relational self-acceptance deals with the question of whether the individual is content with himself/herself. The last step in this linking process is self-love, which confronts the individual with the question of whether he/she is loveable. What is the role of relational self-love in the relationship with oneself? “Healthy love of self... is psychologically and spiritually foundational, for unless we so relate to ourselves we have nothing wherewith to bless

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<sup>48</sup> Wright, Karen, *Dare to Be Yourself: Being True to Oneself is Not for the Faint of Heart*, [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com), Accessed on 24.08.2013

<sup>49</sup> Cowburn, John, *Love*, 31

others. Lacking respect and love for oneself, humans will project on others their own inner wounds and anxieties.”<sup>50</sup> Relational self-love serves as a mirror of people’s relationships.

Susan Taylor is of the opinion that, “Self-love is the starting point for everything.”<sup>51</sup> “The concept of self-love is about recognizing your value at all times. It’s being OK with yourself before, during, and after you set out on your journey.”<sup>52</sup> Self-love is very important in the level of our love towards our neighbour. (cf. Mk 12:31) We should not get mixed up between selfishness and self-love. “More significantly, self-love is not synonymous with selfishness.”<sup>53</sup> Selfishness is one type of self-centeredness of the individual and the relational radius of the individual only turns around oneself. John Cowburn explains why self-love is important for the development of a positive self-image. “...self-love gives a person the confidence, the energy and the strength which he or she needs to be creative and enterprising and to have stamina.”<sup>54</sup> Strong self-love is necessary to achieve the measure of one’s ability. Martin Geigenbauer would say that, “Only a quiet man is the loved one. Everything else is illusion.”<sup>55</sup> Relational self-love is a healthy foundation for the development of the individual.

John Welwood portrays how relational self-love is necessary in order to be open to oneself and to experience one’s natural core in relationship with oneself. According to him, in this process of linking with oneself, the unconditional love we receive from others and our own self-love are interconnected. “Absolute love is not something that we have or that we can even concoct or fabricate. It is what comes through us naturally when we fully open up to another person, to ourselves, or to life. In relation to another, it manifests itself as selfless caring. In relation to ourselves, it shows up as inner confidence and self-acceptance that warms us from within. ...When we experience this kind of openness and warmth coming from another, it provides essential nourishment; it helps us experience our own warmth and openness, allowing us to recognize the beauty and goodness at the core of our nature.”<sup>56</sup> As a result of the unconditional love we experience from others, it enkindles life in the individual. “In

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<sup>50</sup> Beck, James R., Demarest, Bruce *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 333-334

<sup>51</sup> Aitcheson, Connie *Spirit Begins with Self-Love*, 132

<sup>52</sup> Holmes, Tamara E. *To Love or to Loathe? Value Yourself despite the Circumstance*, <http://www.questia.com>, Accessed on 06.09.2013

<sup>53</sup> Cowburn, John *Love*, 26

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 29

<sup>55</sup> „Der einzig ruhige Mensch ist der geliebte Mensch. Alles andere ist Illusion!“ (Martin Schleske, Geigenbauer *Der Klang vom unerhörten Sinn des Lebens*, 81)

<sup>56</sup> Welwood, John *Absolute Love*, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), Accessed on 06.09.2013

helping us connect with the radiant aliveness within us, it reveals our essential beauty and power, where we are one with life itself because we are fully transparent to life. ... You experience the essential dignity and nobility of your existence, which does not depend on anyone else's approval or validation.”<sup>57</sup>

Is relational self-love connected with the emotional happiness of the individual? John Makujina states that relational self-love is necessary in relating with oneself, because it contributes to the emotional happiness of the person. “This element of self-love within man seeks honor, position, acceptance, love, loyalty, and companionship from others.”<sup>58</sup> Fulfilling those emotional needs are part of the individual's self-love. Relational self-love is connected with the emotional happiness of the individual.

What happens when the individual does not have a healthy relational self-love? What is the consequence when this self-love is inappropriate? Geraint Smith would formulate it this way: “The modern definition of narcissism named after the youth in Greek mythology who fell in love with his own reflection is excessive and dysfunctional self-love.”<sup>59</sup> In excessive self-love the individual circles around himself/herself and does not attempt to come out of his/her self-centeredness. Self-centeredness is a wrong way of relating with oneself. The question of a relationship with others does not appear because of the egoistic attitude. Inordinate self-love is a wrong understanding of one's own superior qualities.<sup>60</sup> The narcissists' approach to relationships is directed by two aspects: they think very highly of themselves and they are less open for relational intimacy.<sup>61</sup> The lack of relational self-love blocks the individual from forming intimate relationships. When intimate relationships are not built up, the growth of relational skills and qualities of the individual begins to suffer. Keith Kammell speaks of the consequences in the individual's relational world when the individual suffers from a lack of relational self-love. It affects not only one's own relatedness with oneself but also in other relationships too. “Perhaps individuals who do not love themselves do not believe that others can love them and thus avoid healthy love relationships. Or perhaps if individuals do not love themselves, they select bad relationships as part of an overall self-destructive

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<sup>57</sup> Welwood, John *Absolute Love*, www.questia.com, Accessed on 06.09.2013

<sup>58</sup> Makujina, John *The Second Greatest Commandment and Self-Esteem*, 222

<sup>59</sup> Smith, Geraint, *All You Need Is Self-Love If You Want to Be the Best*, www.questia.com, Accessed on 06.09.2013

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Bushman, Brad J.; Baumeister, Roy F. *Threatened Egotism, Narcissism, Self-Esteem and Direct and Displaced Aggression: Does Self-Love or Self-Hate Lead to Violence?* 220

<sup>61</sup> Kammell, Kieth W.; Foster, Craig A.; Finkel, Eli. J. *Does Self-Love Lead To Love For Others? A Story Of Narcissistic Game Playing*, 341

strategy.”<sup>62</sup> Relational self-identity, relational self-esteem, relational self-acceptance and relational self-love are part of the process of linking with the individual. The relationship with oneself remains as the foundation for the development of a relationship with others, nature and God.

## 2. Linking with Others

### 2.1 Relational Solidarity

A healthy sense of relational self-identity, relational self-esteem, relational self-acceptance and relational self-love enables the individual to be secure in himself/herself and to be aware of his/her self-relational network. The basic foundation for the development of the relationship is built up in the process of linking with oneself. The second step in developing the relational paradigm for pastoral care is linking with others. “In order for an individual of any age to relate psychologically to another person, the individual must have a sense of self. Interpersonal relationships occur between two or more persons, and participants in these relationships must have at least a rudimentary sense of self that is distinct from a sense of the other.”<sup>63</sup> The ability to establish and maintain a quality of social relationships with others is part and parcel of every human being, and the social ability of the person is perceived from that point of view.<sup>64</sup> Martin Buber confirms the fact that, “To be is to be related; everything in the world is being with others.”<sup>65</sup> The development of the individual and the growth of the relationship skills of the individual depend on one’s social interaction with others. Relatedness with others takes place in every pastoral field in a different way. The important aspect is that individuals communicate with others and therefore, chances for relationships are born.

Relational solidarity is entering into the world of others in relationship through a mutual sharing of talents, abilities, time, service etc. It creates opportunities for individuals to enhance their relationship skills through interaction with others. It is a process of identified sharing. According to Buber, “To speak the primary word I-Thou means to enter into relationship.”<sup>66</sup> Relationship means to enter into the world of others and it enriches both individuals. It is important to

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<sup>62</sup> Kampell, Kieth W.; Foster, Craig A.; Finkel, Eli. J. *Does Self-Love Lead To Love For Others? A Story Of Narcissistic Game Playing*, 340

<sup>63</sup> Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 352

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Ibid, 364-365

<sup>65</sup> Mundackal James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 103-104

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 79

note that relational solidarity does not come out of empathy but is a shared experience.<sup>67</sup> Relational solidarity is a means for the individual to link with others.

How does relational solidarity take place? Relational solidarity can take place in every pastoral field in different ways depending upon the situations of the individual and the pastoral set-up. The way relational solidarity is carried out in a parish will be different from that of an educational institution and still will be diverse in the social field. How can one individual show relational solidarity in the parishes? Providing occasions for close interaction with the parish members is the first step. The aim of such opportunities is always to strengthen the relational skills of the individuals in the pastoral field so that they can nurture their relational abilities with others. Relational solidarity requires that acceptance of the other is a prerequisite to enter into relationship with them. Marie Luise Gubler goes one step further and relates that the loving acceptance of others in the parish is the way to recognize God.<sup>68</sup> The chances to show solidarity are plentiful at the parish level.

What does relational solidarity mean at the parish level? Relational solidarity means to be part of the parish life. Becoming a member of different groups in the parish or taking a leading role in parish activities automatically leads the individual to relationship with others, and it is also a means to link with others. "Healthy relationships are fostered by self-disclosure (telling you who I am), listening (you telling me who you are), and communication by dialogue, including the sharing of feelings and emotions."<sup>69</sup> Participation in the groups demands the individual opens oneself up to others and to be open to others. Lots of sharing and exchanging of feelings takes place in every interaction of the individual with others. Visiting the sick and those who are living alone, and bringing communion to the sick are some of the means for relational solidarity with others at the parish level where the individual can interact with others and deepen one's relationship with others. Federic Joseph Kelly reminds us about the responsibility of each member of the Church to participate in the concerns of society. It is the duty of Christians to participate fully and naturally in all the rightful concerns of human society, and also to actively be a part of all the

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. Clarke, Katherine M. *Dimensions of Human Relationship*, 9

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Gubler, Marie-Louise *Wer sagt, er sei im Licht, aber seinen Bruder hasst, ist noch in der Finsternis*. (1 John 2:9) 227

<sup>69</sup> Beck, James R., Demarest, Bruce *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 336

strivings of human beings to build a better world.<sup>70</sup> Such occasions can create opportunities for the individual to link in relationship with others.

Relational solidarity with others also means showing care and concern for others' needs. What is important in this process, more than the help that is offered, is the strengthening and growth of the relationship. The individual should not lose oneself in the process of relational solidarity with others. Only a balanced way of solidarity can bring the expected result in relational solidarity. "A balance is required between our own needs and the need of others. Tending to others and putting their needs on an equal footing with our own creates connections between us and others. Sharing other's lives in this way, we enlarge our own selfhood."<sup>71</sup>

How does relational solidarity can take place in an educational setting? What are the possibilities open to the students? How can a student experience solidarity with others? Solidarity is experienced in the support and sharing of their intellectual abilities with their fellow students. It has to do with learning through others. Sharing intellectual abilities means students who are talented and intelligent should be concerned with their fellow students who may be intellectually poor. It is a means for the students to develop relationships with other students. Mutual sharing of talents among the students can be another means of relational solidarity. Both individuals benefit from the mutual sharing. The interaction level of the students increases in this process of solidarity with other students. The chances for knowing someone closer is high and as a result of it a relationship can emerge.<sup>72</sup>

Sound competition among the students can lead to another type of relational solidarity. The aim of the competition must be not to put anyone down but a chance for each one to be challenged and to excel at the academic level. Competition must be there but it must be a competition which helps the individual to grow. Then the question of winner and loser is insignificant because what is important is the growth. The individual is encouraged to do his/her best and is under positive pressure. Such occasions provide occasions for trusting interaction with fellow students and can lead to a deepening in their relatedness.

Tutoring is another means for the students to experience relational solidarity with others. The students themselves offer coaching to the students in the lower

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Kelly, Frederic Joseph *Man before God: Thomas Merton on Social Responsibility*, 194

<sup>71</sup> Clarke, Katherine M. *Dimensions of Human Relationship*, 10

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 116

classes. In the Indian context, it is usual that students render such services and most of the time consciously accepts less monetary support for their services because of their identification with the younger students. The relatedness developed here is another form of relationship but these opportunities help the individual to cultivate his/her relationship skills and to bond with others.

The aim of all the different relational solidarity exposures in the parish, school or society aims to bring the individual into association with others. Individuals can grow in their relationships only when openings are provided. Failing to enter into relationship with others may deprive the individual of his personal dignity.<sup>73</sup> Human beings can function well only when they are in relationship with others.<sup>74</sup> Human beings can strengthen their relationships only through their social interactions; it will enhance their personalities too.

## 2.2 Relational Community Experiences

Having seen how events of relational solidarity can enrich the relationality of the individual, I will now look at how community experiences can be a channel for the individual to connect with others. How can relational community experiences contribute to the development of the individual's relationship? How are one's relational qualities strengthened through communitarian activities? The occasions of different community experiences for the individuals, whether it may be in the schools or at the parish level, open new horizons for opportunities that enable individuals to connect with others because of the community purposes or programs. "Relationships are discovered by sharing and participating in relational networks in a living parish, school class and youth group in whose center lives Jesus Christ, the Lord."<sup>75</sup> An individual is formed through one's interaction with others or having communion with others.<sup>76</sup> To be part of a group and interact with others is different from the personal relationships which the individual forms in one's social life.

Can the relational community experience strengthen the relational qualities of the individual? Working in a group greatly supports the individual in forming

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 93

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 348-349

<sup>75</sup> „Beziehungen erschließt man durch Teilhabe und Teilnahme an Beziehungsnetzen in einer lebendigen Gemeinde, Schulklasse und Jugendgruppe, in deren Zentrum Jesus Christus, der Herr, selbst steht.“ (Biesinger, Albert; Schmitt, Christoph *Gottesbeziehung. Hoffnungsversuche für Schule und Gemeinde*, 71)

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 158

relationships with others. The support and strength derived from community experiences is tremendous. That is why Scott Peck opines that community experiences contribute a sense of empowerment because, “Out of the strength of your community you will be able to do things you never thought you were capable of.”<sup>77</sup> The sense of confidence which the community relationship facilitates is seen in the relational world of the individual too. Societal elements of a relationship in the individual’s relationality will be integrated through the community activities. In the parishes the liturgical groups, bible study groups, youth groups, and the social engagements of the parish in any underprivileged places can contribute greatly to the relational development of the individual. Each group has an identity according to its task. The individual yearns to be identified with the character of the group and has to adapt to this identity and work with others in the group. It is challenging on the one hand, but on the other hand it is enriching for the individual.

What are the possibilities available in educational institutions? In observing the Indian educational institutions, there are different programs where the students have to work in groups or with the whole college or school community. College day or school day<sup>78</sup> celebrations provide the students opportunities in which they perform different dances and other cultural programs in front of the invited guests, teachers, parents and others. It requires time for the students to plan together, to work out the details and to execute it. During this process, each individual automatically forms relationships with others and each such celebration is a chance to mould the relational qualities of the individual. To work with the team or group always needs adjusting and understanding on the part of the individual. Arts and Sports Day<sup>79</sup> celebrations or different Language Academies<sup>80</sup> and Cultural Academies<sup>81</sup> in each educational institution offers the students the opportunity for more community experiences.

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<sup>77</sup> Peck, Scott M. *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, 329

<sup>78</sup> It is an annual celebration conducted in most of the educational institutions in India. Teachers, students, college or school authorities, parents and well-wishers of the institute will be invited for this day. It can be understood as a patron day celebration.

<sup>79</sup> It is usual in the Indian educational institutions to have Arts and Sports Day where the individuals can perform their talents in sports and arts activities. Most of the time the whole college will be divided into different groups and there will be individual competitions and group competitions both in the arts and sports fields.

<sup>80</sup> Language Academies aim at promoting vernacular languages and English language. All the programs will be conducted only in one language depending on the language academy.

<sup>81</sup> Culture Academy is a term used for the meeting where the students can perform their artistic talents to develop their ability. Depending on the schools it may take place once in a week or once in a month.



It is not always pleasant for the individuals to work with a group or community. They will face different challenges, they will sometimes be confronted with their own limitations, they have to bear criticism and look upon themselves with a realistic viewpoint, they will feel ashamed of themselves for certain things, and inhibitions can block them from interacting with others spontaneously; but after all, the interaction abilities of the individual will have grown by the end of the activities. There may also be times where the individual will suffer from an inferiority complex or low self-esteem.

Community programs in the educational institutions include not only academics but also social exposure programs. Involvement in the social programs which are organized by the educational institutions are an advantage to the students because they have additional opportunities for community experiences. What is different in this social exposure program is that they have to work together to help someone or to clean some common places like the streets, or to visit the homes of mentally retarded children, orphanages or old age homes. All these different social community experiences have an impact on the development of the individual's relational skills because the individual has to adapt himself and relate to the different situations. This adaptation is possible for the individual because of his/her communitarian experience. This communitarian involvement delivers a group belongingness and acceptance in the individual. "As we are accepted in community, we learn to accept ourselves. As we are forgiven in community, we learn to forgive ourselves. As we are loved in community, we learn to love ourselves."<sup>82</sup> This acceptance and self-love which we receive from our community experiences gives more confidence to the individual to be able to connect with others.

Relational community experiences allow the individual to participate in the lives of many people and to share their lives with those whom they serve or work with in the community or group. This group relational experience reveals to the individual the different dimensions of how one acts and reacts in their relationships with others. Some of the disclosures can be positive and encouraging but there can be also other elements which need further growth so that the individual matures in the relationship with others.

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<sup>82</sup> Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 340

## 2.3 Relational Empowerment

Relational solidarity with others allows the individuals more openings for relationships and the relational communitarian experiences enhance the relationship qualities of the individual. Opportunities for relationships and community experiences lead the individual to another growth level which is relational empowerment. Relational empowerment happens when the individual allows others to come into his/her relationship world. It is a positive outcome of good and genuine relationships with others. It is necessary for the individual to leave his/her own world and to get into relationships with others. That is why Buber says that, “Unless man, occasionally at least, leaves the world of knowledge and experience and steps into the world of relationship, the deepest levels of human existence will remain closed to him and he will not attain authentic personality. If man is to become a true self, he must often enter the world of relationship where persons meet as I and Thou, and where there is – is refers back to the world of relationship which is singular mutual self-disclosure and fellowship.”<sup>83</sup> According to the depth of mutual sharing and openness, empowerment in the relationship can be facilitated.

What is relational empowerment in the relationship? Why is empowerment important in the development of the relational skills of the individuals? Empowerment is a process by which the individual is enabled to take control over his/her relational world. Empowerment in relationships indicates that the relational qualities of the individual are strengthened through the mutual relationship with others. It is a way of complementing and enriching the relational skills of the individual. Empowering does not mean to use power and control over others and make them to do what is to be done, as in the socialization process of the children.<sup>84</sup> Empowerment can influence the individual only when it takes place within the framework of trust and cooperation.

The human counterpart in the relationship is the deciding element in relational empowerment. Both persons in the relationship grow as a result of their relationship or relatedness. “The psychological perception that the human person will only find himself/herself through his counterpart, seems to me of fundamental importance. The human counterpart is absolutely indispensable for the

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<sup>83</sup> Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 96

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Balwick, Jack O.; King, Pamela Ebstyn; Reimer, Kevin S. *The Reciprocating Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective*, 60-61

formation of one's identity."<sup>85</sup> Scott Peck highlights why we need each other to have meaning in our lives. "Yet the reality is that we are inevitably social creatures who desperately need each other not merely for sustenance, not merely for company, but for any meaning to our lives whatsoever."<sup>86</sup>

Is there any connection between empowerment and the identity of the individual? Relational empowerment is necessary in a relationship for individuals to find their true identity as individuals. "The true identity of an individual can be gauged by the extent and the mode of right relationship with others that this identity entails upon the individual."<sup>87</sup> The identity of a person means that the individual has the knowledge of who he/she is. Since in the relationship with others the individual comes to know about one better from the perspective of the other, it helps him/her to find his/her identity because, "An individual is fully realized in a relationship with another unique being, a Thou."<sup>88</sup> They experience an individual's true identity because, "Relationship is the place of the reality of man."<sup>89</sup> The true picture of the individual comes into play in relationships and that is why relational empowerment can contribute to the identity of the individual.

Relational empowerment ensures the integral development of the person through his/her relationship. It depends on the varieties of relationships each one encounters in the midst of daily activities. "When a person is really able to meet his fellowmen, to enter into dialogue with others, then and only then does his authentic personality emerge, he becomes himself. It is only through responding with his whole being to the unique situation in which he finds himself, to the other who addresses him, through becoming whole and finding his truest personal direction, that man becomes an authentic person that only he can become."<sup>90</sup> The whole individual person is involved in the relationship and this is what gives an integral touch to relationship. Such integral development is possible because every relationship with others is unique, and each relation-

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<sup>85</sup> „Von grundsätzlicher Bedeutung erscheint mir die psychologische Erkenntnis, dass der Mensch erst am Du zum Ich wird. Das menschliche Gegenüber ist schlechthin unverzichtbar für die Identitätsbildung.“ (Zimmerling, Peter *Die Bedeutung der Gemeinschaft für den Menschen angesichts der Postmoderne*, 218)

<sup>86</sup> Peck, Scott M. *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, 55

<sup>87</sup> Wesley, Arun Kumar *Serendipity and The Joy of Discovering Oneself in the Quest for Identity*, 203

<sup>88</sup> Cohn, Felicia *Existential Medicine: Martin Buber and Physician-Patient Relationships*, 171

<sup>89</sup> Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 105

<sup>90</sup> Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 104

ship enhances the relational life of the individual. This leads to the integral development of the relationship of the person.

An integral development of the relationship can lead the individual to experience the divine element in their mutual relationships. Betty Blanton describes that, "Whenever I truly love another person, the act of that loving evokes the presence of God in me, in the person loved, and in the situation. It is not ours merely to search for God, but to accept the responsibility that is ours to evoke his presence among us in our relationships with other people."<sup>91</sup> Thomas Small would say that we are who we are in our relationships with one another. Because of our complementarity as men and women our mutual relationships mirror the purpose of the creative work of God.<sup>92</sup> Franz Gruber relates that the horizontal level of the human person's relationship alone will not bring about the fullness of a person, but it is possible only when the person is allowed to be recognized as a counterpart by the transcendental reality.<sup>93</sup>

Lorrie Sippola and William Bukowski demonstrate how relational empowerment can influence and change individuals when there are enhancing and enriching relationships with others. "The claim is that through one's interaction with a friend, one not only has opportunities for the positive and stimulating experiences that derive from companionship but unique opportunities to learn how one is seen by a caring and equal other. By experiencing this degree of acceptance and validation from one's friend, the self is believed to be enhanced in both valence (it becomes more positive) and content (one's strengths and weaknesses are clarified)."<sup>94</sup> Creative tensions and opportunities for growth are part of the association which complements the individual's relationships. The lack of such complementing and enriching relationships in the lives of individuals can create socially inappropriate persons who create frustration and misunderstanding, and who may fail to deal with life in a right way.<sup>95</sup>

James Beck and Bruce Demarest argue that even in this process of relational empowerment, individuals tend to be selective in their relationships with others. We build up the relationship according to what we observe in others and how we understand their motives. "Each party to the new relationship displays

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<sup>91</sup> Blanton, Betty L. *God's Continuing Incarnation Through Us*, 39-40

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Small, Thomas A. *In the Image of the Triune God*, 23

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Gruber, Franz *Was ist der Mensch (Psalm 8:5/I.Kant). Theologische Anthropologie im biotechnischen Zeitalter*, 65

<sup>94</sup> Bukowski, William M., Sippola, Lorrie K. *Friendship and Development: Putting the Most Human Relationship in its Place*, 93

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 364

a self-presentation style that either enhances or hinders the development of the relationship. Relationships develop when the parties have a need for affiliation and a desire to associate with one another.”<sup>96</sup> Michael Klessman substantiates that, “From my relationships with others grows the chance to relate to myself, to make my own self the object and to perceive myself as self in relationship with manifold and varied qualities of relationships.”<sup>97</sup> He continues that from this foundation all other relatedness of the individual can flourish. “From there grows the ability to enter into relationship with our surroundings, to perceive these relationships as the biological basis of life, to value and to cultivate them.”<sup>98</sup> Relational solidarity is sharing the relationship on the part of the individual, and the relational community experience is participation of the individual in the relationships of others. Relational empowerment elevates the relational qualities of the individual. All these processes lead the individual to connect with others in relationships.

### 3. Linking with Nature

#### 3.1 Environmental Challenges

The relationships that humans need are not limited to our fellow beings alone. Nature is part of the relational world of the human being. To link the individual with nature, everything that is related with nature also has to be dealt with. The surroundings in which we live influence our lives more now than in early times. Environment is used here in a wider sense to involve all the different elements which influence the individual’s relationships along with the natural world. The aim is to look at environmental challenges from the human being’s relational point of view and how they are part of the our relational world.

What are the environmental challenges that we experience today? How do they affect our relationships? Why do we even have to think about environmental challenges? “We confront a crisis never before faced in the three-and-a-half billion years of life on Earth. We have come to understand that human beings

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<sup>96</sup> Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 365

<sup>97</sup> „...aus der Beziehung zu Anderen erwächst die Möglichkeit, sich zu sich selbst zu verhalten, das eigene Selbst zum Objekt der Wahrnehmung und Betrachtung zu machen, also eine Beziehung zu sich selbst aufzunehmen und sich selbst in der Vielfalt und unterschiedlichen Qualität der Beziehungen – als der bzw. dieselbe wahrzunehmen“ (Klessman, Michael *Seelsorge*, 36)

<sup>98</sup> „Daraus erwächst dann auch die Fähigkeit, in Beziehung zur Umwelt zu treten, sie als biologische Grundlage des Lebens wahrzunehmen, wertzuschätzen und entsprechend zu pflegen.“ (Ibid)

have the power to destroy or to save life on our planet.”<sup>99</sup> “We can see from this some of the complexity of our relationship to the land and soil. This disruption is in need of healing, of being made whole again. We are only just beginning to understand the implications of our brokenness in this regard, through the efforts of the environmental movement.”<sup>100</sup> Environmental movements that we have begun are now interpreted by Niel Ormerod as the first step for healing the wounds of nature, which have been caused by humans in the last decades. Ian Barbour notes that, “Only science can supply the data for evaluating the threats to the environment arising from our technologies and our lifestyles...”<sup>101</sup> The development in technologies changes the lives and lifestyles of people. It also affects the attitude of the human being towards their environment and the way people relate with environment changes.

Environmental challenges increased when human beings neglected their relationality with the natural world. “Human activity has affected even the most remote parts of the planet. Human ingenuity has also created wealth on an undreamed-of scale and we have learned how to extract resources for our use, but it has sometimes posed extreme danger to the quality and sustainability for the balance of nature.”<sup>102</sup> The World Wide Fund for Nature warned us in their Living Planet Report for 2004 that exploitation by human beings has crossed the boundaries in plundering the natural resources. “Stating that the human race is plundering the planet at a pace that outstrips its capacity to support life, the report says humans currently consume 20 percent more natural resources than the Earth can produce, and that populations of terrestrial, freshwater, and marine species fell between 1970 and the year 2000. Humanity will not be able to pay off its ecological debt unless it restores the balance between the Earth’s natural resources and its ability to renew them.”<sup>103</sup> Lack of care for the environment is considered as the most serious sin of the modern era.<sup>104</sup> G. Philips points to the fact that the root causes of the crises in nature is the wrong understanding of Gen 1:27-29.<sup>105</sup> “Shaped by contemplation of the sacredness of the living earth, the prophetic stance names new sins against God’s gracious will:

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<sup>99</sup> Edwards, Denis *Creation, Humanity, Community: Building a New Theology*, 5

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Ormerod, Neil *Creation, Grace and Redemption*, 41

<sup>101</sup> Barbour, Ian *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, Partners?* 33

<sup>102</sup> *Building a Future in Which Human Beings Live in Harmony with Nature*,

www.questia.com, Accessed on 24.05.2012

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Gay, Robert *Creation, Ecology and the Loral Life: How Should Catholics be Environmentalists?* 48

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Points, Philip *Nature-Man-God: A Post-Modern View*, 11-14

biocide, ecocide, genocide.”<sup>106</sup> Patricia Mische depicts how the population increase creates imbalance because of the extensive use of resources of nature.<sup>107</sup> Some of the serious environmental challenges, according to Denis Edwards are, “The hole in the ozone layer, global warming, the destruction of the Earth’s great forests, the loss of topsoil, the spread of deserts, the pollution of our atmosphere, land, rivers and seas – all of this is like a great cry of distress from the Earth itself, warning us that we have arrived at an unparalleled moment of choice in the history of our planet.”<sup>108</sup> Boloz Wojcieh writes that we have exploited nature in such way that nature lost its ability of self-renewal because human greed was stronger than the responsibility with which we were entrusted.<sup>109</sup>

How does the environmental challenge change human relationships? Personal human interaction has taken another twist with the development of new communication technologies. “With technology, human interaction may be sacrificed in the name of expediency, subordinated to another goal, or neglected entirely.”<sup>110</sup> Lepko Zbigniew explains that all the technological developments which have a direct impact on the natural environment can also bring about grave consequences for the human being.<sup>111</sup> Arnold Brown states that due to increasing technological development, relationships have taken on a digital dimension.<sup>112</sup> Human interaction has been substituted by technological interaction. He warns that, “Once humans begin to perceive virtual social interactions as actually having occurred, it will greatly impact individuals, relationships, communities, and society as a whole.”<sup>113</sup>

Every individual has a different environmental heritage which he or she carries throughout life. Depending on this mental template of the individual, an attitude towards the environment is formed. Cohen Stewart explains this through his findings of how children of varying residential and cultural settings acquire attitudes towards the natural environment. “Rural children, for example, are more at ease within natural systems, while urban children possess greater facility in addressing the varied issues and problems associated with manufac-

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<sup>106</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, And Creator Spirit*, 67

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Mische, Patricia M. *The Integrity of Creation: Challenges and Opportunities for Praxis*, 595

<sup>108</sup> Edwards, Denis *Creation, Humanity, Community: Building a New Theology*, 5

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Wojcieh, Boloz *Integrated Protection of the Environment in the Works of John Paul II*, 14

<sup>110</sup> Cohn, Felicia *Existential Medicine: Martin Buber and Physician-Patient Relationships*, 172

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Lepko, Zbigniew *Towards the Ecological Aesthetics of Nature*, 31

<sup>112</sup> Brown, Arnold *Relationships, Community, and Identity in the New Virtual Society*, 29

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 31

tured environments. Greater awareness and more complete understanding of our presence within differing human-ecological systems is possible through exposure to varied environments.”<sup>114</sup> Eileen Parsons estimates that the environment impacts the whole individual. “The influence of the environment is subtle, pervasive, and unconscious; its effects are not limited to the mind but affect the whole individual.”<sup>115</sup> Though every individual has a fixed or inherited view towards the environment, new ways and means of looking at and interacting with the environment are attainable. “Each person’s environmental heritage is a dynamic, ever-changing composite of past and contemporary experiences. New encounters contribute to an ever-changing mosaic and result in new ways of looking at the environment. The distinct and multiple impressions that we form over time are the result of accumulated aesthetic, cultural and personal sentiments acquired through daily and multifaceted contact with our environment.”<sup>116</sup>

What is the role of the environment in developing relationships with nature? Learning about the environment can be influenced by the individual’s beliefs, in the opinion of Glenn Rideout. “In an examination of the formative context within which students’ beliefs develop, it is necessary to identify some of the confounding variables that complicate the relationship between the learning environment and students’ beliefs. There is no exclusive symbiotic relationship. Both are influenced by a wide range of contextual factors such as the media, social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others...”<sup>117</sup> “The value of nature experienced by man determines the quality of his relations with his natural habitat.”<sup>118</sup> The more human beings are exposed to the natural environment, the better their relationship with nature will be.

Regaining the lost “integrity of creation”<sup>119</sup> is a big task for today’s world and society according to Lepko Zbigniew. The reason for all the ecological crises is the wrong human perception of nature.<sup>120</sup> Human beings forgot to deal with nature at home where they dwell. But human beings understand nature as an

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<sup>114</sup> Cohen, Stewart *Children and the Environment: Aesthetic Learning*, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), Accessed on 07.25.2013

<sup>115</sup> Parsons, Eileen Carlton *A Teacher's Use of the Environment to Facilitate the Social Development of Children*, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), accessed on 25.07.2013

<sup>116</sup> Cohen, Stewart *Children and the Environment: Aesthetic Learning*, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), Accessed on 25.07.2013

<sup>117</sup> Rideout, Glenn W. *Educational Beliefs and the Learning Environment*, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), Accessed on 24.07.2013

<sup>118</sup> Lepko, Zbigniew *Towards the Ecological Aesthetics of Nature*, 30

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Mische, Patricia M. *The Integrity of Creation: Challenges and Opportunities for Praxis*, 594

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Lepko, Zbigniew *Towards the Ecological Aesthetics of Nature*, 29



eternal resource. The powerful technical means of human beings and the desire for consumption encouraged humans to exploit nature. Exploitation of the natural environment reached the extreme level where reconstruction of the natural environment is difficult.<sup>121</sup> According to Rosemary Ruether, we have to go back to the holistic view in which man, nature and society form a single community.<sup>122</sup> Awareness about environmental challenges encourages the individual to be aware of the mannerisms that may influence and determine the relational world.

### 3.2 Relational Involvement in Ecological Issues

The environmental challenges draw the real picture of the world in which we live. Awareness of those hazardous issues alone does not solve the problems. How does relational involvement in ecological issues lead the individual to link with nature? What are the possibilities for human beings? Andrew Gabriel enlightens us with, “Theology of nature is concerned with presenting the theological status of nature in light of God’s relationship with the natural world and the implications this has for humans living in the midst of it.”<sup>123</sup> The human being is always directly affected by changes in the natural environment and they are reflected in the relationships. Pope Benedict forewarned that human beings have to protect themselves against their own destruction. It is necessary to have an ecology of human beings along with the ecology of the environment, and we cannot just focus on one species or one area of the environment. The nature of man and the nature of the environment have to go hand in hand. Environmental challenges affect human beings now more than in earlier days.<sup>124</sup>

Conducting awareness programs is the beginning of a relational involvement in ecological issues. It can create an opportunity for the individual to more easily build a rapport between the human and nature. Awareness programs in the schools, parishes and in our pastoral field will help people change their attitudes towards nature and their surroundings. “Thus religious institutions, including Christian churches, should not overlook their normative role with regard to the integrity of creation. Through their education and formation pro-

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<sup>121</sup> Cf. Wojcieh, Boloz *Integrated Protection of the Environment in the Works of John Paul II*, 16

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Bouma-Prediger, Steven *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler, and Jürgen Moltmann*, 31

<sup>123</sup> Gabriel, Andrew K. *Pneumatological Perspectives for a Theology of Nature: The Holy Spirit in Relation to Ecology and Technology*, 195

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Bramwell, Bevil *Pope Benedict XVI and the Environment*, 40-43

grams the churches can help their members develop a consciousness, conscience, and codes of behaviour regarding their relationships with the natural world as an integral part of their spiritual development and practice.”<sup>125</sup> The more we involve ourselves in ecological issues and become part of them, the more our attachment to nature and our environment will grow.

Ecological harmony is another way of relational involvement with ecological issues. That means teaching the individuals to live in, “Ecological harmony, which describes learning to live our lives in a way that is compatible with the limits imposed on us by the natural world. Educators must be committed to promoting education which helps students live in harmony with the earth.”<sup>126</sup> Teaching this attitude of living will elevate the individuals towards a renewed relationship with nature.

Being a part of different preservation and conservation programs for natural treasures provides the individual an opportunity to be directly involved in the natural environment. Conducting such programs in educational institutions and parishes is part of being involved in ecological issues. To be part of such initiatives throws new light on the relatedness of the individual with nature. Joseph Kelly brings our attention to the fact that supporting the conservation programs on a local and national scale will enable individuals to have a kinship with all living things. “When individuals recognize their responsibility to maintain and care for trees in their community, they begin to understand their responsibility for the whole environment.”<sup>127</sup> Joseph Kelly continues by adding that involvement in such programs encourages individuals to look at living things not only as good for them alone, but also good in and of themselves.<sup>128</sup>

Elizabeth Johnson sees ecological challenges as a warning to change our relatedness to God and to the world. “At the most basic level, however, the ecological crisis requires us to rethink our idea of God and God’s relation to the world in order to direct our action aright in harmony with divine care.”<sup>129</sup> According to Philip Points, withdrawing from nature can ultimately lead us to withdraw from our other relationships.<sup>130</sup> Environmental challenges have an effect on

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<sup>125</sup> Mische, Patricia M. *The Integrity of Creation: Challenges and Opportunities for Praxis*, 593

<sup>126</sup> Graaf, Donald G. De; Jordan, Debra J. *Our Environment in Crisis - We Can Change the Future*, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), Accessed on 24.07.2013

<sup>127</sup> Hill, Sandra *Defining Community in Our Cities: Drawing Strength from Diversity*, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), Accessed on 18.07.2013

<sup>128</sup> Kelly, Frederic Joseph *Man before God: Thomas Merton on Social Responsibility*, 231

<sup>129</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, And Creator Spirit*, 40

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Points, Philip G. *Nature-Man-God: A Post-Modern View*, 21-22

the development of human behaviour. Wolfhart Pannenberg affirms that the behaviour of all species is connected with the environment, whatever the environment may be. "The breadth or narrowness, simplicity or complexity of the environment is, naturally, very different for the individual animal species. However, in all species behaviour is tied to the environment."<sup>131</sup> There are many occasions in the Bible which shows the connection between human behaviour and environment. "The Bible repeatedly connects human behaviour with responsibility to the environment. (cf. Lev 26, Deut 28)"<sup>132</sup> The coming of God's Kingdom includes a renewal of the human being with his environment. (cf. Rom 8:18)<sup>133</sup> Since the environment plays a vital role in human behaviour, any sort of involvement in the environment and nature will positively influence and enhance our relatedness with nature.

Are ethics and ecology related? Denis Edwards would say that, "Ecology is about interrelationships. Ecological action and ecological ethics depends upon seeing all things as relational."<sup>134</sup> Michael Northcott argues that it is necessary to recognize the connection between environmental crisis and social justice. As a solution to the environmental crisis, he suggests a cultivation of passion for justice.<sup>135</sup> "In one sense, grace consists in this, that the situation is offered to man. The human part of relationship consists in doing justice to the situation and not neglecting it."<sup>136</sup> Ecological ethics will influence the individuals to view the natural world as part of human beings and their relationships.

According to the structure and style of the Indian educational institutional situation, some of the ways in which we can cultivate a close relatedness between nature and the students are the students having their own small gardens with the families, developing gardens within the school campus, taking care of the trees on the school campus, planting a tree at home or at school and taking care of it throughout the year as a group or as individuals. All these events will nurture the children's attachment with nature and will help them to understand the interconnectedness of their lives with nature.

The relational involvement of individuals in ecological issues can lead them to a better understanding of their roles as members in the community. Sandra Hill

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<sup>131</sup> Pannenberg, Wolfhart *What is Man?* 4

<sup>132</sup> Berry, R.J. *One Lord, One World: The Evangelism of Environmental Care*, 25

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Zimmerling, Peter *Die Bedeutung der Gemeinschaft für den Menschen angesichts der Postmoderne*, 220

<sup>134</sup> Edwards, Denis *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology*, 114

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Northcott, Michael S. *Ecology and Christian Ethics*, 46

<sup>136</sup> Mundaackal James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 105

opines that the definition of the community includes the relationships of the people with their natural surroundings.<sup>137</sup> The goal of presenting environmental challenges and the relational involvement in ecological issues is to reflect what kind of a relationship the individual should have with the natural environment, and how it can improve or enhance the relationship with nature.

### 3.3 Relational-Covenantal Approach with Nature

The different challenges we face in today's environment and the ways and means we can participate in the ecological issues alone do not accomplish linking with nature. What is most important is to know what our right attitude must be towards nature. How should we make use of or relate with natural resources? God created human beings as stewards of creation, but human beings have forgotten their responsibility towards the natural environment. A new mode of relationship is necessary in order for the human being to link with nature. What kind of relationship will be supportive both for the well-being of the human being and the entire universe? A relational-covenantal approach with the natural environment is necessary for the preservation of nature for future generations, and also to enjoy the natural resources with due respect. The relational-covenantal approach towards the environment foresees a dignified method of relationship with nature. It is not only making use of nature but also nurturing it.

The relational-covenantal approach to nature consists of a right view, right appreciation and right use of creation. The right view of creation means that the natural world is a gift of God meant for us. The right appreciation for the created world includes the attitude of being thankful for creation. The right use grasps that nature is made for us to enjoy and use with responsibility for the future. Responsibility for future generations means not to exploit nature. The human being has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives which God has put at the service of his personal dignity.<sup>138</sup> The first step of becoming aware of creation reminds us of our moral responsibility. It is followed by appreciation which includes respect and value of creation. As a result, a dualistic mind-set of humans with nature becomes apparent and stewardship is born.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. Hill, Sandra, *Defining Community in Our Cities: Drawing Strength from Diversity*, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), Accessed on 18.07.2013

<sup>138</sup> Cf. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html), Accessed on 18.08.2012

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Brandt, Don *Stealing Creation's Blessings*, 68

Martha Kirkpatrick opines that our approach to nature and ecology is “grounded in our covenantal relationship with God.”<sup>140</sup> She continues that, “It is a covenantal approach that finds, in God’s promise and blessing, an understanding of the relationship between humans and all life as one of interconnectedness and interdependence.”<sup>141</sup> From this interconnectedness and interdependence arises a responsibility for the human beings to care for the environment; both because of the image of the representative of God, but also to act on behalf of God.<sup>142</sup> “Humanity is being challenged to opt consciously for a way of life which respects the interconnectedness of all creatures. In this context, the human community faces an urgent task in self-understanding: how are we to see ourselves in relationship to other creatures on this planet and beyond it?”<sup>143</sup> Harris Peter is of the opinion that the whole cosmos is intensely relational and the whole of creation itself has a relationship with the Creator. Ecology can be considered as the study of relationships.<sup>144</sup> The existence of the human being comes into expression through the relationship to the world,<sup>145</sup> and the medium for our relationship to our environment is our physical body.<sup>146</sup>

Can love of God and love of neighbour be connected in our relatedness with nature? John Wakareaga explains the relational-covenantal approach to environment by using the images of love of God and love of neighbour. Love of God is being conscious of the sacramentality of the earth, and love of neighbour can be realized in developing concern for others and for environmental conservation.<sup>147</sup> By justly sharing natural gifts, acknowledging that they are destined by God for all is also part of love of God.<sup>148</sup> Patricia Mische gives an additional and wider explanation of love of neighbour from an ecological point of view. “By extension, loving one’s neighbour also includes respecting their need for and right to water, food, shelter, and adequate resources. By further extension, one can see that loving one’s neighbours includes respect for the

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<sup>140</sup> Kirkpatrick, Martha “*For God So Loved the World: An Incarnational Ecology*, 198

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 210

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Marshall, I. Howard *Being Human: Made in the Image of God*, 60

<sup>143</sup> Edwards, Denis *Creation, Humanity, Community: Building a New Theology*, 6

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Harris, Peter *Environmental Concern Calls for Repentance and Holiness*, 12

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Cohn, Felicia *Existential Medicine: Martin Buber and Physician-Patient Relationships*, 170

<sup>146</sup> Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce, *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 319

<sup>147</sup> Wakareaga, John B.K. *Responsible Stewardship of the Environment: Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*, 153

<sup>148</sup> Okke, Paschal-Paul *Sacramental Life: A Divine Encounter*, 90

rights and needs of future generations. Those yet to come depend on our proper stewardship of resources on a finite planet.”<sup>149</sup>

The relational-covenantal approach to nature demands that human beings relate to every creature of the created world as part of our community and as our neighbours. The relationship with the created world is the same as our relationship to our neighbour. All created beings are in relationship with us. “Who is our neighbour: the Samaritan? the outcast? the enemy? Yes, yes of course. But it also the whale, the dolphin, and the rain forest. Our neighbour is the entire community of life, the entire universe. We must love it all as ourselves...”<sup>150</sup> Dealing with the created world as part of ourselves gives a new outlook in the human being’s relationship towards nature.

When the created world is understood as God’s body, then earth becomes the meeting place of God. “We meet God in the world and especially in the flesh of the world: in feeding the hungry, healing the sick.... We find God in caring for the garden, in loving the earth well.”<sup>151</sup> Paschal Paul Okke presents the caring of nature as a means of encountering God. “...We have to care for the environment by avoiding any form of pollution because it is fundamental to the universal good, since the health and well-being of all life depends on a healthy environment. ...Creation has its own relationship with God, in some measure independently of humankind and beyond human understanding... the destruction of nature can silence creation’s song of praise to God while preservation and care for creation can be a true expression of human praise for God’s initiative.”<sup>152</sup> The human being’s relationship to nature and the created world has to be seen as the dwelling place of God because of its unique relationship with God. Then the world is a sacred space where all live in harmony.

Rosemary Ruether calls the relational-covenantal approach to nature as Eco-Justice. “Eco-Justice implies a fundamental change of our entire system of relationships to each other and the world; from a system of violence and exploitation to that of a life-giving relationship on all levels; between classes, races, people on the one hand, and between people and land on the other.”<sup>153</sup> “Envi-

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<sup>149</sup> Mische, Patricia M. *The Integrity of Creation: Challenges and Opportunities for Praxis*, 594

<sup>150</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Women, Earth, And Creator Spirit*, 67,

<sup>151</sup> Mc Fague, Sallie *God’s Body, Our Home: Intimate Creation*, 42-43

<sup>152</sup> Okke, Paschal-Paul *Sacramental Life: A Divine Encounter*, 89

<sup>153</sup> „Öko-Gerechtigkeit“ bedeutet eine grundlegende Veränderung unseres gesamten Systems von Beziehungen zueinander und zur Erde, von einem System der Gewalt und Ausbeutung hin zu einem, das lebensspendende Beziehungen auf jeder Ebene unterhalten kann; zwischen Klassen und Rassen und Menschen einerseits und zwischen Menschen und dem Land andererseits.“

ronmental justice must put pressure on human beings to demonstrate justice towards fellow human beings and everything else on earth, including the land itself and all its resources.”<sup>154</sup> The right of way of social justice, according to Kevin Irwin, will be that we human beings are called to preserve the natural world that has been given to us because we are stewards. Since we are stewards we have to preserve it and are compelled to leave this earth in a better ecological state than we have received it.<sup>155</sup> John Wakareaga adds that a harmonious and good relationship with the living God, the sharing of the essential means of life without forgetting the future generations, is part of justice. We need to develop positive relationships between the other, the environment and ourselves.<sup>156</sup> This is possible, in the opinion of Marion Grau, when human beings change their attitude towards their environment. From the attitude of taking it for granted, we have to grow to develop an attitude of solidarity with all life on the planet.<sup>157</sup>

A relational-covenantal relationship with the environment is not possible without upholding the integrity of all creation. Denis Edwards is speaking of “...a positive commitment to the integrity of all creation”<sup>158</sup> as the solution for the problems of our planet. In order to keep up the integrity of creation, Edwards puts forth a new ethical norm governing all human behaviour in relation to nature; that all are interconnected within an ecological whole.<sup>159</sup> He continues that, “The integrity of creation is grounded not simply on our interconnection with all other creatures in an earth community and a cosmic community, but in the one God who is present to all creatures, sustaining and empowering them. ...It is grounded in the fact that every creature is sacramental, revealing and embodying something of the mystery and diversity of the Creator.”<sup>160</sup> The integrity of creation helps the human being to remain in relationship with the natural world and it ensures the harmony of creation through interdependence and interconnection.

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(Ruether, Rosemary Radford *Der Gott der Möglichkeiten: Neue Überlegungen zu Immanenz und Transzendenz*, 417)

<sup>154</sup> Wakareaga, John B.K. *Responsible Stewardship of the Environment: Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*, 135

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Irwin, Kevin W. *Liturgy, Justice, and Spirituality*, 174

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Wakareaga, John B.K. *Responsible Stewardship of the Environment: Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*, 141

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Grau, Marion *Elements of Renewal: Fourfold Wisdom*, 687-706

<sup>158</sup> Edwards, Denis *Creation, Humanity, Community: Building a New Theology*, 8

<sup>159</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 66- 67

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, 67

What happens when we do not have a relational-covenantal approach towards nature? How do we alienate ourselves from nature? Howard Clinebell deduces that, “Humankind’s alienation from our organic relatedness to the natural world”<sup>161</sup> is one meaning of the expulsion from the Garden. “We have an inner environmental crisis, an alienation from our deep rootedness in nature which impacts our total body-mind-spirit organism in unrecognized but wholeness-diminishing ways.”<sup>162</sup> As a result of alienation from our deep rootedness in nature, we began to divide God from nature and nature from God. That blocked us from comprehending that God can communicate in this world.<sup>163</sup> “If we continue to reject this programming and do not establish a friendly, respectful interaction with nature, we lose a vital slice of our humanness. Eventually we’ll also lose our beautiful planet home.”<sup>164</sup> Alienation from the natural world is an imbalance in the relational world of the human being and this is a consequence of the lack of the relational-covenantal approach to nature on the part of human beings.

Bernhard Anderson is of the opinion that we have to develop an approach towards nature which is salutary to all. We have to care for the environment as God would care for the environment. “Care for the environment belongs essentially to God’s creative and redeeming work that includes human beings universally and the nonhuman creation as well.”<sup>165</sup> Thomas Berry urges that, “We need to move from a spirituality of alienation from the natural world to a spirituality of intimacy with the natural world...from a spirituality concerned with justice simply for humans to a spirituality concerned with justice for all those other components of the great earth community.”<sup>166</sup>

A relational-covenantal approach towards nature will enable human beings to have a healthy relationship with the natural environment, and it will equip human beings to relate to the world as God relates to the world. Right appreciation and right use of natural resources enable human beings to avoid imbalances in their relationship to nature, and to relate to the created world as an integrated part of human life. Environmental challenges demand our relational

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<sup>161</sup> Clinebell, Howard *Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Toward an Ecological-Systems Model for Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 271

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 267

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Trost, Lou Ann *Theology’s Need for a New Interpretation of Nature: Correlate of the Doctrine of Grace*, 246

<sup>164</sup> Clinebell, Howard *Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Toward an Ecological-Systems Model for Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 266-267

<sup>165</sup> Anderson, Bernhard W. *The Sacredness of the Earth*, 28

<sup>166</sup> Berry, Thomas *Christianity’s Role in the Earth Project*, 128



involvement in ecological issues, and through a relational-covenantal approach to nature human beings can dream of a better world of relationships.

## 4. Linking with Divine (God)

### 4.1 Relational Religious Experience

The fourth phase in developing a relational pastoral care is linking the individual with God. Connecting the individual with oneself, others and nature is followed by connecting the individual with God who is the foundation of all relationships. How can the pastoral caregiver help an individual relate to God? Can the pastoral caregiver prescribe a relational image of God for the individual? Linking with the divine begins by finding the images of God which the individual possesses. Looking at the relational religious experiences of the individual is necessary in order to figure out the individual's image of God. Religious experiences are relational and unique because they contribute to the individual's relational image of God.

To encourage the individual to connect with the divine, we have to start with where he/she is standing in his/her religious experience and what kind of religious images of God he/she is bringing with him/her. The aim of the pastoral caregiver is to find out the relational image of God in people's lives and to help them reconnect with the divine. In order to arrive at this goal, pastoral caregivers have to think of the possibilities available in the pastoral field. The formation of God images in our lives are influenced through our different relationships. Sometimes the stories children hear about God in their childhood also form a certain impact on them. Preliminary God experiences can be on the human level. The individual projects experiencing others as reliable and trustworthy, and then projects this experience to God. "God images of children and the young are frequently images of relationships. The ideas about God go hand in hand with the experiences of and longings for relationships."<sup>167</sup> Depending on the positive and negative experiences the individual has in relationships, the God image may have positive and negative traits. According to Helmut Weiss, the main elements of how a human relationship takes place are the same in the

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<sup>167</sup> „Gottesbilder von Kindern und Jugendlichen sind sehr häufig Beziehungsbilder. Die Vorstellungen von Gott gehen einher mit Beziehungserfahrungen und Sehnsüchten.“ (Boschki, Reinhold *Beziehung als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik: Grundlegung einer dialogisch-kreativen Religionsdidaktik*, 172)

relationship of the individual with God. "Encounter – connectedness – relationship are key words and key qualities of God."<sup>168</sup>

The relational religious experience is always connected with an individual's faith. Faith is the foundation for the religious experiences human beings encounter. Our faith comes into expression in our relationship with God. Faith and relationship are interconnected. Growth in faith is the sign of development in the relationship. Albert Biesinger and Christoph Schmitt state that trying to grow in faith is almost the same as learning to relate. "Learning to grow in faith became for me, during the last ten years, learning about relationships, learning to relate in a relationship to him who says I have carved your name into my hand, you are mine; to him who counts the hair on my head and invites me to the banquet."<sup>169</sup>

Sharing one's own relational religious experience is central in building up a relationship with God. To share one's faith experience means that the individual has internalized it and is convinced of what he or she shares. "He who speaks about himself and his faith in this way is communicating very personally, he enters into a relationship with his neighbour and with God. And pastoral care wants to encourage that. Those who express such a personality-specific creed are beginning a process of clarification. It is a process to become clearer about oneself, one's own situation in the here and now, and about God."<sup>170</sup> Relational religious experiences help individuals deepen their relationship with God and also help to experience this faith-intimacy in their present lives. "A relationship with God is not something going on next to life but right through it. The God-relationship is a relationship like no other, but it unfolds like all the others. He who passes on faith forms his God-relationship in a way that his entire life can give an answer to God's promise: I have carved you in the palm of my hand."<sup>171</sup> Relational religious experiences are the fruits of one's own

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<sup>168</sup> „Begegnung - Verbindung – Beziehung sind Schlüsselworte und Schlüsseleigenschaften Gottes.“ (Weiß, Helmut *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 68)

<sup>169</sup> „Glauben-Lernen ist für mich in den letzten 10 Jahren zum Beziehungslernen, zum Zuwendungslernen geworden: Die Beziehung lernen zu dem, der sagt, ich habe deinen Namen in meine Hand geschrieben, mein bist du, zu dem, der die Haare meines Hauptes zählt und mich einlädt zum großen Gastmahl.“ (Biesinger, Albert; Schmitt, Christoph *Gottesbeziehung: Hoffnungsversuche für Schule und Gemeinde*, 69)

<sup>170</sup> „Wer so von sich und seinem Glauben spricht, kommuniziert sehr persönlich, geht Beziehung zum Nächsten und zu Gott ein. Und dazu will Seelsorge anregen. Wer solch ein persönlichkeitspezifisches Credo zum Ausdruck bringt, begibt sich in einen Klärungsprozess. Es ist ein Prozess, sich über sich selbst, die eigene Situation im Hier und Jetzt und über Gott klarer zu werden.“ (Weiß, Helmut *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 131-132)

<sup>171</sup> „Die Beziehung des Menschen mit Gott ist keine Angelegenheit, die nebenher läuft, sondern mittendurch. Die Gottesbeziehung ist zwar eine Beziehung wie keine andere - aber sie funktioniert wie jede andere. Wer den Glauben vermittelt, der gestaltet die Gottesbeziehung so,

history of faith. The individual's faith history is related to one's own family and the religious faith each one was practicing. The individual's faith history and the different relational religious experiences each individual has made or experienced are interrelated. The religious atmosphere and spiritual influences from society also contribute to the religious experiences of the individual.

In the Indian context most people have some religious background and some kind of religious practices that they do at home.<sup>172</sup> Many of the Hindus visit their temple regularly or for the different feasts or occasions. They make pilgrimages to holy places like Sabarimala<sup>173</sup> and as preparation for the pilgrimage they hold lent or fasting. For the Muslims the fasting and preparation for Ramadan has also great religious and spiritual influences on the lives of the people. Christians have Holy Mass, Sunday catechism for the students, parish feasts, preparation for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, and the different activities of the parish. Many of the catholic families have family prayer in the evening such as reciting the holy rosary. All these experiences provide the spiritual and religious background for individuals. According to Mark Wynn, "A person's religious beliefs may contribute toward their participation in trust-relationships, both in relation to other human beings and in relation to God."<sup>174</sup> In finding out the relational religious experience of the individual, the pastoral caregiver can assist the individual in the process of linking the individual with God.

Some individuals may have relational religious experiences from the schools in which they studied. Most of the catholic schools in India have a spiritual element at the beginning of the day. Whether it is a prayer or prayer song, that itself is a vital element which links to the Divine. Coming together as a school community to invoke the presence of the Divine in the beginning of the day shows a religious atmosphere. Some of the schools have prayers services and Holy Masses once a month. All these religious experiences leave significant impressions on the individuals and they remain as a link in forming their own relational image of God.

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daß das ganze Leben eine Antwort auf Gottes Zusage werden kann, die da heißt: Ich habe Dich in meine Hand eingeschrieben." (Biesinger, Albert; Schmitt, Christoph *Gottesbeziehung: Hoffnungsversuche für Schule und Gemeinde*, 16)

<sup>172</sup> Most of the people have some kind of religious experience in their life though the intensity and the frequency of the experiences may differ.

<sup>173</sup> It is a holy place of Hindu people situated in Kerala. Thousands of believers from different parts of India make pilgrimages to this holy place. Usually they wear black dresses and prepare themselves through prayers and fasting.

<sup>174</sup> Wynn, Mark *Trust Relationships and the Moral Case for Religious Belief*, 187

Are all the relational experiences of the individuals very positive and productive? Not all relational religious experiences need to always be positive. It is also highly possible that the individuals have a negative and destructive image of God because of their particular religious experiences in the past. This negative relational experience can remain a block for the individual in building up a positive relational image of God. To link the individual with God, the pastoral caregiver has to find out what kind of relational religious experiences the individual has had.

## 4.2 Relational Dimension of Mystagogie

The relational religious experiences of the individual remain as a foundation for the formation of a relationship with God. In order to lead the individual to one's own personal image of God, it is necessary to strengthen and deepen these relational religious experiences. There are different methods used to deepen this relatedness. "Mystagogic pastoral care motivates people to discover and further the script of their own life history as salvation history with God"<sup>175</sup> The aim is to help individuals to find God in their lives because God intervenes in their lives in different ways, but it is experiential for us when we get involved.<sup>176</sup> The intervention of God in the lives of humans takes place in the midst of their day-to-day activities. In all religions, this relationship with God continues to be shaped in the context of temporal events.<sup>177</sup> "Faith means entrusting oneself to life, to feel dependent on the ultimate support."<sup>178</sup> To empower the individual to seek God with faith and to find God in all things, in all circumstances and in all persons is a process of constructing a relationship with God. Entering into a relationship with God has to reflect the ways and means through which God has acted in one's life. Some of the ways of reflecting and mediating those interventions of God in our lives are the administering of sacraments, liturgical celebration and religious education.

How do liturgical celebrations deepen and strengthen the religious experience of the individual? There is a relational element of faith and life in every liturgical celebration. Liturgy was one of the indelible nets of relationships in the

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<sup>175</sup> „Mystagogische Seelsorge regt Menschen dazu an, den Text der eigenen Lebensgeschichte als Heilgeschichte Gottes mit ihnen entdecken und voranbringen zu können.“ (Fürst, Walter; Baumgartner, Isidor *Leben Retten: Was Seelsorge zukunftsfähig macht*, 117)

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Körner, Bernhard *Wie handelt Gott durch die Sakramente*, 445

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Novak, David *A Jewish Response to a New Christian Theology*, 112

<sup>178</sup> „Glauben heißt, sich dem Leben anzuvertrauen, sich von einem letzten Grund abhängig zu wissen.“ (Klessman, Michael *Seelsorge*, 47)

early church.<sup>179</sup> For liturgy, we use ordinary things from ordinary human life. It can be any symbols or anything from nature or manufactured by a human. The liturgical celebration articulates what we believe about God by the way we use those symbols to worship God.<sup>180</sup> Liturgy is integral to Christian spirituality and it supports the individual in evaluating and dealing with life.<sup>181</sup>

Liturgical celebrations are uplifting spiritual moments in the lives of the people that also calls for practice of them in their daily lives. “It (Liturgy) is a memorial action that reminds us that the God we encounter in liturgy is the God we encounter in life.”<sup>182</sup> “The relationship with God cannot be experienced any differently than in the loving care of the members of the parish.”<sup>183</sup> “What is celebrated liturgically should be realized in the way we live in relationships with others which we have celebrated.”<sup>184</sup> The practical part of liturgy has to be seen in our daily lives and within in our relationships. Kevin Irwin explains how liturgy affects or imparts influence in all the areas of our lives and as a way of experiencing God. “We live in one graced world in which liturgy is a supremely apt means of experiencing God because it uses the common means of human communication – sight, sound, smell, taste, touch – and uses them to disclose the revealed yet always utterly transcendent God. Liturgy is especially crucial to help us see how and where God is revealed in life; it also should shape how we respond to the God discovered in liturgy and prayer.”<sup>185</sup> Finding God in the midst of life and relating with him is the essence of our life. Liturgical celebrations encompass all relational worlds of the individual so it can strengthen the relational religious experiences of the individual.

Anthony Padovano brings out the relational dimension of sacraments. According to him the whole aim of administering sacraments is to bring the people into relationship with one another. “The point of all grace and sacrament is relationship with one another. These relationships create church, build the reign of God and make paradise worthwhile.”<sup>186</sup> Sacraments can strengthen the religious experiences of the individual and guide them to a deeper relationship

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<sup>179</sup> Zimmerling, Peter *Die Bedeutung der Gemeinschaft für den Menschen angesichts der Postmoderne*, 226

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Irwin, Kevin W. *Liturgy, Justice, and Spirituality*, 173

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Ibid, 164

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 163

<sup>183</sup> „Die Beziehung zu Gott ist nicht anders zu erfahren als in der liebenden Zuwendung zu den Mitgliedern der Gemeinde.“ (Gubler, Marie-Louise „Wer sagt, er sei im Licht, aber seinen Bruder hasst, ist noch in der Finsternis...“ (1 John 2:9), 225)

<sup>184</sup> Irwin, Kevin W. *Liturgy, Justice, and Spirituality*, 174

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 163-164

<sup>186</sup> Padovano, Anthony T. *The Point of all Grace is Relationship*, 2

with God. "Sacraments as God's way of acting remind me that I can and must count on God here and today: God's action is both chance and a healing challenge."<sup>187</sup> If the aim of the sacraments is a relationship with human beings; this relationship is not a static but a dynamic relationship. "We have said that in the sacraments is God at work. They remind us of the fact that God is a God who acts, a living God, a personal God who aims at entering into a relationship with man, and indeed does so."<sup>188</sup> The individual experiences the relational dimension of sacraments in the form of a spirituality in which the human being is taken seriously as a chosen person. It is an encounter with God as a person. This encounter in the sacraments is a gift and grace because God turns to one not because of any of spiritual skill with which an individual can summon God. God acts in the sacraments as God acts in the Biblical stories.<sup>189</sup> Bernhard Körener continues by stating that the celebration of every sacrament is a commemoration of the paschal mysteries. "This action becomes present in the sacraments through the action of the Holy Spirit. And in this way God acts in man in the celebration of the sacraments. And this (happens) above all by the fact that he comes towards man, that he meets him and invites him and takes him into the community with himself."<sup>190</sup> The relational dimension that we experience in the sacraments is very unique and personal and is where the encounter between God and the individual takes place.

Religious education or catechism provided in the schools is another area of the relational dimension of mystagogie. "Albert Biesinger calls catechesis a discovery of our God-relationship in a teaching-learning process which lasts a whole lifetime and never comes to an end."<sup>191</sup> For many students that religious education may be the one and only chance they can deepen their faith and their relationship with God. The religious educator influences the faith formation of

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<sup>187</sup> „Sakramente als Handeln Gottes erinnern daran, dass ich mit Gott hier und heute rechnen kann und muss: Das Handeln Gottes ist beides: Chance und heilsame Herausforderung.“ (Körner, Bernhard *Wie handelt Gott durch die Sakramente*, 448)

<sup>188</sup> „Wir haben gesagt: in den Sakramenten handelt Gott. Sie erinnern also daran, dass Gott ein Gott ist, der handelt, ein ‚lebendiger Gott‘, ein personaler Gott, der mit uns Menschen in Beziehung treten will und in Beziehung tritt.“ (Körner, Bernhard *Wie handelt Gott durch die Sakramente*, 448-449)

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Ibid, 450

<sup>190</sup> „Dieses Handeln wird durch das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes in den Sakramenten gegenwärtig. Und so handelt Gott am Menschen in der Feier der Sakramente. Und das vor allem dadurch, dass er dem Menschen entgegen kommt, ihm begegnet und ihn so in die Gemeinschaft mit sich einlädt und aufnimmt.“ (Ibid, 445)

<sup>191</sup> „...weil der Glaube im weitesten Sinne eine Beziehung ist, ist das Glaubenlernen immer Beziehungslernen (vgl. Kapitel II). Albert Biesinger bezeichnet die Katechese als Erschließung der Gottesbeziehung in einem Lehr-Lern-Prozess, der ein Leben lang dauert und zu Lebzeiten an kein Ende kommt.“ (Biesinger, Albert, Schmitt, Christoph *Gottesbeziehung: Hoffnungsversuche für Schule und Gemeinde*, 14)

the children. “The success of religious education as with the pastoral care of schools is decisively linked to the person who is teaching religious education. Moreover, as experience shows, faith and Church for many students are only experienced in the religious strength of the person teaching religion.”<sup>192</sup> Depending upon their family and social background, they can be nurtured in faith or deprived of this opportunity too. Religious education plays an unavoidable role in the lives of individuals in forming a relationship with God. “This observation carries an important consequence for every form of religious education: developing a relationship with God presupposes being capable of forming relationships in the first place. This is a fundamental learning goal in religious education since the way a person lives his relationships is also the way he lives his God-relationship. In the same way we form our relationships in family, school and parish we also form our relationship with God. There is no other form of relationship.”<sup>193</sup> In the process of building a relationship with God, the relational dimension of mystagogie enriches the relational religious experiences. This enrichment leads the individual to figure out one relational image of God.

### 4.3 New Relational Image of the God of my Life

Relational religious experiences are strengthened through the relational dimensions of mystagogic pastoral care. This enables the individual to redefine one's image of God from a new point of view of relationship. More than a ritual relationship, the individual finds and feels a personal attachment and bond to God in his/her spiritual life. The personal image of God, which the individual was having, is getting moulded in the new image of God. To experience or believe God's providence, especially in the negative realities of life, is not possible without a relational image of God. The new image of the God of our lives does not mean that we intend to bring an entirely new image of the God of life for the individual in our pastoral care. The new image of the God of our lives is the consequence of discovering the meaning of the events and facts in our lives in

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<sup>192</sup> „Das Gelingen des Religionsunterrichts wie der Schulpastoral ist entscheidend mit der Person des Religionslehrers bzw. der Religionslehrerin verknüpft. Zudem wird, wie die Erfahrung immer mehr zeigt, Glaube und Kirche von vielen Schülerinnen und Schülern nur noch in der Person der Religionslehrkraft erlebt.“ (Geissler, Ulrich, *Spiritualität in der Schulpastoral*, 119)

<sup>193</sup> „Diese Beobachtung hat eine wichtige Konsequenz für jede Form von religiöser Erziehung: Die Beziehung zu Gott zu entwickeln setzt voraus, überhaupt beziehungsfähig zu werden. Das ist ein fundamentales Lernziel der religiösen Erziehung. Denn die Art, wie ein Mensch seine Beziehungen lebt, ist die Art, wie er seine Beziehung zu Gott lebt. Die Art und Weise wie wir in Familie, Schule und Gemeinde unsere Beziehungen gestalten, ist die Art, wie wir unsere Beziehung zu Gott gestalten. Eine andere Form von Beziehung gibt es nicht.“ (Biesinger, Albert; Schmitt, Christoph *Gottesbeziehung: Hoffnungsversuche für Schule und Gemeinde*, 17-18)

the light of a relationship with God. In other words, to see the realities of life with God's eyes. God is present in our human life, in the life of all religions, in the life of my family and in my personal life. My personal life is a mixture of good experiences, security, uncertainty, fears and everything, and it is challenging in the tensions of my life to find out what the meaning of it is at the end. "God enters into relationship with us by establishing us as persons in ourselves and as partners in a historical and living dialogue. He can be encountered and known only in the concreteness and communion of a direct relationship."<sup>194</sup>

The new relational image of God means a wider understanding of the image of God which the individual has. In other words it is the personalization of the same image of God. The individual begins to experience God as very personal, relational, caring and loving because of his/her new understanding. The individual experiences a deep personal relationship with God. Klaus Winkler names this personal experience as personality-specific creed. "Pastoral care aims at helping people reach this creed and bring their life history experiences and their present experiences into context with their faith and trust in God."<sup>195</sup>

During the process of finding a new relational image of God, the understanding about the image of God will be corrected and complemented. Relating with oneself confidently and building up relationships with others and the environment complements the individual to foster new ways of relatedness with God. A positive relational image of God is the consequence of this relationship. Individuals are convinced and experience God in their daily lives as one who accompanies them in their ups and downs of life, in their disappointments and disasters, in their successes and failures and in every big and small incident of their lives.

Finding a new relational image of God is not an easy task for an individual. It demands inner conviction for one to believe that God takes part actively in the human life and is concerned about each individual. "It takes some time for a human person to understand that confidence in God, faith, going out of himself does not lead to the loss of self, but, on the contrary, it can lead to a greater gain of oneself and to the experience of security and a greater intensity of

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<sup>194</sup> Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 159

<sup>195</sup> „Seelsorge, so schreibt Klaus Winkler, bedeutet die Ermöglichung eines persönlichkeitspezifischen Credos. Seelsorge arbeitet also darauf hin, dass Menschen zu diesem Credo gelangen, also ihre lebensgeschichtlichen Erfahrungen und das gegenwärtige Erleben mit ihrem Glauben und Gottvertrauen in Zusammenhänge bringen.“ (Weiß, Helmut *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 131)



life.”<sup>196</sup> Once this hurdle of insecurity and anxiety is overcome, the individual can experience greater security in his life.

The new relational image of God encompasses the whole life of the individual. It is an integral image of God. The whole mechanism of the human being is wrapped up in this image. Our whole person is involved in the relationship with God. David Benner tells us, “We do not have a part of the personality that relates to God or yearns to be in such relationship. The totality of our being yearns for and responds to such a relationship. Furthermore, our relationship with God is mediated by the same psychological process and mechanisms as those involved in relationships with other people...Psychological and spiritual aspects of human functioning are inextricably interconnected....Efforts to separate the spiritual, psychological, and physical aspects of persons inevitably results in a trivialization of each.”<sup>197</sup> The integration of all human activities in our relationship with God paves the way for growth in the relationship.

The individual’s relational image of God and his relationship with others are very much interconnected and interrelated. Each relationship complements and presupposes the other. “For example, from a theological perspective, there would seem to be a strong basis for believing that one’s relationship with others would be inextricably and fundamentally linked to one’s relationship with God.”<sup>198</sup> “Harmonious relations with God form the basis for right relations with oneself and with other human beings.”<sup>199</sup> The individual’s new relational God image strengthens all other relationship networks of the individual.

We human beings are always searching to find who we are. The new relational image of God remains as a link to find our own identity in relationship with God. The aim of all relationships is to lead us to our own identity. “Our relationship with God and our trusting relationships with other believers gives us a certain rooting, groundedness and security in who we are.”<sup>200</sup> Awareness about oneself in relation to God, others and nature is radiated in all the spheres of our relationships.

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<sup>196</sup> „Es braucht Zeit, bis ein Mensch begreift, dass das Vertrauen auf Gott, der Glaube, das Herausgehen aus sich selbst nicht zum Selbstverlust, sondern im Gegenteil zum Selbstgewinn und zur Erfahrung von Geborgenheit und größerer Lebensintensität führen kann.“ (Zimmerling, Peter *Die Bedeutung der Gemeinschaft für den Menschen angesichts der Postmoderne*, 226)

<sup>197</sup> Benner, David *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*, 62

<sup>198</sup> Simpson, David B.; Newman Judy L.; Fuqua, Dale R. *Understanding the Role of Relational Factors in Christian Spirituality*, 126

<sup>199</sup> Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 322

<sup>200</sup> Intrater, Keith *Covenant Relationships: Handbook for Integrity and Loyalty*, 6

## 5. Roles of the Pastoral Caregiver

### 5.1 Personal Facilitator

In leading the individual to link with oneself, others, nature and God, the support and assistance of the pastoral caregiver is crucial. The process depends on how well the pastoral caregiver accomplishes his or her role. The main task of the pastoral caregiver is to build a relationship with the individual. In order to build a relationship, the pastoral caregiver has to provide an atmosphere in his pastoral field so that a relationship can take place. Building a relationship with every individual in the pastoral field is a challenging task. “At the beginning of Christian pastoral care we don’t see the proclamation of eternal truths, but a living person, Jesus of Nazareth. His way of encountering people and building up relationships lets people prick up their ears and heave a sigh of relief, back then as well as today. His message is a message of trust, faith and love. In encountering Jesus, people experience the truth of this message. They feel that they are addressed, valued, loved.”<sup>201</sup> Since relationships cannot be demanded or forced, the pastoral caregiver can create a helpful social situation in a pastoral area in which individuals can come into contact with the pastoral caregiver easily.

Building relationships depends a lot on past experiences which the individuals bring along with them. The role of the pastoral caregiver is to provide such a trust-filled relationship so that the individual himself may be prepared for the beginning of the relationship. “...One must experience supportive and trusting relationships in order to be capable of forming relationships. We must be first addressed if we want to be able to speak.”<sup>202</sup> The pastoral caregiver remains as a relationship builder. Individuals can function well in their relatedness depending upon the core experience they bring from their supportive and trusting relationships. “People learn through trust-filled experiences to enter into relationships with others, while through traumatizing events they learn to fear relationships. The brain in particular is the organ of relationship in which activities

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<sup>201</sup> „An Anfang der christlichen Seelsorge steht nicht die Verkündigung ewiger Wahrheiten, sondern ein lebendiger Mensch, Jesus von Nazareth. Seine Art, Menschen zu begegnen, Beziehungen aufzunehmen, lässt damals wie heute aufmerken, aufatmen. Seine Botschaft ist eine Botschaft des Vertrauens, des Glaubens und der Liebe. In der Begegnung mit Jesus erfahren die Menschen die Wahrheit dieser Botschaft. Sie spüren: sie sind gemeint, geachtet, geliebt.“ (Honsel, Bernhard *Was fördert und was erschwert Seelsorge als Beziehung?* 1)

<sup>202</sup> „...Man muss tragfähige und vertrauensvolle Beziehungen erleben, um selber beziehungs-fähig zu werden. Man muss angesprochen werden, um selber sprachfähig zu werden.“ (Klessman, Michael, *Seelsorge*, 35-36)

are constantly connected with each other.”<sup>203</sup> Depending upon the trust the individual experiences from the pastoral caregiver, the individual will open himself up to share more intimate and personal matters. If there is a lack of sufficient trust in the relationship between the pastoral caregiver and the individual, the whole relationship process can be blocked.

The challenging part for the pastoral caregiver in this relationship is that on one side the relationship has to be very genuine, and on the other side the pastoral caregiver has to be aware of the purpose of the relationship. “The relationship is a means, a purpose. So, it is not a friendship but help in a counseling and learning process and, therefore, lasts only for a certain period of time.”<sup>204</sup> The pastoral caregiver has to be vigilant and alert so that the aim of the relationship is always to strengthen the relationships of the individual with himself, others, nature and God.

In spite of the clear role definitions Michael Klessman suggests that, “Even if the roles are determined (i.e. teacher/student) you must work out, in the course of the interaction, which quality this relationship should have: friendly or distant, superficial or personal, trusting or rather distrusting, factual or emotionally coloured.”<sup>205</sup> This self-evaluation will assist the pastoral caregiver to improve or to correct his/her own role as pastoral caregiver. Life situations and early childhood experiences might have influenced the individual to have negative images of God, such as God as punishing, God as someone they are afraid of, God who is away from his people, or God who is indifferent towards his people. The role of the pastoral caregiver is to provide the facilities to overcome those negative God images through the accompanying of the individual. “Life and faith are put into relationship with each other and don’t remain as separate entities with little or nothing to do with each other. In pastoral care this separation is not possible. The support of life must also become the support

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<sup>203</sup> „Durch vertrauensvolle Erfahrungen lernen Menschen, Beziehungen einzugehen, durch Traumatisierungen lernen sie vor Beziehungen Angst zu haben. Gerade das Gehirn ist das Beziehungsorgan, in dem andauernd Aktivitäten miteinander verknüpft werden.“ (Weiß, Helmut *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 70)

<sup>204</sup> „Die Beziehung ist ein Mittel, ein Zweck. Sie also keine Freundschaft, sondern Hilfe in einem Beratungs-und Lernprozess und deshalb auf begrenzte Zeit angelegt.“ (Ibid, 72)

<sup>205</sup> „Selbst wenn die Rollen feststehen (z.B. Lehrer-Schüler), kann und muss im Lauf der Interaktion erarbeitet werden, welche Qualität die Beziehung haben soll: freundlich oder distanziert, oberflächlich oder persönlich, vertrauensvoll oder eher misstrauisch, sachlich oder auch emotional getönt.“ (Klessman, Michael *Seelsorge*, 35)

of faith.”<sup>206</sup> The relationship of the individual with the pastoral caregiver remains as a link for them to augment or reconnect with the relational world.

Building a relationship implies another role of the pastoral caregiver. It is the role of accompanying. What does mean to accompany someone? The accompanying role of the pastoral caregiver demands availability. The role of the pastoral caregiver is to accompany the individual in this process. “The metaphor of a traveling fellow means first of all that two people walk next to each other; then the mentor should find time to be there, to listen, to empathize, to understand, to be the partner who can be close to the other.”<sup>207</sup> To be reachable for the individual means to invest time and energy in the relationship. It means walking with that other person to reach a particular aim. Michael Klessmann explains availability as being present: “...to have time, not leaving the other people and their relatives alone, to help bear, within limits, the suffering, the serious situation, the helplessness.”<sup>208</sup>

Part of accompanying is to exhibit understanding towards the individual and their life experiences. It will encourage the individual to open up more to the pastoral caregiver. “If a pastoral person makes the effort to understand the intention of another person, the other feels valued and acknowledged. Even if the understanding is only relatively successful, the effort alone is usually seen as a warm expression of interest and appreciation.”<sup>209</sup> To be understood by the pastoral caregiver is an encouraging attribute for individuals.

The accompanying process has certain challenges to be faced. The ability for endurance in the accompanying process is important. Not everything in this process is pleasant. Each individual has certain things in his/her life which he/she is not able to change in spite of many efforts and attempts. This can make it very unpleasant for others in their relationships. The duty of the pasto-

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<sup>206</sup> „Leben und Glauben werden miteinander in eine Beziehung gesetzt und bleiben nicht getrennte Bereiche, die nichts oder wenig miteinander zu tun haben. In der Seelsorge ist diese Trennung nicht möglich. Lebenshilfe soll zur Glaubenshilfe zu Lebenshilfe werden.“ (Weiß, Helmut, *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 130)

<sup>207</sup> „Die Metapher der Wegbegleitung bedeutet zunächst, dass zwei Menschen nebeneinander gehen; dabei soll die begleitende Person Zeit haben, da bleiben, zuhören, sich einfühlen, mitfühlen, verstehen, Gefährte sein, dem/der Anderen nahe sein.“ (Klessman, Michael *Seelsorge*, 39)

<sup>208</sup> „... Zeit zu haben, den anderen Menschen und seine Angehörigen nicht allein zu lassen, das Leiden, die schwere Situation, die Hilflosigkeit in Grenzen mitzutragen.“ (Klessman, Michael, *Qualitätsmerkmale in der Seelsorge oder: Was wirkt in der Seelsorge?* 149)

<sup>209</sup> „Wenn eine Seelsorge-Person sich Mühe gibt, das Anliegen einer anderen Person zu verstehen, fühlt diese Person sich ernst genommen und anerkannt. Selbst wenn das Versehen nur bedingt erfolgreich ist: Allein schon das Bemühen wird in der Regel als wohltuender Ausdruck von Interesse und Wertschätzung erlebt.“ (Klessman, Michael *Seelsorge*, 45)

ral caregiver is to accept the fact that he/she is not able to accomplish everything in the accompanying process. “Accompanying also means to endure with the other what you cannot change, like not escaping from the inevitability of suffering and dying.”<sup>210</sup> Accompanying means to be present with the other in all the phases of his/her life. Staying away from the other during their difficulties and suffering means that the pastoral caregiver did not fulfill his/her office responsibly.

When pastoral care takes place in an educational institute, it is essential that the relationship with the students has to be, “Personally or individually focused in order to be pedagogically effective...”<sup>211</sup> It depends on the personal ability of the pastoral caregiver to give each student personal attention. Personal attention and care gives them the feeling that they are valued, and that each student is important to the pastoral caregiver. This personal interest of the pastoral caregiver or teacher in each individual student can be evaluated in their effort “... to know in a more than casual or external way the thoughts, motives and feelings of those with whom they are engaged in conversation – something of, in contemporary demotic, ‘where they are coming from’ – in order to take the conversation in further fertile and life-enhancing directions.”<sup>212</sup> Information about where they come from can help the pastoral caregiver or teacher accompany each student effectively.

## 5.2 Spiritual Facilitator

The role of the pastoral caregiver is not only to accompany the individuals, listening to them and showing understanding, but also to take on the role of the spiritual facilitator; as well as to interpret life situations within the given circumstances and what each would mean to the individual. “Pastoral care here is given a double task: it may observe a topic, a problem from the outside, from a distance, and contribute to the fact that the respective person gains distance. And it can – here lies its special competence – bring into play religious interpretation by putting a well restricted theme into the context of an entire life, its meaning and goals.”<sup>213</sup> To help the individual look at life situations with the

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<sup>210</sup> „Begleitung heißt auch, mit auszuhalten, was nicht veränderbar ist, beispielsweise vor der Ausweglosigkeit von Leiden und Sterben nicht weg zu laufen.“ (Ibid, 39)

<sup>211</sup> Garr, David *Personal and Interpersonal Relationships in Education and Teaching: A Virtue Ethical Perspective*, 268

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 265

<sup>213</sup> „Seelsorge hat hier eine doppelte Aufgabe: Sie kann ein Thema, eine Problemstellung von außen, aus der Distanz betrachten und dazu beitragen, dass auch die betroffene Person Abstand gewinnt. Und sie kann - da liegt ihre besondere Kompetenz - religiöse Deutungen ins Spiel

eyes of faith and to assess what it means in each present situation is the task of the pastoral caregiver as the interpreter of faith.

Peter Schmid reminds us that this faith interpretation process is a joint effort between the pastoral caregiver and the individual. Involvement from the affected person is important. "Pastoral care as an encounter is a listening, empathetic and accepting ministry, which seeks to interpret the call of God speaking in the situation; not only on the part of the pastoral caregiver, but rather to seek and understand together with the affected."<sup>214</sup>

To be an interpreter of faith means to guide the individual in a proper way to become what God wants of him. It is giving an orientation to the individual by understanding his situation. Guidance is crucial when the individual is puzzled and confused. The role of the pastoral caregiver is to give the right directions at the right time. Guidance also involves challenging the individual to come out of his "comfort zone" when it is necessary for the development of his relationship skills. The pastoral caregiver has to help the individual to find the evidence of God even in the unpleasant realities of life. Confrontations can be challenging for the individual but they promise growth. The guidance of the individuals should just not be pleasing to the individual as when the pastoral caregiver sees only the positive side of him. It is also the duty of the pastoral caregiver to confront the unpleasant side of the personality of the individual.

In the process of interpreting faith and discovering the foot prints of God in others' lives, the pastoral caregiver will also encounter God. "After discovering the hidden work of God in others and helping to unfold it, they themselves will encounter God."<sup>215</sup> The role of the pastoral caregiver as the interpreter of faith also enriches the God-experience of the pastoral caregiver.

### 5.3 Social Facilitator

Along with the roles of the pastoral caregiver as a personal facilitator and spiritual facilitator, the caregiver has the role of social facilitator. Pastoral care has to make sure that the human dignity and worth is protected and is assured in all

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bringen, die ein begrenztes Thema in den Zusammenhang des ganzen Lebens, seiner Bestimmung und Zielsetzung stellen." ( Klessman, Michael *Seelsorge*, 42)

<sup>214</sup> „Seelsorge als Begegnung ist daher die zuhörende, einfühlsame und annehmende Pastoral, die versucht, den Anruf Gottes in der jeweiligen Situation nicht nur von Seiten des Seelsorgers zu interpretieren, sondern gemeinsam mit den betroffenen zu suchen und zu verstehen.“ (Schmid, Peter F. *Begegnung ist Verkündigung: Paradigmenwechsel in der Seelsorge*, 20-21)

<sup>215</sup> „Wenn sie das verborgene Wirken Gottes im andern entdecken und entfalten helfen, begegnen sie selbst Gott.“ (Fürst, Walter; Baumgartner, Isidor *Leben Retten: Was Seelsorge zukunftsfähig macht*, 115)

the different social levels. “The dignity of each individual is the theological and empirical starting point and aim of the modern pastoral care...”<sup>216</sup> The life of the individual is very much dependant on the social, cultural, moral and ethical environment of the society in which the individual is situated. The role of the pastoral caregiver as a social facilitator means to make sure that nothing is blocked in the relational world of the individual. Stefan Gärtner considers the importance of understanding the individual disposition of the person in the concrete social context in pastoral care.<sup>217</sup>

In being a social facilitator, the pastoral caregiver has to be updated with different systems and structures of the society. “New structures necessitate new skills for priests and laity in the pastoral ministry.”<sup>218</sup> Certain new structures and systems may lead the individual to confusion in determining whether it is fitting with the ethical and moral values. Christopher Schneider Harprecht writes that pastoral care is supposed to support people to act morally in their life situations which they may perceive as problematic.<sup>219</sup> “Pastoral care aims at empowering people to act on different levels of the social system in daily life and in conflict situations on the basis of their unconditional acceptance by God and the biblical value of relationship righteousness.”<sup>220</sup>

Being a social facilitator means to be an advocate of social justice and equality for all. An individual cannot develop one’s relational skills when the social situation is fraudulent and ruled by inequality. The role of the pastoral caregiver is to make the people aware of such exploitations and work with them to free them from such social bondages. “Therefore, pastoral care has an ‘advocate function’ for those who are separated from social life because of their poverty, their impotence, their lack of education and their speechlessness, for those who are marginalized in the political life, because lobbyists fight politically for distributing among themselves (power and profit).”<sup>221</sup> Thomas Henke continues

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<sup>216</sup> „Die Würde des/der Einzelnen ist theologischer und empirischer Ausgangs- und Zielpunkt der modernen Seelsorge...” (Klessman, Michael *Solidarität und Parteilichkeit: Der prophetische Auftrag der Kirche im Kontext der Notfallseelsorge*, 99)

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Gärtner, Stefan *Prophetie in der Seelsorge: Unmöglich oder unvermeidlich?* 498

<sup>218</sup> „Neue Strukturen erfordern neue Kompetenzen bei Priestern und Laien in der Seelsorge.“ (Christoph, Jacobs *Mit Leidenschaft für Gott und sein Volk: Berufen zur Seelsorge in Zeiten pastoralen Wandels*, 269)

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Schneider-Harprecht, Christoph *Was kann die Ethik von der Seelsorge lernen?* 271

<sup>220</sup> „Sie zielt darauf ab, Menschen zu befähigen, auf verschiedenen Ebenen des sozialen Systems im Alltag und Konfliktsituationen auf der Grundlage der ihnen von Gott zugesprochenen bedingungslosen Annahme und des biblischen Wertes der Beziehungsgerechtigkeit zu handeln.“ (Schneider-Harprecht, Christoph *Seelsorge als systemische Praxis: Der soziale und politische Auftrag der Seelsorge*, 427)

<sup>221</sup> „Seelsorge hat deshalb eine „Anwaltsfunktion“ für diejenigen, die durch ihre Armut, durch ihre Ohnmacht, durch ihren Mangel an Bildung und durch ihre Sprachlosigkeit aus dem gesell-

by stating that advocate function includes publicly taking sides with those who are oppressed and marginalized who are not able to defend their own rights and interests, and in showing solidarity in conquering isolation in society.

The role of the social facilitator is to bring together the practice of faith and social life of the people. It is challenging to live one's faith in a society where social discrimination exists. "The social and political mandate of the pastoral caregiver is based on the gospel of the gracious acceptance of humankind by the Triune God and in his commandment of justice. It is also based on the social need of people for meaningful orientation and for the coping of crises and extreme situations. In this mandate both aspects are combined and are concretized in the positions of prophetic critique and functional shaping of relationship systems at different levels of social life."<sup>222</sup> Ulrich Geissler explains the necessity of relationship between word and action. According to him it will lead to the emancipation of the people who are in critical need of liberation from poverty, hardship, oppression, etc.<sup>223</sup> "It's about the future of suitable human life for all, about our human identity, which threatens to lose its balance. It is about the liberation from all paralyzing *angst*, from all alienation and from all darkness for which the non-believer has no explanation and even has no future."<sup>224</sup>

The role of the pastoral caregiver as a social facilitator in the relational paradigm also includes caring for the natural environment. The caregiver has to fight against the exploitation of natural resources which create imbalance in nature. As the advocate of nature protection, the pastoral caregiver has to invest time and energy to motivate others to develop a covenantal relationship with the natural environment. Organizing the people to fight against the excessive

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schaftlichen Leben ausgegrenzt werden, die im politischen Verteilungskampf der Lobbyisten marginalisiert sind." (Henke, Thomas *Wahrnehmung des Politischen: Zu einer wenig beachteten Dimension in der Seelsorge*, 117)

<sup>222</sup> „Der soziale und politische Auftrag der Seelsorge gründet im Evangelium der gnädigen Annahme des Menschen durch den dreieinigen Gott und in seinem Gebot der Gerechtigkeit. Sie gründet auch im sozialen Bedürfnis der Menschen nach sinnhafter Orientierung und der Bewältigung von Krisen- und Grenzsituationen. In ihr verbinden sich beide Aspekte und konkretisieren sich in den Positionen prophetischer Kritik und funktionaler Mitgestaltung von Beziehungssystemen auf den verschiedenen Ebenen des sozialen Lebens.“ (Schneider-Harprecht, Christoph *Seelsorge als systemische Praxis: Der soziale und politische Auftrag der Seelsorge*, 442)

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Geissler, Ulrich *Spiritualität in der Schulpastoral*, 118

<sup>224</sup> „Es geht um die Zukunft des menschengerechten Lebens für alle, um unsere menschliche Identität, die an ihren eigenen Fliehkräften zu zerbrechen droht. Es geht um die Befreiung aus der lähmenden Lebensangst, aus der Entfremdung und dem Dunkel, für das der Nicht-Glaubende keine Erklärung und schon gar keine Zukunft mehr weiß.“ (Christoph, Jacobs *Mit Leidenschaft für Gott und sein Volk: Berufen zur Seelsorge in Zeiten pastoralen Wandels*, 268)



use of natural resources and creating awareness in the people for the right use and appreciation of natural resources in the created world are part of this role as advocate of eco-justice.

## 6. Competence of the Pastoral Caregiver

### 6.1 Personal Competence

In order to help the individual link with oneself, others, nature and the divine, the pastoral caregiver must also be equipped with human and professional qualities which are indispensable. Competence means skills and abilities which are required of the pastoral caregiver to perform his responsibility. In order to accomplish the roles of the pastoral caregiver as inter-personal facilitator and spiritual and social facilitator, he/she requires the corresponding competency in different areas. Some of the competency and skills can be acquired through professional training but certain qualities always depend on the personality of the pastoral caregiver. Michael Klessman confirms just how important the pastoral caregiver is as a person. "One's own person is the decisive means of pastoral ministry which is the most important tool for the formation of relationships. Therefore, I name as the first prerequisite the dealing with oneself."<sup>225</sup>

Personal competence requires the pastoral caregiver to have a good relationship with himself/herself. That means that he/she must be clear about his/her relational personal identity. A sound and healthy self-concept regarding his/her own strengths and weaknesses is part of one's relationship with oneself. A relationship with oneself means one knowing one's personal strengths and weaknesses and integrating it along with a personal and professional identity. It is to be aware of the factors which are disturbing in one's own person and to know the projections and transference which are allowed and which are not allowed<sup>226</sup>. Wilfred Evertz speaks of a realistic understanding of the role of the pastoral caregiver in the pastoral field. This realistic way of role definition also includes knowing one's own limitations and taking them seriously.<sup>227</sup>

In the relational paradigm for pastoral care, the personal competence of the pastoral caregiver enhances his/her profile. The pastoral caregiver's relational self-identity, relational self-esteem, relational self-acceptance and relational

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<sup>225</sup> „Die eigene Person ist das entscheidende Medium der Seelsorge, das als wichtigstes Werkzeug für die Beziehungsgestaltung. Deswegen nenne ich als erste Voraussetzung die Auseinandersetzung mit der eigenen Person.“ (Klessman, Michael *Qualitätsmerkmale in der Seelsorge oder: Was wirkt in der Seelsorge?* 150)

<sup>226</sup> Ibid

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Evertz, Wilfred *Pfarrer: Manager und Seelsorger*, 182-184

self-love will make him/her more acceptable to others in the pastoral field. He/she must be someone who believes in himself/herself and lives that belief. "Yet: those pastors who are active in the Christian ministry without a personal profile will be regarded by people of today as being more than unattractive."<sup>228</sup> This remains as the necessary foundation for his/her pastoral work in order to lead the individual to a relational paradigm because, "Self-perception and perception of the other are mutually dependent and can and should be trained in their interdependence."<sup>229</sup>

As a person, the pastoral caregiver needs to be in good relationships with others. Competence in this area shows his/her relational network with others and how it is lived in his/her own life because it involves the whole person of the pastoral caregiver. His/her relationship with others will be determined by the integrity of his/her person. "We have assumed that pastoral ministry does not constitute a method that a person can simply acquire and then apply; but rather that pastoral ministry is an attitude, an attitude of the whole person. In this regard one must work on oneself and confront one's own biography; therefore detailed self-awareness is meaningful and necessary."<sup>230</sup> Involvement in the social life of people in the pastoral field confirms his/her ability in living in relationship with others. "The personality of the pastoral caregiver must authenticate his office and role. The subjectively convincing and credible appearance and speech are the decisive way to make the message appear to be credible and relevant."<sup>231</sup> Personal competence as a pastoral caregiver in leading the individual to a relational paradigm anticipates that he/she must be interested in the ecological issues and has to involve developing an attachment with the environment. He/she has to live in a covenantal relationship with nature.

The pastoral caregiver's personal relationship with God will be always expected as part of personal competence. Because Jacobs Christoph emphasizes

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<sup>228</sup> „Doch: Wer ohne persönliches christliches Profil in der Pastoral tätig ist, wird als Seelsorger für Menschen von heute mehr als uninteressant.“ (Christoph, Jacobs *Mit Leidenschaft für Gott und sein Volk: Berufen zur Seelsorge in Zeiten pastoralen Wandels*, 272)

<sup>229</sup> „Selbstwahrnehmung und Fremdwahrnehmung bedingen sich gegenseitig und können und sollen in ihrer Verschränkung eingeübt werden.“ (Klessmann, Michael *Qualitätsmerkmale in der Seelsorge oder: Was wirkt in der Seelsorge?* 150)

<sup>230</sup> „Wir sind davon ausgegangen, dass Seelsorge nicht eine Methode darstellt, die man sich einfach aneignet und dann handhabt; vielmehr geht es in der Seelsorge um eine Haltung, eine Einstellung der ganzen Person. Daran muss man arbeiten, sich mit sich selbst und der eigenen Biographie auseinandersetzen; deswegen ist ausführliche Selbsterfahrung sinnvoll und notwendig.“ (Klessmann, Michael *Seelsorge im Zwischenraum/im Möglichkeitsraum: Pastoralpsychologische De- und Rekonstruktionen*, 416)

<sup>231</sup> „Die Persönlichkeit des Pfarrers, der Pfarrerin muss das Amt, die Rolle beglaubigen; dass subjektiv überzeugende und glaubwürdige Auftreten und Reden ist das entscheidende Medium, um auch die Botschaft glaubwürdig und relevant erscheinen zu lassen.“ (Ibid, 418)

this fact strongly that, “From the perspective of spiritual life, the question is whether all human rootedness is ultimately anchored in God. Only the one who is profoundly anchored in God, will be able to have a new fundamental start – without endangering the integrity of his person and his life project.”<sup>232</sup>

Personal competence also implies the ability of the pastoral caregiver to take enough time for himself/herself to remain fresh and to become rejuvenated. The inner discipline to distance oneself from the pastoral care activity is important.<sup>233</sup> The caregiver’s own self-esteem will give confidence to the individuals who are being accompanied. Relational self-acceptance is vital to help the caregivers accept themselves along with their talents and limitations. He/she must be the one who lives the relationship with himself/herself better than others. Integrating the relational skills in dealing with others and involvement in the ecological issues shows the personal competence of the pastoral caregiver.

## 6.2 Relationship Competence

The pastoral caregiver must be a man of relationships who gladly embraces contact with others and who radiates a pleasant character. A man of relationships in the pastoral field means one whom people can trust and share their concerns with. “Confidentiality is one of the main elements in having a good relationship with the students.”<sup>234</sup> Keeping confidentiality is important in all areas of pastoral work. “Good teachers need to know they must teach as well as they can in order to meet their students’ particular needs as fully as possible, and to establish positive personal relationships (of inevitably different quality) with them.”<sup>235</sup> In a confidential relationship every individual, whether it is a student or an individual from our pastoral field, tends to confide more information about themselves to the pastoral caregiver. This information can help the progress of the individual educationally or personally.

The confidentiality of the relationship helps the individual to open up because he/she feels acknowledged and confirmed from the pastoral caregiver. “One can only confide in someone who accepts him as a fellow-creature and person in his being and existence, who accepts him in his singularity. He who does not

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<sup>232</sup> „Aus der Perspektive des geistlichen Lebens gilt es, *alle menschliche Verankerung auf Gott hin zu überschreiten*: Nur wer sich tiefgründig in Gott verankert, wird fähig zum Neuaufbruch – ohne Gefahr für die Integrität seiner Person und seines Lebensprojektes.“ (Christoph, Jacobs *Mit Leidenschaft für Gott und sein Volk: Berufen zur Seelsorge in Zeiten pastoralen Wandels*, 266)

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Lambert, Willi *Beziehungskultur von Seelsorgern*, 387

<sup>234</sup> Garr, David *Personal and Interpersonal Relationships in Education and Teaching: A Virtue Ethical Perspective*, 268

<sup>235</sup> Ibid

receive such acceptance and confirmation from person to person is closed up in himself and dares not to confide in another. Confidence means giving oneself to a reliable person and it depends much on the truthfulness and self-manifestation of the educator.”<sup>236</sup> The authenticity and genuine behaviour of the pastoral caregiver or the educator is essential for relationship competence.

It is important for the pastoral caregiver to keep in mind that when the time is right, they have to let people go. Once the pastoral caregiver has fulfilled his or her responsibility to a certain relationship, the relationship must be terminated. Terminating the relationship is necessary for the growth of the individual. Along with the ability to terminate relationships, the pastoral caregiver is supposed to have the inner freedom to be close to the individual but to maintain distance from his pastoral relationships. To be close means close enough that the individual can feel the support of the pastoral caregiver, but maintaining distance in the relationship means that there is a limit or level of intimacy which is good for the functioning of the relationship. To maintain distance also means to give enough freedom to the individual to make decisions for his or her own life. Limiting the relationship in this way is very important since it is a protection both for the pastoral caregiver and the individual.<sup>237</sup>

Relationship competence demands that it is the obligation of the pastoral caregiver to know his/her own strengths and shadows, weaknesses and talents and abilities and limitations. This self-awareness will help the pastoral caregiver to avoid areas in which he does not feel competent. Accepting oneself and being content with the way one is very important in having a relationship with others. Awareness of one's own limitations can be helpful in the pastoral field in order to show understanding towards the mistakes and short-comings of others. It also warns the pastoral caregiver how far he/she can go in his/her pastoral field. In the opinion of Michael Klessmann, “The need on the part of the pastoral caregiver to foster relationships everywhere is not a sign of good pastoral care.”<sup>238</sup> The relationship competence of the pastoral caregiver also necessitates that competence should be developed in observing, understanding and interpreting the trends of our time; of society, the changing of culture, new and lost values and just going with the flow of anti-values. The new waves of fash-

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<sup>236</sup> Mundackal, James *Man in Dialogue: A Study of Dialogue and Interpersonal Relationship According to Martin Buber*, 214

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 261

<sup>238</sup> „Gute Seelsorge werden vor allem nicht der Größenphantasie erliegen, immer und überall „Beziehungen stiften“ zu wollen.“ (Steinkamp, Hermann *Leiten heißt Beziehung stiften. Ja-aber...*, 345)

ion and technological development affect the relational world of the individual more than anything.

Dealing with each individual responsibly because of office or assignment is part of relationship competence. The pastoral caregiver must have the ability to continue the relationship which means that one must maintain the relationship. “The conscious nurturing of relationships must be an integral part of pastoral care. Additionally within pastoral ministry, relationship quality is not trivial, although not alone, it is an important condition for creating the possibility that healing can take place.”<sup>239</sup> To maintain relationships, frequent personal contact either through telephone or visits, or contact via any other medium can be used. Every relationship need not be smooth and easy. When there are challenging relationships, endurance is necessary to keep them up. If the individual does not make progress, the pastoral caregiver cannot break the relationship or neglect the individual. This may happen very easily in the educational fields. Relationship competence requires that the individual can count on the pastoral caregiver as reliable and supportive in all different life situations.

### 6.3 Psychological and Counseling Competence

Competency in the field of counseling and knowledge in the area of psychology is very helpful in pastoral work. Human qualities alone will not support the pastoral caregiver in being able to fulfil his duty to be a professional in his work. In order to help the individual better, the pastoral caregiver must have enough knowledge of psychology and experience in the field of counseling. This competence helps the pastoral caregiver to understand what the unconscious elements are which may shape our personalities. “Psychoanalysis has shown that the forces that truly shape our personalities are unconscious drives, hidden impulses, defenses, memories, and fears that reside deep within us.”<sup>240</sup> Modern life is so complicated and challenging. Social and technological development has influenced the relationships of human beings so much that without knowledge of psychological and counseling studies, a breakthrough in the life of the individual is difficult. That is why Doris Nauer claims that, “The pastoral caregiver needs elementary knowledge of both inter-personal and intra-

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<sup>239</sup> „Bewußte Beziehungsgestaltung muss ein Bestandteil der Seelsorge sein. Auch in der Seelsorge ist Qualität der Beziehung, nicht nebensächlich, sondern eine – nicht die einzige – wichtige Bedingung der Möglichkeit dafür, dass Heilsames geschehen kann.“ (Klessman, Michael *Qualitätsmerkmale in der Seelsorge oder: Was wirkt in der Seelsorge?* 149)

<sup>240</sup> Ariel, S. David *What do Jews Believe?* 17

psychic dynamics which make possible a pastoral relationship on a conscious level, or block it.”<sup>241</sup>

The ability to accompany a process is important in this field. Most of the time the pastoral caregivers accompany different life processes of the individuals. In these processes, the psychological and counseling competencies enable the pastoral caregiver to be aware of factors that he or she may need in order to pay attention so that the accompanying process may function constructively. The way the pastoral caregiver reacts, the tone, the body language, everything is important in the guidance of the life processes. Training or formation in the counseling field will equip the pastoral caregiver to be aware of such factors. “A pastoral caregiver answers with feeling, being affected, compassion; with presence.”<sup>242</sup> The growth of the individual is determined according to the support and understanding of the pastoral caregiver.

Psychological and counseling competencies will help the pastoral caregiver to understand the social, bodily, psychological and historical context of the individual. Understanding the context of the individual is important because pastoral care always has to do with the situation and the context of the individual.<sup>243</sup> “Understanding the functional relationship between behaviour and the environment makes it possible to design the means of intervention in specific social settings in order to bring about a desired change in behaviour and social activity.”<sup>244</sup> The context of the individual influences him tremendously, and being aware of such factors is part of psychological and counseling competence.

Psychological and counseling competence also means having the ability and skills to enter into relationships with individuals and to involve the individuals in the relationships. Without the involvement of the individual, the relationship will remain one-sided. “Pastoral ministers can only begin to relate when they bring themselves in as subject, and as a person enter into relationships. Pastoral care may need techniques and methods, but in order to communicate consciously, the existential involvement of the person is indispensable.”<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> „Seelsorgerinnen brauchen daher elementares Wissen sowohl über inter-personelle als auch intra-psychische Dynamiken, die auf bewusster Ebene eine Seelsorgebeziehung überhaupt erst ermöglichen oder auch blockieren.” (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 257)

<sup>242</sup> „Ein Seelsorger oder eine Seelsorgerin antwortet mit Gefühlen, Betroffenheit, mit Compassion, mit Präsenz.“ (Weiß, Helmut *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 73)

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Weiß, Helmut *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 124

<sup>244</sup> Mannino, Fortune V. *An Ecological Approach to Understanding Family and Community Relationships*, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), Accessed on 13.06.2012

<sup>245</sup> „Seelsorge und Seelsorgerinnen können nur in Beziehung gehen, wenn sie sich als Subjekt und Person auf die Beziehungen einlassen. Seelsorge braucht Techniken und Methoden, um

In the educational situation, it is necessary for the pastoral caregiver or teacher to know that their friendly contact can accelerate the capacity for change in the individuals or in the students.<sup>246</sup> Psychological and counseling competence will support the pastoral caregiver or teacher to have emotional self-control in dealing with the students. Balanced judgement is required to make the best out of the potentiality of the students and to have a real perception of the students by knowing their abilities and talents.<sup>247</sup> To understand the peculiar and unique social and family environment of the students, psychological and counseling competence remains as a helping hand. The role and competence of the pastoral caregiver can expedite the process of relationships of the individual with oneself, others, nature and God, which is the goal of relational pastoral care.

## 6.4 Theological Competence

Theological studies empower the pastoral caregivers to excel in their pastoral ministry. According to Jacobs Christoph, theological studies can influence the pastoral caregiver in the theological-spiritual interpretation of the pastoral situation within the faith and Church history of God's people. "The interpretation of the pastoral situation in the sense of exile, exodus, diaspora, covenant-theology, Holy Saturday, the setting-forth into the Promised Land, the visions of the Revelation of John find more acceptance and above all will release more transformative forces ...."<sup>248</sup> Michael Klessmann adds that, "In this respect it belongs to the training of the pastoral caregiver, to work on his/her own interpretation of his/her motives and his/her own interpretation competence: What is important for my faith, for my vision of humankind and the world, for my understanding of God? Where do I have difficulties? Am I so familiar with the respective biblical images and statements that I can talk about them?"<sup>249</sup> Hav-

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bewusst kommunizieren zu können, aber der existentielle Einsatz der Person ist dabei unerlässlich." (Weiß, Helmut *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 124)

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Corsini, Raymond J. *The Dictionary of Psychology*, 825

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Garr, David *Personal and Interpersonal Relationships in Education and Teaching: A Virtue Ethical Perspective*, 265

<sup>248</sup> „... dass die Deutung der pastoralen Situation im Sinne des Exils, des Exodus, der Diaspora, der Bundestheologie, des Karsamstags, des Aufbruchs in das Gelobte Land, der Visionen der Offenbarung des Johannes mehr Akzeptanz finden und vor allem mehr verwandelnde Kräfte freisetzen werden..." (Christoph, Jacobs *Mit Leidenschaft für Gott und sein Volk: Berufen zur Seelsorge in Zeiten pastoralen Wandels*, 271)

<sup>249</sup> „Insofern gehört es zur Seelsorgeausbildung, an den eigenen Deutungsmotiven und der eigenen Deutungskompetenz zu arbeiten: Was ist für meinen Glauben, für meine Sicht des Menschen und der Welt, für mein Gottesverständnis wichtig und womit tue ich mich schwer? Bin ich mit den entsprechenden biblischen Bildern und Aussagen so vertraut, dass ich sie zur Sprache bringen kann?“ (Klessman, Michael *Qualitätsmerkmale in der Seelsorge oder: Was wirkt in der Seelsorge?* 153)

ing a solid theological foundation enables the pastoral caregiver to deal with the challenges of the pastoral situation from the point of view of faith.

Knowledge about the foundation of the concept of relational pastoral care is absolutely expected on the part of the pastoral caregiver. Each pastoral concept has a theological and anthropological foundation on which the pastoral concept is built. Theological competence implies the intellectual ability to explain and to give an account of the Christian faith. It means to have a lot of knowledge and the ability to defend it even though one may not personally share the same views. Theological competence does not mean to have an answer to all questions.<sup>250</sup> An inability to explain the questions with regard to Christian faith shows the incompetency of the pastoral caregiver in this area.

Theological studies are necessary for the pastoral caregiver to have a good foundation about the relational images of God, and of how God intervened and interacted in the lives of the people of Israel. Covenant history shows how people experienced God in their lives and how the people entered into a relationship with God. The different relationships God built up with the leaders of Israel like Moses, Noah and Abraham will provide a solid understanding about the positive and negative relational dimensions of God. An anthropological foundation throws light on the facts of who a human being is and why human being needs relationships. Imparting the right notion of faith is part of pastoral care. The proper explanation of faith on the part of the pastoral caregiver is enriching in the relationship of the individual with God. "Therefore to be theologically competent means to be familiar with both the bright and the dark sides of one's own Church traditions and the ability to deal with both sides."<sup>251</sup> Theological competence will assist the pastoral caregiver to support the individual in regard to the question of faith in the building up of a relationship.

## 6.5 Spiritual Competence

The fundamental aim of relational pastoral care is to lead the individuals to build a renewed relationship with God and to understand the ways God relates with them. Helmut Weiss confirms this fact. "Pastoral care always has a spiritual dimension. It is always geared at God's relationship with us men. It doesn't have to become reflexive each time, but it remains implicitly pre-

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<sup>250</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 247

<sup>251</sup> „Theologisch kompetent sein bedeutet daher, sowohl mit den Licht- als auch mit den Schattenseiten der eigenen Kirchen-Traditionen vertraut sein und damit umgehen zu können.“ (Ibid)



sent.”<sup>252</sup> Ulrich Geissler understands the spiritual competence of the pastoral caregiver as, “...the ability to meaningfully interpret the respective situation in the everyday school life and to act accordingly. Thereby, the school as a system, the concrete person, plays a role in the relationship of my own possibilities and limitations and the orientation towards the Christian message.”<sup>253</sup>

Having the responsibility to guide and lead the individual to God, the pastoral caregiver needs to have his/her own source of energy from where he/she can recharge. The pastoral caregiver must believe in the providence of God who guides and leads him. In order to serve others continuously, each pastoral caregiver should find his/her own means to strengthen himself/herself spiritually. “To be spiritually competent implies having found one’s own spiritual fountain of power and to experience the mysterious presence of God as supporting ground for all reality in spite of the distance of God from him.”<sup>254</sup> Spiritual competence anticipates the cultivation of one’s own spirituality. The pastoral caregiver has to consciously look for opportunities to cultivate it. “To value the personal vocation and to nurture this vocation in all humility before the God who calls is not a selfish triviality in the everyday life of one’s pastoral undertakings.”<sup>255</sup> Personal prayer is one way of keeping up the relationship with God. Participating in Holy Mass, attending retreats, taking part in bible classes or continuing with other formation through seminars are some of the means to enrich one’s own spiritual life.

It is necessary for the pastoral caregiver to have his/her own spiritual life because it will help to enrich his/her. “Spirituality leads us to discover our own limitedness and, at the same time, helps us to transcend it.”<sup>256</sup> It helps the caregiver to be able to depend on the transcendent power of God to fulfil the role

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<sup>252</sup> „Seelsorge hat immer eine spirituelle Dimension. Sie ist immer bezogen auf die Beziehung Gottes zu uns Menschen. Dies muss nicht immer explizit zur Sprache kommen, schwingt aber immer mit.“ (Weiß, Helmut *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 119)

<sup>253</sup> „... die Fähigkeit, die jeweilige Situation im alltäglichen Schulleben sinnvoll zu deuten und entsprechend zu handeln. Dabei spielen die Schule als System, der konkrete Mensch gegenüber, meine eigenen Möglichkeiten und Grenzen so wie die Orientierung an der christlichen Botschaft eine Rolle.“ (Geissler, Ulrich *Spiritualität in der Schulpastoral*, 118)

<sup>254</sup> „Spirituell kompetent sein impliziert bedeutet daher, selbst Anschluss gefunden zu haben an eigene *spirituelle Kraftbrunnen* und die geheimnisvolle Anwesenheit Gottes trotz aller Ferne als tragenden Grund aller Wirklichkeit zu erfahren.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 252)

<sup>255</sup> „Die eigene Berufung – in aller Demut gegenüber dem Gott, der beruft - Wert zu schätzen und sie zu pflegen, ist nicht eine egoistische Nebensächlichkeit im Alltagsgeschehen des pastoralen Agierens.“ (Christoph, Jacobs *Mit Leidenschaft für Gott und sein Volk: Berufen zur Seelsorge in Zeiten pastoralen Wandels*, 265)

<sup>256</sup> „Spiritualität führt uns dazu, uns in unsrer Begrenztheit wahrzunehmen und gleichzeitig immer wieder über uns hinauszugehen.“ (Weiß, Helmut *Seelsorge Supervision Pastoralpsychologie*, 119)

efficiently. “Reflection, meditation, creativity and leisure are required for theologically qualified pastoral work.”<sup>257</sup> Only those who believe in such spiritual intervention can accompany others to find their spiritual inner source. Spiritual competence requires that the pastoral caregiver excels less in the technical and professional skills but more in the “...cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, temperance and courage –together with those more particular qualities of respect, patience, generosity and a sense of humour that would seem to be logically derivative of such master virtues.”<sup>258</sup> Along with other virtues, the moral integrity of the pastoral caregiver is also significant to fulfil his obligations.

Spiritual competence means that the pastoral caregiver must be a man of good character. David Garr proposes good character formation for the pastoral caregiver. According to him, the character dispositions of the pastoral caregiver or teacher have more influence on the students or individuals than their technical ability. “The key point is that those who lack certain fundamental qualities of ordinary moral human character and association – of temperance, courage, honesty, fairness (justice), wisdom (good practical judgement) – unlikely to effective teachers.”<sup>259</sup> The higher the moral integrity of the pastoral caregiver means the he/she will be accepted in his/her pastoral field.

## 6.6 Mystagogical Competence

To fulfil the role of the pastoral caregiver as a spiritual facilitator, one needs to have mystagogical competence along with spiritual competence. Guiding the individual into a right relationship with God and assisting the individual to find God in his daily life requires the caregiver to have the ability to interpret and experience God in one’s own life. In the midst of all the chaos and confusion, the pastoral caregiver has to lead a life out of his/her relationship with God. Herbert Haslinger states that, “Mystagogie indicates first that the relationship with God grants to any human being value that never can be lost, and second that this human being, just by opening up in faith and trust to the God who offers him his relationship, can reach self-realization and responsibly shape his life as a whole in solidarity with God’s people.”<sup>260</sup> A mystagogue is someone

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<sup>257</sup> „Für theologisch qualifizierte Seelsorge braucht es Reflexion, Meditation, Kreativität und Muße.“ (Christoph, Jacobs *Mit Leidenschaft für Gott und sein Volk: Berufen zur Seelsorge in Zeiten pastoralen Wandels*, 271)

<sup>258</sup> Garr, David *Personal and Interpersonal Relationships in Education and Teaching: A Virtue Ethical Perspective*, 266

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, 261-262

<sup>260</sup> „Mystagogie zeigt an, erstens daß die Beziehung zu Gott dem Menschen einen unverlierbaren Wert verleiht und zweitens wie dieser Mensch, indem er sich dem Beziehungsangebot Gottes glaubend-vertrauend öffnet, zu seiner Selbstverwirklichung und zur verantworten

who lives his/her relationship with God in the routines of everyday life. The ability to help people to find God in their daily lives is the responsibility of the pastoral caregiver as a mystagogue.

How can the pastoral caregiver assist the individual in finding God here and now? Competence in liturgical and other religious practices and traditions is understood as the part of mystagogical competence of the pastoral caregiver. In order to provide links for the people to find God in their daily lives, the pastoral caregiver can make use of the sacraments and other religious traditions of every culture which nurtures the people to remain connected with the divine. "The aim is to disclose to people, out of texts written in their biographies, the nearness of God, for which the sacraments are a special demonstration."<sup>261</sup> The pastoral caregiver can make use of the rituals, symbols, stories and metaphors of Christian tradition to connect the individual with one's life situations.<sup>262</sup> For Michael Klessmann, mystagogical competence implies being familiar with liturgical forms like blessings and prayers.<sup>263</sup> The ability of the pastoral caregiver to perform liturgical functions and the knowledge of the religious traditions of one's faith is part of this competence. It matters a lot how the pastoral caregiver is familiar and confident in the celebration and use of religious practices and traditions.

Mystagogical competence facilitates the pastoral caregiver in assisting the people in seeing how God intervenes in their daily lives. In order to support the individual finding God in one's relational world, the pastoral caregiver can work with the different relational God images in the Bible. Stories of the different interventions of God in the lives of the Israelites and the imageries of how they experienced God will broaden the God-relational experiential world of the individual. Mainly all the relational images of the Bible depict a special and unique way of God touching the lives of the Israelites. These images can motivate or support the individual to form a life in view of God's will for himself/herself. That is why Stefan Gärtner writes that, "From a theological perspective it is about the future and how the future should be according to the

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Gestaltung seines ganzheitlichen Lebens in der Solidarität des Volkes Gottes kommen kann." (Haslinger, Herbert *Was ist Mystagogie? Praktisch-theologische Annäherung an einen strapazierten Begriff?* 64)

<sup>261</sup> „Dann geht es darum, den Leuten aus ihren Lebenstexten die Nähe Gottes zu erschließen, wofür die Sakramente ein besonderer Aufweis sind.“ (Knobloch, Stefan *Verschleudern wir die Sakramente? Die Feier der Sakramente als lebensgeschichtliche Mystagogie?* 117)

<sup>262</sup> Cf. Gärtner, Stefan *Prophetie in der Seelsorge: Unmöglich oder unvermeidlich?* 502

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Klessman, Michael *Qualitätsmerkmale in der Seelsorge oder: Was wirkt in der Seelsorge?* 151

will of God, in the presence of the person being cared for.”<sup>264</sup> Experiencing God here and now encourages the individual to mould his/her life in the light of that experience. The relational images of God in the Bible assist the individual to find one’s own relational image of God for his/her life.

The aim of relational pastoral care is to always help people be in relationship with God. The challenging part of mystagogical competence is in teaching the individual that the experience of God is possible outside liturgical celebrations and religious practices. For that, the pastoral caregiver has to assist them to look at divine experience beyond the usual and traditional religious activities. Ottomar Fuchs writes that, “God is, however, not only the one who acted first. He is not only experienced through human activity and through our religious services, but God is rather a reality that goes far beyond and reaches infinitely deeply into a mystery, whose reasons and abysses we can never grasp and feel in this life.”<sup>265</sup> The mysterious presence of God is experienced in the human encounter in different ways. Herbert Haslinger is of the opinion that why we experience God in the interaction and acceptance of each other is because of the fact that all of us stand on the horizon of an indiscriminately given relationship with God.<sup>266</sup> Mystagogical competence will support the pastoral caregiver not only in deemphasizing the tension between closeness and distance of God but to endure it along with the people.<sup>267</sup> This tension is part of the relationship of human beings with God. Klaus Kießling explains this mysterious closeness and distance of God as part of the incomprehensibility of God.<sup>268</sup> God always remains as a mysterious presence in our relational world. In order to link the individual with the divine and lead a life of relationship with God, the mystagogical competence of the pastoral caregiver is expected and it enhances the profile of the pastoral caregiver.

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<sup>264</sup> „In einer theologischen Perspektive geht es um die Zukunft, wie sie nach dem Willen Gottes sein sollte, in Verbindung mit der Gegenwart eines Pastoranden/ einer Pastorandin” (Gärtner, Stefan *Prophetie in der Seelsorge: Unmöglich oder unvermeidlich?* 504)

<sup>265</sup> „Gott ist jedoch nicht nur derjenige, der zuerst gehandelt hat. Er wird nicht nur durch das menschliche Handeln und durch unsere Gottesdienste erfahrbar, sondern ist eine Wirklichkeit, die weit darüber hinausgeht und unendlich tief hinein reicht in ein Geheimnis, dessen Gründe und Abgründe wir in diesem Leben niemals begreifen und erfüllen können.“ (Fuchs, Ottomar *Einige Richtungsanzeigen für die Pastoral der Zukunft*, 229)

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Haslinger, Herbert *Was ist Mystagogie? Praktisch-theologische Annäherung an einen strapazierten Begriff?* 70

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Sorge um die Seele*, 254

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Kießling, Klaus *Mystagogisch und solidarisch in kulturell pluraler Welt: Konturen religionspädagogischer Spiritualität*, 463

## 6.7 Prophetical-Critical Competence

Demanding that the people lead a life of sharing with those who are marginalized and showing them solidarity is part of the prophetical-critical competence of the pastoral caregiver. There should be solidarity not only on the social level and but also in the use of natural resources. In order to cultivate a relational-covenantal relationship toward nature and to protect nature, the pastoral caregiver has to be vigilant in ecological issues.

To fulfil the role as the social facilitator, the pastoral caregiver is supposed to have a prophetical critical competence which helps him/her to find the places in which the kingdom of God is blocked and to teach relational solidarity. “In addition to the cooperation between all the forces of good will, it is therefore a question of identifying those places where the local and global society is characterized by no solidarity and to identify the causes and to find those people causing the problems.”<sup>269</sup> Along with the different qualities required of the pastoral caregiver, the ability for prophetical-critical competence is indeed relevant for today’s relational world. To think uniquely and act differently, the pastoral caregiver is supposed to have prophetical-critical competence. “The Prophet, if I may greatly simplify the complex Old Testament lines, is not so much the one who predicts the future, but rather is one who looks below the surface critically, reveals injustice and the abuse of power of the ruling class, confronts them in solidarity with the poor and needy with the judgment of God.”<sup>270</sup> This role of the pastoral caregiver can be compared with the different stories of the prophets we have in the Bible and also in how Jesus confronted the social systems that existed at that time.<sup>271</sup> Prophetical-critical competence necessitates the pastoral caregiver to act from the inner conviction which he/she lives from his/ her relationship with God.

In the field of relational pastoral care, this ability empowers the pastoral caregiver to point out the manipulations and exploitations the individual may be going through because of the social structure. “According to tradition, pastoral

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<sup>269</sup> „Neben der Kooperation mit allen Kräften guten Willens geht es auch darum, jene Orte zu benennen, in denen die lokale und globale Gesellschaft ganz und gar nicht von Solidarität geprägt ist und wo die Ursachen und die verursachenden Menschen zu finden sind.“ (Fuchs, Ottomar *Einige Richtungsanzeigen für die Pastoral der Zukunft*, 231)

<sup>270</sup> „Der Prophet, wenn ich die komplexen alttestamentlichen Linien stark vereinfachen darf, ist nicht so sehr derjenige, der die Zukunft vorhersagt, sondern einer, der kritisch unter die Oberfläche der Dinge sieht, Ungerechtigkeit und Machtmissbrauch der Herrschenden aufdeckt und sie, in Solidarität mit den Armen und Elenden, mit dem Gericht Gottes konfrontiert.“ (Klessman, Michael *Solidarität und Parteilichkeit: Der prophetische Auftrag der Kirche im Kontext der Notfallseelsorge*, 99)

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 202

care is not only the care of healing and salvation of the individual, but also stands in the prophetic tradition which keeps in view both the behavior of the individual person and the orientation of society as a whole.”<sup>272</sup> The relationality of human beings is interrelated and interconnected with social, cultural, economic and religious situations and surroundings. The aim of relational pastoral care is not only to rectify and renew the relationship with God alone but also to look at the integral life of the individual. This is the motivational point for Karl Lehman to say that, “Since pastoral care is directed at the entire human being, it must also turn to the physical, social, economic and political contingent situation.”<sup>273</sup> The ability to understand the cultural influence in the relational world of the individual is helpful for the pastoral caregiver. He need not be an expert in different cultures but to be aware of that cultural aspect and its complexity in the human relationships. Such information will assist the pastoral caregiver to understand the particular behaviour of the individual.<sup>274</sup>

Prophetic-critical competence in relational pastoral care means to liberate the individual from the chains of situations wherein the human relational qualities cannot be developed or are obstructed. That is why Doris Nauer formulates that, “Pastoral care is not only a help in the crisis of faith and intervention in somatic-psychic crisis, but also includes the dimensions of specific aid for deliverance, life (and survival).”<sup>275</sup> The relationships of human beings cannot be separated from their social environment. Prophetic competence enables the pastoral caregiver to draw attention to social injustice and unjust situations in which the individual lives. These unfair situations can hinder the relational qualities of the individual and block growth of his/her relationality. Without changing the existing social environment of the individual, he/she may not be able to develop his/her relationship. For example when an individual who is being abused in the family comes to the pastoral caregiver, it is necessary for the pastoral caregiver to provide options to avoid such situations and to free the individual from further abuse. It may also be necessary for the pastoral care-

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<sup>272</sup> „Seelsorge steht nicht nur in der Tradition der Sorge um Heilung und Heil des einzelnen Menschen, sondern auch in dieser prophetischen Tradition, die das Verhalten einzelner Personen, aber auch die Ausrichtung des Gemeinwesens als Ganzes in den Blick nimmt.“ (Klessman, Michael *Solidarität und Parteilichkeit: Der prophetische Auftrag der Kirche im Kontext der Notfallseelsorge*, 100)

<sup>273</sup> „Da die Seelsorge dem ganzen konkreten Menschen gilt, muss sie sich auch der leiblich, sozial, gesellschaftlich, ökonomisch und politisch bedingten Situation zuwenden.“ (Lehmann, Karl *Seelsorge als Aufgabe der Kirche*, 52)

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Schneider-Harprecht, Christoph *Interkulturelle Systemische Seelsorge*, 225)

<sup>275</sup> „Seelsorge erschöpft sich daher nicht in Glaubens- und somato-psychischer Krisenhilfe, sondern umfasst immer auch die Dimension konkreter Befreiungs- und (Über) Lebenshilfe.“ (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorge: Sorge um die Seele*, 202)

giver to look for other ways to confront the parents by contacting the authorities. “The battle for just structures is not only dependent on the livelihood security of the single individual, but is also seen as a prophetic service to the whole of society...”<sup>276</sup> Sometimes the individual may suffer from social systems and is helpless because of his situation. The ultimate aim of relational pastoral care is to strengthen the individual to stand against social injustices and evils which destroys human dignity and the relational network of human beings. In order to help the individual, the pastoral caregiver has to confront and critically question the social system.

Prophetical-critical competence equips pastoral caregivers to be familiar with the social systems in which they are working. The organizational system in the parishes, in the educational institutions and in the hospitals will be entirely different from one another. “Pastoral care cannot be undertaken unless it is based on an adequate perception and assessment of the concrete individual and social situation.”<sup>277</sup> In order to link the individual with oneself, others, nature and God, sometimes it is necessary to have a critical analysis of the life situation of the individual. In relational pastoral care, prophetical-critical competence is crucial because the relationship of the individual is always connected with social life situations and the environment. Prophetical-critical competence is a great support for the pastoral caregiver in the process to free the individual from anything which may hinder the growth of the relationship and lead the individual to build up one’s own relational world.

## 7. Multidimensional Relationship

Relationships are an integral part of human beings. Every now and then human beings attempt to define what a relationship is. Can we understand a relationship from just one point of view? Katherine Clarke describes the difficulty of defining what relationships are because most of the time what is defined as a relationship is really the different dimensions of relatedness.<sup>278</sup> Reinhold Boschki states that, “The word relationship is important because relationships

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<sup>276</sup> „Der Kampf um gerechte Strukturen dient jedoch nicht nur zur Lebenssicherung des einzelnen Individuums, sondern wird auch ein prophetischer Dienst an der Gesamtgesellschaft gewertet...” (Nauer, Doris *Seelsorgekonzepte im Widerstreit: ein Kompendium*, 307)

<sup>277</sup> „Seelsorge kann verantwortet nur betrieben werden, wenn sie auf einer adäquaten Wahrnehmung und Beurteilung der konkreten individuellen und sozialen Situation beruht.” (Henke, Thomas *Wahrnehmung des Politischen: Zu einer wenig beachteten Dimension in der Seelsorge*, 114 )

<sup>278</sup> Cf. Clarke, Katherine M. *Dimensions of Human Relationship*, 5

matter so much for today's people."<sup>279</sup> "Relationship" points to the importance we give to this subject, be it in everyday life or in scientific reflection. Relationships are an emotionally important process for people; they are connected with their most basic life realities, and with their relation to themselves and others. Relationships points to the depth of human existence, are emotionally charged, and determine the quality of the exchange among humans."<sup>280</sup>

Peter Schmid exposed the inevitability of different relationships which human beings need for their personal development. "They (developments) show to what extent and depth human beings are in need of relationships. There are a number of other relationships constitutive for the identity of a person: friendships, relationships at his working place, social activities, relationships with regard to things or values, i.e. relationships to his own work, and the task to which he dedicates his energy, etc."<sup>281</sup> Human beings exist because of their relationships. Along with other things which nurture human beings, relationships are vital in that category. For Michael Klessman, "Life exists not only biologically but can also function in relationship to self, others, the world and to the basis of all being, to God."<sup>282</sup>

To define a relationship from one angle alone will make the definition frail because relationships comprise different aspects and many elements from society, from religion, from the individual and from the environment too. That means that only a multidimensional definition of relationship can integrate all the elements of human relationships: relationship with oneself, relationship with others, relationship with nature and relationship with God.

Linking with oneself unfolds the relationship to oneself. Relational self-identity teaches the individual who he/she is and what his/her identity is in the relation-

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<sup>279</sup> „Das Wort "Beziehung" ist wichtig, weil die Sache der Beziehung für heutige Menschen wichtig ist." (Boschki, Reinhold *Beziehung als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik: Grundlegung einer dialogisch-kreativen Religionsdidaktik*, 95)

<sup>280</sup> „Beziehung" zeigt die Bedeutung, die dem Gemeinten beigemessen wird- sowohl im Alltag als auch in wissenschaftlicher Reflexion. Beziehung ist für Menschen ein emotional bedeutsames Geschehen; sie hat etwas mit ihren ureigensten Lebensvollzügen zu tun, mit ihrem Verhältnis zu sich selbst und zu anderen. Beziehung verweist in die Tiefe menschlicher Existenz, ist emotional nicht neutral und bestimmt über die Qualität des Austausches der Menschen untereinander.“ (Ibid, 106)

<sup>281</sup> „Sie zeigen, wie sehr und umfassend der Mensch der Beziehung bedarf. Zusätzlich gibt es eine Reihe anderer Beziehungen, die konstitutive für das Selbstverständnis eines Menschen sind: Freundschaften, Arbeitsbeziehungen, soziale Aufgaben, die Beziehungen zu Sachen oder Werten: etwa zur eigenen Arbeit, zu einer Aufgabe, der man sich widmet, usw.“ (Schmid, Peter. F. *Der Mensch ist Beziehung: Personalität aus sozialpsychologischer und philosophischer und philosophisch-anthropologischer Perspektive*, 229-230)

<sup>282</sup> „Leben ist nicht nur biologisch vorhanden, sondern kann sich zu sich selbst, zu anderen, zur Welt und zum Grund des Seins, zu Gott, verhalten.“ (Klessman, Michael *Seelsorge*, 46)



ship. Relational self-esteem brings to the awareness of the individual his/her relational abilities, and relational self-acceptance empowers the individual to accept his/her relational qualities and to be content with them. Self-acceptance leads the individual to relational self-love. These four dimensional developments enable the individual to link with oneself.

When a person has a strong foundation of who he/she is and what he/she is capable of, it serves as the foundation for the formation of relationships with others. Relational solidarity with others provides the individual opportunities to come into relationship with others. Relational community experiences strengthen and deepen the relational qualities of the individual and also the relationships with others. Interaction with others empowers the relational qualities of the person and is complemented further through continued relatedness with others in his/her social environment.

Linking with nature is not possible without creating an awareness of the environmental challenges of today's society in which we live. Awareness of environmental challenges demands the individual's active participation in ecological issues, and this builds bridges for the relationship of the person with nature. Involvement in ecological issues teaches the individual that he/she has to learn to live with natural resources in a better way. This consciousness demands that a new relational method like the relational-covenantal approach to nature is necessary. Nature and environment is seen as an integral part of the human being, and the respectful use of natural resources is expected to maintain the covenant relationship with nature. A covenantal approach towards nature will safeguard creation for future generations.

Linking with oneself, linking with others, and linking with nature automatically leads the individual to a relationship with God, which is the basis of all relationships. In order to link the individual with the divine, the strengthening of religious experiences are needed. Most of the time an individual brings along with him/her an image of God which has either been nurtured or neglected. The relational dimension of mystagogia sheds light on the enrichment of a relationship with God through liturgy, sacraments and religious education. This will help the individual to redefine or modify his/her image of God which then becomes a new relational image of God.

In defining a relational paradigm for pastoral care, the role and the competence of the pastoral caregiver is mandatory. In the process of helping the individual to relate with himself/herself and others, the pastoral caregiver remains as the personal facilitator. By accompanying the individual, the pastoral caregiver supports the efforts of the individual in building up the relationship process. As

the spiritual facilitator, the pastoral caregiver works with the individual to see the footprints of God and to discern the will of God in his daily life. The role of the pastoral caregiver is not limited to the life of the individual alone but also to the society and the social environment in which the individual lives those relationships. As the social facilitator, the pastoral caregiver accepts the role of social advocate who ensures that the social environment lives relationality.

In order to fulfil the role, the pastoral caregiver needs to possess certain professional and human qualities which can better facilitate linking. Theological competence supports the pastoral caregiver by having a right understanding about one's own faith and also the theological and anthropological foundation of the relationship. Relationship competence demands human qualities of the pastoral caregiver in order to build up relationships. He/she has to be aware of the dos and don'ts in relationships which will facilitate in helping others form relationships. Spiritual competence demands that the pastoral caregiver finds and nurtures his/her own spiritual resources. Psychological and counselatory competence aids the pastoral caregiver in understanding the unconscious elements in the lives of the individuals which may influence or block relationships. Mystagogical competence helps the pastoral caregiver to support the individual in finding God's presence in their daily lives. Prophetic-critical competence enables the pastoral caregiver to exercise the role of social facilitator and to be an advocate of a social system where relationships are not blocked and where people can live in relational harmony.

Multidimensional relationships unfold from a healthy relationship of the individual to oneself, which remains as the foundation for the all other relationships. The relationship with oneself leads the individual to relate with others, which empowers and enhances the individual. A relationship with nature teaches human beings to see nature and the environment as part of their lives and to be able to relate to them as fellow beings, or to see them as God sees them. The new relational image of God strengthened by religious experiences helps the individual to redefine his/her own image of God.

A multidimensional relationship is a network of relationships of the individual to oneself, others, nature and God. Each relationship network has to be seen in the context of other relationships. They are dynamically interrelated and influence each other. A multidimensional relationship empowers the individual to live his own relationships to the fullest. "Human beings, then, were created to enter into a wide range of relationships. We are born as persons to connect, affiliate, and relate with other humans in a spirit of mercy and love. Humans clarify their identity, experience growth, and find fulfilment in the web of lov-

ing relationships.”<sup>283</sup> Building up better relationships with themselves, others, nature and God will lead the individuals to integrated multidimensional relationships. An integrated multidimensional relationship is wholeness, and is another face of the Creator himself.

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<sup>283</sup> Beck, James R.; Demarest, Bruce, *The Human Person in the Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty First Century*, 318-319

## **V. CASE STUDY: PASTORAL CARE IN AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**

### **1. The Aim and Beginning of the Mary Matha Schoenstatt College**

The theological and anthropological foundation of human relationships laid the foundation for me to develop a relational paradigm for pastoral care. This chapter will unveil how such a scientific theory can be put into practice in the pastoral field of an educational institution. The outlook of this chapter is different from the other four chapters, while the purpose of this chapter is to describe my limited experiential fieldwork which I was able to make in the Mary Matha Schoenstatt College.<sup>1</sup> Each experience is limited, of which I am aware, but each experience has a value which is beyond theory, which has to be verified with reality. My experience has its own advantages and limitations. My experience is related to the key intuitions<sup>2</sup> that were in my mind and experience. I followed my fundamental intuitions about helping the students increase their accademical enhancement by enriching their relational world. My idea was to make these intuitions into a scientific approach that would accompany the students while in college and throughout their lives. I have acquired the competence required to fulfil my role as pastoral caregiver from our Schoenstatt spirituality along with my professional training and studies. I have no intention of explaining the different aspects of the Schoenstatt spirituality in detail, though it remained as a solid foundation for the accompaniment of the students. It is important to note that I am describing my experience from 2004-2007; both the mentality and social situation have undergone drastic changes in the last years.

Mary Matha Schoenstatt College came into existence in the year 2002. The need of a place for Plus One and Plus Two studies (11th and 12th grades) for the seminarians of the Schoenstatt Fathers Community was another motivation for the creation of this college. From 2003 onwards we began to admit students from the outside, whereas before it was meant only for the seminarians. In the beginning there was no plan to develop the college into the comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Matha Schoenstatt College is situated in the district of Thrissur in Kerala State, India. The name of the college has been changed slightly and it is known as Mary Matha Schoenstatt Academy.

<sup>2</sup> Every student has some God-given talents. How the student is being helped in is important in discovering and utilizing his or her abilities and talents.

educational facility as it is now. It was a gradual development and the result of creative outcome.

We admitted a maximum of fifty students every year. Though we had more requests for admission we restricted the number of the students to fifty so that individual care could be given to each student. The individual care and integral growth of the students are hallmarks of our college. Many other educational institutions concentrated mainly on the intellectual development and performance of the students. Large numbers of students with intense pressure to finish the prescribed portion quickly would not permit the institutions to provide any other support for the students. They concentrate solely on study and the marks the students achieve in the exams. My goal was the integral growth of the students, and in order to reach this goal I had to set priorities for admissions. Among the admissions, more than sixty percent of the students had passed the tenth grade<sup>3</sup> with the bare minimum of grades needed to pass.<sup>4</sup> Twenty percent of the students scored above average,<sup>5</sup> and the next twenty percent had scored<sup>6</sup> good grades in the exams. The mixture of students between below average, average, and above average percentile was necessary because of two reasons. First, the combination encouraged the below average students to work hard and to motivate themselves to study well, and second, it was an opportunity for the good students to show solidarity by helping the lower performing students increase their academic performance. It is worthwhile to mention that most of the time it was not easy for the below average students to get admission<sup>7</sup> to a good college for their Plus One (11th grade) studies. So I gave preference to the below average students. There were times when I suggested to the good students from the tenth grade to continue their 11th and 12th grade studies at other colleges so that I was able to admit more below average students.

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<sup>3</sup> The Indian educational system goes until tenth grade Lower Primary School (1-4), Upper Primary School (5-7) and High Secondary School (8-10). The tenth grade examination is the final examination from the High School. Higher Secondary School includes Plus One and Plus Two classes (11th and 12th Grade) are preparation for the college studies. After finishing the Plus Two studies, students can go to college for different degree courses like in any other country. The age group of the students with whom I was dealing in my college varied from 16-19 years old.

<sup>4</sup> Pass mark from the tenth grade examination was 210/600. Half of the students scored below 260.

<sup>5</sup> They scored above 275/600 marks.

<sup>6</sup> The score of the students were above 300 out of 600

<sup>7</sup> Admissions for Plus One (11th Grade) studies in the colleges were given according to the marks of the students. Preference was given to the students who scored high marks. Below average students were automatically left out.

The time of the classes was also different from that of other colleges. Normal college class hours are from 10 a.m. in the morning till 4 p.m. in the afternoon. We began at 9 a.m. in the morning and ended at 1:25 p.m. This time arrangement helped me to organize special classes for those students who needed extra care in regard to their studies. This time arrangement was meant to be helpful for those students who wanted to work in order to earn something for their studies after college. Very few students made use of this time.

The motto of the college was *Education Through Trust and Love*. This motto originated from the spirituality of the Schoenstatt Movement Founder, Fr. Joseph Kentenich.<sup>8</sup> He tried to create a new atmosphere in the field of education with his own principles which were unique and attractive.<sup>9</sup> The way Fr. Kentenich accompanied the students is education through trust and pedagogy of love and attachment.

The focus at the beginning of Mary Matha Schoenstatt College was to provide an opportunity for the below average students who would not normally be considered in other colleges. The Indian educational system is based upon the ability of the student to reproduce what they have been taught.<sup>10</sup> The involvement of the whole person was not important in the other colleges. Since there are a lot of students in those schools, attention to the emotional needs of the students cannot be given. From the beginning of the college, we tried to concentrate on the development of the whole person, having the students' social environment in our minds.

## 2. Sitz im Leben of the Students

### 2.1 Mistrust

It is important to describe the Sitz im Leben of the students because most of the students who studied at Mary Matha Schoenstatt College had their own unique

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<sup>8</sup> Fr. Joseph Kentenich (1885-1965) is the Founder of International Schoenstatt Movement which is present on all five continents.

<sup>9</sup> There was one incident when Fr. Kentenich was working as the spiritual father of the students in the minor seminary of the Pallotines Fathers in the year 1912-1913. He was teaching them Latin. It was usual at that time that the teachers did not leave the classroom when examinations were given. But when he conducted the Latin examination, he left the classroom after giving the students the test paper. It was a surprising experience for the students but the explanation given by Fr. Kentenich was that he trusted his students. This incident had a great impact on the life of the students. When I read the biography of Fr. Kentenich, this incident struck me and it remained in me as a motivating factor in the process of accompanying the students.

<sup>10</sup> At present many educational policies have been updated so that the Indian educational system may be compatible with the education system of other countries.cf. [www.ssa.nic.in](http://www.ssa.nic.in); See also [www.educationforallindia.com](http://www.educationforallindia.com)

and particular situations. Many of the students brought haunting experiences with them which disturbed them emotionally. A healthy emotional life is necessary for a good academic performance of the students, while an unsteady emotional life can create barriers in the learning capacity of the individuals. The intelligence quotient is dependent on the emotional quotient and they are interrelated.<sup>11</sup> One of the basic problems of the students was that they had learned to mistrust others, from their own parents, friends or from their schools. Take the case of Clare;<sup>12</sup> she telephoned me two days before the exams and told me that she wanted to talk to me because she was not able to study. She was upset because her uncle, the younger brother of her mother, tried to sexually abuse her when there was no one at home. She was in shock because she did not expect anything like this from her uncle. Added to that, her mother did not believe her when she explained the incident, and instead sided with her brother saying that he would not do such a bad thing. Though her uncle only attempted to abuse her, the fact that he looked at her and tried to touch her that way shook her totally and she lost her trust in her relatives. Most of all, Clare was lost because her mother did not believe her. The basic trust Clare was supposed to have towards her relatives was shattered. The people who were supposed to be the trust-builders in her life either did not live up to their responsibility or their behavior created mistrust rather than trust. Due to problems in their families, such as a misunderstanding between the parents or where the wife had been ill-treated because the husband was a drunk, the students did not have any trust-building experiences at home.

These students have rarely experienced a person who stood with them and fought for them in their moments of difficulty. Some of the students did not have anyone at all who offered them trust. The trust-breaking experiences at home and the exploitation from their friends and others who were close to them increased their mistrust. Then their poor academic performance and their lack of self-confidence caused them to lose even more self-confidence. The children had lived through many more painful experiences in their lives than positive ones, and so they begin to mistrust themselves. The unfavorable social environment and lack of education of the parents are the other aspects which kept the students from developing trust.

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<sup>11</sup> Landau, Jacqueline; Meirovich, Gavriel *Development of Students' Emotional Intelligence: Participative Classroom Environments in Higher Education*, <http://www.questia.com>, Accessed on 07.04. 2014

<sup>12</sup> Not the real name of the student.

## 2.2 Conditional Love

Experiencing unconditional support and love from parents is necessary for the growth of every child. To know that they are loved by their parents regardless of what they are is an encouraging factor for the growth of children.<sup>13</sup> Some parents project their unfulfilled desires on their children and expect them to perform well, which may not be easy for their children. In the Indian context, sometimes the egotistical needs of the parents also play a large role in conditionally loving their children. The unhealthy wish or need of the parents to have their children perform well, like their friend's or relative's children, put demands on the children which they may not be able to meet. Such a comparison is quite common among parents and may be because of the helplessness of the parents in helping their children overcome their problems. Whatever may be the parent's reasons, what the child registers is that he/she is not accepted; but that only the academic performance is valued. Most of the students are convinced that they are only worth as much as they achieve.

When the parents express more love towards their children who achieve something or perform well in school, the children do not experience unconditional love. Many students experience only conditional acceptance and love from their parents, which is the subjective opinion of the students. Unfortunately, often the students felt their performance at school was the measurement of their own person. This unhealthy situation created pressure on the students which affected their relationship with their parents. Children realized that the recognition and appreciation they received from their parents whenever they performed well academically were forms of conditional love. This misunderstanding was confirmed when the parents failed to support the students because they did not perform well in school. The children felt that, more than their person, their performance was the criteria for love.

The unnecessary comparison of the children against other students by their parents is also part of conditional love. Most of the parents make this comparison with the intention of challenging their children. They point out those who are performing well in school as role models for their children. But it ends up in the ears of their children exactly the opposite of how the parents intended.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bowlby, John A *Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*, 11



## 2.3 Destructive Self-Image

Another challenging task for me was dealing with students who had very destructive self-images. Most of the messages the students received from their trust-builders like parents, siblings, teachers or relatives were negative. Ajith<sup>14</sup> achieved very good grades for the 12th grade final exams. He did not feel that he did a great job because he was always verbally put down by his parents who told him that he was not smart or talented like his siblings. What he felt from his parents was that he was not good enough and couldn't perform well. Ajith was lost and confused when his own family members did not believe in his potential.

Failing the tests was a self-fulfilling prophecy for those students who carried a destructive self-image. The result of such thinking was that they began to believe that they could not pass the exams. Even attempting them would be waste of time. The example of Arun<sup>15</sup> confirms such thinking. He just barely managed to pass the tenth grade. Since he was not good at studies he did not want to continue with 11th grade. But his parents convinced him how important it was to have the 12th grade certificate so Arun sought admission to our college. After one year he came for the 11th grade public exams. Unfortunately he did not pass on the first attempt. He came to me and wanted to quit his studies. I tried to convince him that it was worthwhile for him to try again. But he told me, "I know, Father, I will not get through the examination. I am not talented like others. Others used to tell me that I am not good at studies." I was puzzled at his explanation. Then I asked him to give me one more chance to prove that he could get through 12th grade. His reply to my request was interesting, "Father, you will be wasting your time trying to help me study. I know that I will not make it." After lengthily discussions, Arun agreed that he would try the 11th grade examination again. He passed on the second attempt and was able to continue his studies in the 12th grade. He received special attention from me and I personally made sure that he got the support of the teachers in clarifying his problem areas. He took the final exam for the 12th grade and when the results were published he did not want to check because he believed that he did not make it. But to his great surprise, he passed the tests. This is just one example to show how deeply the students have been influenced in a destructive self-image by other people. At this age, they look for recognition and confirmation from others of what and who they are. But instead of encouragement,

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<sup>14</sup> Not the real name of the student.

<sup>15</sup> Not the real name of the student.

many students receive discouragement. As a result, the students believe the negative messages more than their real ability to achieve something.

## 2.4 Disconnected from the Divine

A distorted relationship with God was another of the students' *Sitz im Leben* that I had to face. Many of the students felt and thought that how the parents treated them would be how God would treat them too. They projected their relationship with their parents onto their relationship with God.<sup>16</sup> Because of their mistrusting experiences and the lack of unconditional love the students developed destructive self-images, and as a consequence, their personal image of God was affected. As a consequence, the students were disconnected from the divine too.

When the parents were loving, the children perceived God as loving and close to them, but when the parents were emotionally cold and rigid then it was not easy for the children to have intimacy with God, or they avoided a relationship with God altogether.<sup>17</sup> This perception of God was not helpful for their growth since they viewed God as distant, rigid, strict and punishing. Most of the time children transfer their first experiences with their parents onto God. This does not mean that all the students experienced a distorted relational image of God. Most of the students had a relationship with God; however, it was difficult for them to believe that God was someone who accompanies and supports them in their daily lives or in their small mistakes and failures. Their relationship with the divine as well as their personal relational image of God had been severely affected and damaged due to their earlier experiences.

## 3. Linking with Oneself

### 3.1 Education Through Trust

To help the students link with themselves and to help them develop relational self-identity and self-esteem, I adapted the main pedagogical guidelines of our Founder, Joseph Kentenich,<sup>18</sup> in such way that was helpful for the students'

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. King, Herbert *Joseph Kentenich - Ein Durchblick in Texten (Pädagogische Texte)*, 508

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Limke, Alicia; Mayfield, Patrick B. *Attachment to God: Differentiating the Contributions of Fathers and Mothers Using the Experiences in Parental Relationships Scale*, <http://www.questia.com>, Accessed on 29.04.2014; See also Balthasar, Hans Urs von *Vom menschlichen Du zum göttlichen Du*, 15-21

<sup>18</sup> His pedagogical guidelines are born out of an idea of dialogical complexity. That means the caregiver has to foster in himself a multifaceted and broadminded awareness of life. The starting point of education was not any scientific theory for Fr. Kentenich but the continued reflection of his own experiences in the field of education and guidance. He aimed for an integrated

situation. I have been greatly influenced by the way Fr. Kentenich was able to help the boys whom he was accompanying and guiding to develop trust. To build trust in someone is to have received trust. As the pastoral caregiver I gave that trust to the students without judging whether they deserved it or not. Part of this trust is that I viewed the life of each student as valuable and meaningful, and I believed that there were hidden qualities in every student which made them different from others.

As we have seen in the fourth chapter, relational self-identity and relational self-esteem are required in order to draw a realistic picture of oneself and to believe that one is worthwhile. I offered the students the method of education through trust<sup>19</sup> in order to help them develop their self-identity and self-esteem. As the pastoral caregiver, I remained the bridge-builder for them; someone who believed in their abilities and at the same time who supported them in their struggles to overcome their lack of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Trust is the basic quality required in order to develop a relationship with oneself. Since the students had a lot of trust-breaking experiences from their childhood days, it was not easy for them to feel they could trust themselves or to believe in themselves when suddenly someone suggests they do so.<sup>20</sup> Education through trust needs someone to sow the seeds of trust. My responsibility as the pastoral caregiver was to awaken and actuate those abilities even though the students may not have been able to create those abilities themselves. In order to build a rapport with oneself, first one has to trust oneself because rela-

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and balanced concept of education. The pedagogical guidelines of the Schoenstatt Spirituality mainly include five pillars of education: Movement Pedagogy, Attachment Pedagogy, Ideal Pedagogy, Covenant Pedagogy and Trust Pedagogy. All these guidelines aim at the formation of the individual from a holistic approach giving each fraction of life its due preference and importance. Fr. Kentenich verified the guidelines of his education mainly in the context of self-education. (Cf. Frömbgen, Erika *Pädagogik*, 293-297)

<sup>19</sup> „Die Vertrauenspädagogik geht aus einem bewussten Kontrastverhalten hervor, das P. Kentenich von Beginn seiner erzieherischen Tätigkeit an praktizierte, und zwar als seine positive Antwort auf den pädagogischen Pessimismus in seinen verschiedenen Auswirkungen. (z.B. dauernde Kontrolle, Freiheitsbeschränkungen der verschiedensten Art, Disziplinierung durch formalisiertes Verhalten.) “Education through trust emerges out of a conscious contrast behaviour, which Fr. Kentenich put into practice from the beginning of his educational activity onwards, as his positive response to the pedagogical (educational) pessimism in its various consequences (e.g. continuous control, freedom restrictions of various kinds, disciplining through formalized behaviour.)” (Frömbgen, Erika *Vertrauenspädagogik*, 413) The mistrust of the individuals can be replaced by giving trust to the individuals. Believing in the goodness of every individual and mutual trust between the individual and the pastoral caregiver are included in the process of trust building. (Cf. Frömbgen, Erika, *Vertrauenspädagogik*, 413-414, See also Cf. King, Herbert *Joseph Kentenich - Ein Durchblick in Texten (Pädagogische Texte)*, 233-296)

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Erikson, Erik H.; Erikson, Joan M. *The Life Cycle Completed*, 60

tional self-identity and relational self-esteem serve as the foundation for linking with oneself.

Positive relationships are ways to build trust. I tried to remain a person of trust for the students so that they might be able to transfer the trust which they experienced from me to their relational world. The trust which I extended was unconditional without analysing whether the student would misuse it or whether he or she deserved it. I extended my services to them as a person of trust with whom they could develop a relationship, and with whom they might have been able to overcome the blocks which they may have inherited from their past experiences. I believed in the capabilities of the students even though the students had little belief in themselves. Believing in the capacity of the students always presupposed that I had to demand more from them when they did not measure up to their abilities, and had to correct them<sup>21</sup> when they deviated from their motivation. My consistency in making those demands and the fatherly support was necessary to help them grow.<sup>22</sup>

Helping the students build trust required a realistic time frame. It was a slow process and would only develop well over time. It was my responsibility to create and provide the circumstances needed to give them time to develop trust. The students received my trust according to what they were able to use; giving them time to develop trust meant giving them the freedom to develop a rapport with me. Trust has something to do with giving freedom. Depending on the ability of the students, I asked them to make certain decisions regarding their study plans and time management. Providing them with such small and limited responsibilities increased their confidence in themselves, afforded them the opportunity of checking their own performance, and so in the course of time, they were able to improve their relational self-esteem. Allowing them opportunities to take on responsibilities and accompanying them in fulfilling their responsibilities was part of their development of a relational self-identity and relational self-esteem. Working out responsibilities by themselves gave them self-confidence because it was a sign that I trusted them and their abilities. During the talent day performances, the students themselves had to plan how they would take part in the competitions, what preparations needed to be done, arranging the practices, getting the necessary materials and keeping track of the given time frame. They were allowed to get help from the teachers, but assuming the talent day responsibilities provided them confirmation of their self-confidence.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. King, Herbert *Joseph Kantenich- Ein Durchblick in Texten (Pädagogische Texte )*, 255

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Uriburu, Esteban *A Father to Many*, 36

Education through trust will not work without the fulfilment of basic rules which are needed for forming community and guaranteeing studies.<sup>23</sup> Punctuality, discipline and time management were part of this program. Regular reporting and checking on their study plans was part of the educational guidelines of the college. It developed a sense of responsibility among the students for them to make their own checklist regarding their studies.

Helping the students find their real talent and strengthening their belief that they were talented in at least one area of their lives was also important in helping them find their own relational self-identity and relational self-esteem. It was important to assist the students to find an area in which they were talented and to help them concentrate on that area. The academic level gave an identity for each student. The feeling that they were good in at least one area or in one subject produced more positive energy in those students.

This process of building trust in the students was always a time of learning together. This was my inner disposition as I worked with them in the college. I learned with the students and from the students, which helped me to understand them better. Learning together helped me to be open and flexible with the students which was a necessary part of the understanding. Education through trust is a process of learning together.<sup>24</sup> The pastoral caregiver can learn from the students too since they belong to a new generation and they come up with new ideas and vitality of life. How deeply and how well this learning process took place depended on the relationship of the individual student with me.

Relational self-identity and relational self-esteem helped the students to look at themselves realistically. Sometimes over-protection from the parents led to the development of a wrong self-image and they ended up believing in something in which they were not capable. Sometimes they were shy and it led them to failures by underestimating their abilities. The experience I had with Jackson<sup>25</sup> can show the overconfidence or unrealistic view from the student. When the students came with their parents seeking admission, I demanded a promise from every student in writing which grade they would achieve for the year.<sup>26</sup> Jackson had promised a 70% grade for every subject even though he was a very average student. The reason he gave for that 70% was that he would work

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Frömbgen, Erika *Vertrauenspädagogik*, 413

<sup>24</sup> Fr. Kentenich stressed the aspect of learning together as part of education through trust. That is why he wrote in the pre-founding document that “**We** want to learn - not only you, but also I. We want to learn from each other.” (*Schoenstatt Founding Documents*, 14)

<sup>25</sup> Not the real name of the student.

<sup>26</sup> Such a system did not exist in other colleges. Since I had more academically below average students, it was necessary to make such demands in order to motivate them.

hard and perform well. When the result was published, what I had feared had happened. Jackson was called in for an evaluation. I showed him the two sets of papers, the marks he actually scored for the examination and the marks he had promised me he would score when he joined the college. This comparison gave him an insight into his ability. He had scored only 48% in the examinations. For the students to look at themselves realistically and to improve in the areas they can gave them a realistic picture of themselves. Jackson learned from this experience. It was a process for him to look at himself to see who he was and where he stood, as well as what he could achieve. When the students are able to get a true picture of themselves then it is easier for them to be happy and content and able to relate to themselves more comfortably. It is necessary to have that awareness of their abilities and limitations.

What happens when the students do not have a realistic view of themselves? It can lead them to have higher expectations of themselves which can affect their decisions about their future. If the students are unable to accept the way they are, they follow unrealistic expectations which may provide them a temporary hold among their friends, but in the long run they only earn disappointment and increased tensions.

Education through trust is a process which has to be accompanied by the pastoral caregiver. Trust has to be given at all stages and has to be enlightened by a clear perception of reality and truth. Education through trust requires a framework of discipline, a well determined helpful area of freedom for self-checking, a supportive atmosphere among the students, and a permanent confrontation with reality.

### 3.2 Education Through Attachment and Love

We have seen in the previous chapter how important it is to have relational self-love. To help the students develop this relational self-love, I was able to make use of the guidelines of education through attachment and love from Fr. Joseph Kentenich.<sup>27</sup> Relational self-acceptance and relational self-love are part

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<sup>27</sup>The aim of education through attachment and love is to enable the person to love oneself. (Cf. King, Herbert: *Joseph Kentenich - Ein Durchblick in Texten (Getragen von der Grundkraft der Liebe)* 325-334). This process of enabling to love is possible through developing attachment to the persons, ideals and places. "Liebspädagogik ist eine konkrete und spezifische Form der Bindungspädagogik. Bindungspädagogik als solche kennt nicht nur personale, sondern auch lokale und ideenmäßige Bindungen." (Education for love is a concrete and specific form of education through attachment. Education through attachment as such includes not only attachment to persons, but also attachment to places and attachment to ideas (and ideals). Cf. King, Herbert *Joseph Kentenich - Ein Durchblick in Texten (Pädagogische Texte)* 513; See also 335-358, 499-525

of education through attachment and love. This self-acceptance cannot be demanded, it has to be facilitated so that it can germinate, grow and increase in a long-term process.

Mutual respect is part of education through attachment and love because there is a mutual giving and receiving in this process.<sup>28</sup> Mutual respect indicates that the individuality and dignity of each other is safeguarded. When the students are respected and treated accordingly, it elevates their sense of worth and appreciation for others. I respected the students even with their immaturity and I found something good in each of them. David Hartman confirms the fact that, “Becoming aware that you cannot shape your child, your students or your community in your own image is the beginning of being a parent, a teacher, or a community professional. You have to be able to work with people’s freedom and independence, to recognize the ‘otherness’ of human beings.”<sup>29</sup> To recognize the “otherness” in the students, I had to respect and accept the students as they were. Mutual respect is a precondition in education through attachment and love and it was required from me as well as from the students.

In the process of developing self-love and self-acceptance, it was necessary for the students to experience that they were loved and accepted. This must be an effect of a natural process which arises from mutual respect. For those students who had undergone conditional love and acceptance in their families, unconditional love and acceptance would help them to be what they are without any pressure. They experienced that those who were around them (teachers or friends or me) accepted them unconditionally whether they performed well or not.

From the different guidelines of education through attachment and love, what was most appealing and useful in the college was the element of attachment to a place<sup>30</sup> where the students felt at home. They experienced a kind of feeling at home on the college campus. It was a secure home, a place where they were accepted. The students knew that they did not need to put on a different face when they come to college, they were accepted and recognized and loved as

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. King, Herbert *Joseph Kentenich - Ein Durchblick in Texten (Pädagogische Texte)* 235-236

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hartmann, David *Living in Relationship With the Other: God and Human Perfection in the Jewish Tradition*, 146

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Kentenich speaks about three types of attachment: attachment to the place, attachment to the person and attachment to the idea. Attachment to a place, person or idea is a normal consequence of love. Attachment to a place meant that the students felt at home in the college campus and it became a place for their development in which they were able to develop their relational world. (Cf. King, Herbert *Joseph Kentenich - Ein Durchblick in Texten (Pädagogische Texte)*, 505-510)

they were. For the development of the relational world of the individual, it is necessary to have a place where each person is accepted and loved.

Relational self-love depended on how much the students were able to accept their family situations and circumstances. Unconditional acceptance from me motivated them to accept their own difficult situations at home and to deal with them creatively. There was one girl named Arathi<sup>31</sup> who was not able to do her homework whenever there was a quarrel between her father and mother. In the beginning she used to hide the truth<sup>32</sup> and would find excuses to explain why her homework was not done. After visiting her house and knowing the situation, I encouraged her to accept her situation at home and to not be ashamed of it. What was important for her was that I did not make fun of her family situation nor make her the subject of any gossip. Whenever she did not do her homework, I was able to figure that there was a problem or quarrel at home. This unconditional support allowed Arathi the ability to freely talk to me about her home situation and better accept it. This acceptance empowered her to relate with herself better. Being open to oneself is part of healthy relational self-love. Accepting their own positive and negative qualities along with challenging life situations at home helped the students develop their relational self-esteem.

Education through attachment and love included respecting the individuality of each student which was vital for the development of a relational self-love. It was important for me to help the students nurture whatever talents each one possessed. As a part of this process, I had to talk to the parents and encourage them to accept their children as they were, and to teach them to respect the uniqueness of each child. Many times pressure from the parents made the children very uncomfortable because the parents were pushing them to score higher marks without knowing their realistic abilities. This led them to be dissatisfied with themselves. When there was a corresponding acceptance and support from the parents, the students could accept themselves better and be proud of their individuality and uniqueness.

When the students lacked this relational self-love, it showed in their interactions with other students. They became very upset when someone teased them and they were not able to deal with any kind of mockery, teasing or scolding

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<sup>31</sup> Not the real name of the student.

<sup>32</sup> Most of the time, the students from poor families did not feel comfortable talking about their family situation to their friends or teachers. It was something like losing face in front of their friends. So in the beginning the students tended to hide the truth as much as they could. In reality it was because they are not ready to accept their present family situation.



from others since they themselves did not feel comfortable. A certain amount of teasing and mockery is part of the college life, because it helps them positively to bear criticisms and get along with it. Another way the lack of relational self-love was apparent was that they did not interact with others; their social interaction was the bare minimum.

### 3.3 Motivational Inputs

Another method I used to help the students connect with themselves was motivational inputs. They were essential at the beginning of college life. The arrival of the new students along with the inauguration of the academic year took place in the Holy Eucharist.<sup>33</sup> I made use of the sermon on that day to motivate the students. The one element I stressed among all the other motivational advice I gave was that I believed in their abilities, even though they may not have believed in themselves. I was fully aware that I could not expect them to work with me without first saying that I trusted them. For some, it was the first time they heard they heard that someone believed in them.

I also used motivational inputs after the students performed well in any of the programs. I evaluated their performance, appreciated their efforts and highlighted their achievements. Suggestions for improvement were also part of the input sessions. Altogether, the motivational input sessions involved encouraging them to give their best effort toward any of their commitments, using stories of people their age who had to overcome difficulties to make remarkable improvements in their lives. These sessions also included possible ways to improve their talents, different ways to enhance their memories and how they could develop their coping skills to better support their own development. Along with helping them to achieve good marks in their exams, I also provided them with guidance in planning their future lives by helping them decide what kind of career would fit each one of them according to the abilities and opportunities each student possessed.

The individual conference was also another method of providing motivational guidance. It was also a chance for me to give the students an evaluation and show them the areas where they had improved. Such feedback motivated the students to try again and again with enthusiasm. Here the information about the family background of the students was very helpful because I was able to take into consideration their backgrounds while showing them possible future op-

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<sup>33</sup> Holy Mass was offered mostly every month in the college. In most of the catholic schools there was custom of having Holy Mass on every First Friday. In the course of time this tradition died out completely in certain schools.

portunities. Additionally, if I saw that a student was gloomy or sad, I was able to have them come to my office and talk about what was disturbing them. Issues like misunderstandings between their parents affected the students and the individual conference was a chance for them to share what was upsetting them so they could regain a positive attitude and energy for their daily lives. Such individual conferences were vital to keep the students motivated and to keep them from deviating from their commitment to their studies. It had a great impact on the students because I was able to guide them in their very particular situations.

Appreciation and encouragement of each individual's initiatives were another method used for motivational inputs. There were students who delivered newspapers<sup>34</sup> in the early morning before attending classes and it was quite natural that they came late if the newspaper distributor arrived late. Most of the students who delivered newspapers used a bicycle, so when it was raining they arrived late to class because it took them longer to deliver the newspapers in the rain. I showed understanding towards them in that situation and also expressed appreciation and encouragement since they were paying the tuition fees from their own hard work. There were other students who worked as tutors for the children from Lower Primary,<sup>35</sup> Upper Primary and other classes of their area. Both kinds of students had a difficult time because they had to complete their studies while they also had their commitment to their jobs. My continued support gave them the confidence to handle both commitments well. The appreciation and encouragement from me deepened their trust in themselves. It was a very uplifting moment for them when they were able to support their education with their own income.

## **4. Linking with Others**

### **4.1 Visit to the Homes of the Students**

The relational social world of the students was very connected to their relationship with others. This relational world of the students included mainly their relationships with their parents, friends, teachers, relatives and neighbors. I had

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<sup>34</sup> It is not common in the educational institutions that the students provide their own income to meet their educational expenses. When you have classes from 10 am until 4 pm, not much time is left for other jobs. The timing of the classes (9 am-1:25 pm) in the college was helpful for the students to make some other commitments.

<sup>35</sup> Lower primary classes include the students who are studying from first grade till fourth grade. Upper primary classes include students who are studying from fifth grade till seventh grade.

to provide opportunities to enable the students to link with others. The idea to visit the families of every student arose when I realized that it was necessary to have a relationship with the parents and family members in order to understand the relationality of the students. In my experience, my visits to the families of the students opened new horizons for relationships for them. How each student lived at home and how they interacted with their parents and siblings was important. It was significant for me to know the social environment of the students' families so that I was able to understand their relational environment better.

From the relational point of view, my visit to the families of the students was a great sign that I valued them and that I was interested to know more about them and their families. The visit did not have any official character. Each week I decided to visit a certain number of families who were then informed of my visit. Since our culture is famous for hospitality, I made sure that my visit to the family was not any extra burden for them to prepare coffee and snacks as I accepted only black coffee if they offered something to drink. There was no time limit for my visit. I usually spent one hour with each family and in certain cases, depending on the situation, I spent more time. The visit was concluded with a prayer<sup>36</sup> with the Catholic families.

Certain issues between the parents and students could be discussed in these family visits. For instance, some of the students tried to lie. All the students had to show a checklist<sup>37</sup> when they came to school of their study hours each day. They had to write on the checklist how many hours they studied the previous day and had to get the signature of their parents. How many hours each student was supposed to study was decided on in the presence of their parents when they sought admission to the college. The hours needed for study were fixed according to the academic performance of the students and I could assess the progress of their studies according to the hours they had decided to study. Alex<sup>38</sup> was an average student who had agreed to study at least three hours each day. Alex failed three subjects during the midterm examinations and his overall performance was not satisfactory. When I went over his study checklist, to my surprise I found that he had studied for three hours every day for which his parents had signed. Somehow I was not convinced of this fact. When I vis-

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<sup>36</sup> It is usual in our culture that when a priest visits a family, they pray together and the priest gives his blessing at the end of his visit.

<sup>37</sup> Every student had a checklist on which they had to mark the hours they studied at home. They had to get it signed by their parents every day. Either before the beginning of the class or during the class time, I used to look at the checklists of the students.

<sup>38</sup> Not the real name of the student.

ited his family, I asked his parents whether they had signed the study checklist for the last few days. The parents told me that they had not signed the checklist for months. Then I understood that it was Alex himself who had signed for his parents. It was a very difficult moment for his parents to realize that their son had been cheating for the past few months. They felt bad that they did not check it beforehand. As a consequence of this incident, I had to dismiss him from the college<sup>39</sup> since he was cheating himself, his parents and me too. Such confrontations were part of the home visitations.

The visit to the families built two types of rapport. First it increased the openness of the students with me. Since I came to know where they lived and the social environment in which they were brought up, it added intensity in their attachment towards me. Knowing the family and the family circumstances of the students was a breakthrough for me in my relationships with the students. When the students knew that I was aware of their life situations and had constant contact with their parents, it helped them to freely relate to me. Some of the students were shy of their life situations since they were either financially poor or were having some family problems, like the father was an alcoholic or some other reasons. The exchange of such information led to a close relationship between me and the students. The second type of rapport was built between the parents and their children. I was able to spend a good amount of time with the parents and this helped me to clarify the misunderstandings between the parents and the children. It enriched both parents and students to understand each other better. The interaction between the child and the parents was elevated to another level and they began to relate better when the flow of communication between the parents and children increased.

Visits to the families were necessary to motivate and empower the parents in understanding and accepting their children. The cooperation and support of the parents was important for me in building a relationship with the students. It was also a chance for the parents to come to know how much energy and time I invested in each student. It was the specialty of our college that the homes of the students were visited. Visiting the families of every student is not usual for the educational system in India. In other schools, if parents or close relatives of

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<sup>39</sup> Though I had dismissed students from the college, I always helped them to appear for examinations and they were allowed to get help from the teachers privately. I personally made sure that they got the information regarding the dates and timetables of the examinations. I also provided them the materials for their studies. I was sure that if I denied my help they would not appear for the examination, but at the same time I had to punish them so that all the students would learn to be truthful and sincere to themselves.

the students die, then the visit to the families was done to pay homage to the dead and to show solidarity with the student.

The relational world of the students was widened because my visit was a platform used to solve the small misunderstandings between parents and children. Both parties had different expectations and both of them were disappointed when their expectations were not met. Both parents and children could develop a sense of understanding for each other. The family visits opened new horizons of relationality for the students. It is important to note that not all the families suffered from relational problems between children and parents. In some of the families there was an excellent relationship between the parents and children. As a whole, my visit to the homes of the students was an enrichment allowing them to widen their relational world.

## **4.2 The Teacher's Role in Education**

The role played by the teachers in helping each student to link with others was remarkable. Relationships with the teachers were built up differently than in other educational institutions. Most of the students had a good relationship with at least one teacher. Teachers were given enough background information about the situation of the students so that they could better guide the students. A healthy rapport and relationship with teachers was necessary for the development of the students. However, some of the students lacked a good relationship with their teachers and were afraid of them. Most of the time the students who did not perform well intellectually tried to avoid any personal contact with the teachers. They would try to escape from such situations. In the Indian educational situation, students maintain a distance from their teachers which is interpreted as a sign of respect. The challenge for the teachers was to break this type of thinking through their friendly and understanding behavior in order to win over the students. When the teachers came to know the students closely and especially knew their backgrounds, was easy for the students to build a rapport with their teachers.

Showing respect did not mean that the student did not have any special relationships with the teachers. When the teachers extended their concern for the future of the students by demanding them to study well, students began to take seriously their relationship with the teachers. Having the teachers know the difficult situations at home allowed the students to be able to confide in the teachers. Thus the teachers were able to show solidarity with the students. Those students who suffered problems with their families or had financial difficulties were treated with extra care. The teachers made sure that no one was left out from their classes.

In turn, the students learned to be open and truthful in their relationships with their teachers. They had no need to hide anything because they were accepted as they were even when the teachers knew their circumstances. Sometimes the students did not want to reveal anything about their family situation. For instance, if Lija<sup>40</sup> was not able to do her homework most days, it was because her father did not allow her to study peacefully because he had been drinking alcohol. Lija did not need to hide this fact from her teachers because they showed understanding and supported her. Such support from the teachers increased the students' ability to accept themselves and their family situations. Before, when the students were not able to do their homework or any other responsibilities due to their family circumstances, they used to think that it was just their fate and that it would always be like that. Accepting themselves as they were along with all their strengths and weaknesses was a great step in their positive growth. This growth in self-relatedness later had an effect on their relationships with others. The contribution of the teachers in developing the relational skills of the students was extraordinarily appreciated.

The attitude and disposition of the teachers towards the students was highly notable. More than the financial motive, what guided the teachers was their concern for the integral growth of the students. As part of their relationship with the students they were willing to spend extra time outside the usual class time. In certain cases, the teachers invited the students to come to their families for special tutoring. Such acts deepened the relational bond between the teachers and the students. Normally in private colleges, the extra classes taught by the teachers have to be paid for like any other normal class time. But there were times when the teachers declined the extra pay because they so identified with the students, and that helping them get through the exams was perceived as their responsibility. Unconditional encouragement and support from the teachers invigorated the students to perform better in the exams.

### **4.3 The Parent's Role in Education (PRE)**

My main desire was to integrate the parents in the educational process of their children because for the integral development of the student, the support and understanding of parents was a must. The parent's role in education was stressed through the PRE meetings which were conducted every year. It is usual to have PTA (Parents Teachers Association) in most of the educational institutions in India. The aim of the PTA is to involve the representatives of the

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<sup>40</sup> Not the real name of the student.

parents in the activities of the institution. Mostly the involvement of the PTA was limited to fundraising programs and other extra-curricular activities of the educational institution. The active involvement of the parents in the academic activities of the students was not expected nor demanded.

Instead of PTA, I named the group PRE (Parent's Role in Education) because I wanted to emphasize the important role of the parents in the education of their children. Most of the time, the parents do not pay attention to the academic activities of their children because they see it as the duty of the teachers and the educational institution. But it was different in my college and there were certain principles behind such endeavors. The goal of the college was not only the academic excellence of the students but the integral growth of every student. Having the parents be part of their children's education meant giving them some responsibility. For example, asking the parents to sign the checklist every day was one kind of responsibility given to them. The challenging part of this responsibility was that every day the parents had to observe their children to see how many hours they spent on studying. Every day the parents had to think about the academic life of their child. The involvement of the parents was automatically very high and it had a positive impact on their children because they saw that their parents were very concerned about their studies.

Meeting personally with every parent at least twice in a year was part of the PRE program. An evaluation of the academic performance of their child was given to the parents in this meeting. Instructions were given to the parents regarding the areas of development which were necessary for their child's improvement. It was also an opportunity for the parents to ask for and receive clarification for their queries. Since most of the students in my school had some issues to be dealt with, the cooperation of the parents with the educational principles and guidelines of the college helped the parents to assist their child in their academic life.

At the PRE meetings, updates were not just about the educational development of the students, but also included an explanation of the different programs of the college. I made it clear to the parents what kind of support I expected from them in the education of their children. The idea was to make the parents part of our thinking and planning. There were always some lectures and guidance regarding the understanding of their teenage children and how to better cope with the challenges in parenting. It was an orientation program for the parents.

From the relational point of view, it was a chance for the students to come to know the parents of their friends and develop their relationships with them. These meetings remained as a relational link for the students to the families of

their fellow students. PRE meetings opened the doors for the parents to develop relationships with the parents of the other students. There was a flow of understanding between the parents who were undergoing the same challenges about their children. A kind of solidarity and fellowship was automatically felt among such parents. Sharing their anxieties and challenges along with their difficulties was a support for many parents since they discovered they are not the only ones going through difficult times with their children. It enabled the parents to take their role as parents seriously and to contribute to the education of their children.

#### **4.4 Talent Day Performance**

The identification of the students with their classmates was not only on the intellectual level alone but also in extracurricular activities like arts and sports. In the Indian educational situation, it is normal for every school or college to have their own Arts Day<sup>41</sup> and Sports Day<sup>42</sup> competitions. Normally the whole school or college would be divided into different groups. There are individual events for the competition as well as events in which students have to take part as a group. For the individual events like dancing and singing, the one who receives the first prize will be allowed to perform for the Annual Day celebration which takes place with their parents and other invited guests.

Arts and Sports Days provided an opportunity for every student to closely relate with the other students. Some of the students were performing or taking part in such competitions for the first time. Since our college was small, most of the students had to take part in one or the other competition and it was recommended that they had to participate at least in one event. Taking part in the group items like dance and singing forced them to learn to get along with others in the group and to relate well with them. The practices before the competition facilitated good interaction among the students. Each student had to come out of his/her own shell and join with the group. Working with the group always challenged the students to improve their own relational skills so that they could interact better with the others in the group. This interaction was challenging for those students who found it difficult to socialize with others. These occasions allowed the students to overcome their own lack of self-confidence,

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<sup>41</sup> Arts Day is part of the extracurricular activities of every educational institution in India. The aim is to foster the talents of the students in the area of cultural and linguistics.

<sup>42</sup> Sports Day is conducted in the educational institutions to nurture the athletic abilities of the students. Competitions are organized for individual events as well as group events.



and since there was support and encouragement from their friends, challenged them positively so that the outcome was very fruitful.

The culmination of the talent day performance was the college day celebration. Such celebrations like college day or school day or patron's day are common in the different Indian educational institutions. The students are given the chance to exhibit their talents especially in the field of dance, music and other cultural activities in front of invited guests, parents and friends. Organizing such an event was fully the responsibility of the students. In the process of organizing the event the students had to interact among themselves and with teachers and other college authorities. If they needed guidance, then they could turn to the teachers. For some of the students, it was the first time that they were given the opportunity to perform in front a public audience. It deepened and improved the self-confidence of the students and created occasions in which they could develop their relational skills. From the relational point of view, the support and encouragement the students themselves were able to give each other was excellent. Encouragement from the peer group was a real boost for the students in enriching their extracurricular talents. Linking the students with others in their social world was possible through the given opportunities like visits to their families, involving the parents in the educational program of the students, taking advantage of the role of the teachers in the education process and making use of the extracurricular activities as a platform in developing the relational skills of the students.

## **5. Linking with Nature**

### **5.1 The Structure and Surroundings of the College Building**

The relational world of the students included the natural environment in which they lived. A relationship with nature is part of their relational world. What is important is that the students are given the opportunities to develop a positive attachment to nature and the natural environment. The structure of the college itself provided such an opening for the students; not only in the educational system but also in the structure of the building, for our college was different from other educational institutions. Normally all other colleges have a large compound along with big buildings protected by walls. The infrastructure of the Mary Matha Schoenstatt College was very different from many of the existing colleges at that time.<sup>43</sup> There were only three classrooms which looked like

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<sup>43</sup> Now the college has been shifted to a new building since the student numbers increased.

three huts from the outside. When it was necessary, I was able to make use of the rooms of the minor seminary of the Community of the Schoenstatt Fathers since the land on which the college is situated belonged to them. These huts sit among the coconut, nutmeg and banana trees. No electricity was necessary since the classes only went till noon. Sometimes when a newcomer entered the college, he may not have thought that it was an educational institution because of its structure and set-up. Though the structure of the college was simple it had its advantages and disadvantages. Windows were not necessary because the classrooms had no walls. The students could feel the breezes while attending classes. During the monsoon season, though, it was not easy to hear the lectures because of the rain and sometimes after the monsoon it was too hot. Since there were no big buildings or walls for the class-rooms, a different atmosphere radiated among the students. The structure of the college buildings was nature-friendly, it encouraged the students to have a positive and respectful attitude towards nature and its resources.

Not only was the structure of the college nature-friendly but the surroundings of the college helped the students to become involved with nature. During the break the students used to walk around the land. The ways and sidewalks to the classrooms were full of different plants. There was the cultivation of vegetables and trees of seasonal fruits in the college surroundings. There were times when the students could pick certain fruits like guava or lubi and eat them during the break. The whole atmosphere of the college permeated from the natural environment of its location. This opened a door for the students to automatically relate with nature and they could integrate nature and natural surroundings as a part of their relational world.

The infrastructure and surroundings of the college influenced the students most positively when they began to take care of the plants in the grotto of Our Lady near the classrooms. Some of the plants were in earth and some were in pots. It was interesting to note that the students looked after the plants every day during their break. Sometimes they watered and removed the weeds from the pots. It looked as if they had developed a relational bond with those plants. The natural situation of the college generated a very positive environment for enriching the relationality of the students with nature and the natural environment.

## 5.2 Sevana Dinam (Manual Labour Day)

Another opportunity for the students to link with the natural environment was on the day of Gandhi Jayanti.<sup>44</sup> The Indian government introduced Gandhi Jayanti in order to honor our national father, Mahatma Gandhi. In connection with Gandhi Jayanti, all the educational institutions had one week of service programmed for the schools. That means they have to work on the school campus or help to clean any public places like the streets or public health centers. The school campus was cleaned by the students too. As time went on the one week program was reduced to three days and now it has been shortened to one day.

Another objective of Gandhi Jayanti<sup>45</sup> was that it was an occasion to teach the students the value of manual labor. Cleaning the surroundings involved cutting the grass from the school premises and a thorough cleaning of the classrooms. One time I went with the students to clean the Public Health Centre (Government Hospital) which is situated near the college. The cleaning involved collecting papers and other waste from the compound and depositing it in a big bin where it was burned. One group of students cut the grass in the compound. Another group of the students swept the corridors of the hospital. Students did this manual labor for three to four hours. This experience provided the students with the opportunity to look at the public service centers as part of their lives and enkindled in them a sense of responsibility towards their relational world.

Accepting the responsibility to keep the classroom clean and tidy by cleaning it daily was another occasion for the students to link with their natural surroundings. There was no hired person to clean so the students themselves had to take turns in cleaning the classroom either at the end of the classes or before the beginning of classes each day. If they were cleaning the classrooms before the classes, then they made sure that they reached school early enough to do their responsibility. They had to make sure that the blackboard was clean and that writing materials were available for the teachers. Students carried out this responsibility excellently and very rarely did I have to interfere because the cleaning was not done. All these different events encouraged the students to

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<sup>44</sup> Mahatma Gandhi's birthday (Gandhi Jayanti or Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti) is a gazetted holiday in India on October 2 each year. It marks the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth on 02.10.1869. Gandhi is remembered for his contributions towards the Indian freedom fight.

<sup>45</sup> There is no official declaration that this day is dedicated for some kind of public service on the part of the educational institutions. It is an unwritten tradition that in many educational institutions, some kind of a public service program is organized on this day. Some educational institutions conduct prayer meetings or essay competitions to propagate the values and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.

relate to the natural environment. They grew with an attitude of considering nature and the natural environment as part of their lives. And as it is part of their lives it is also a portion of their relationality.

### 5.3 Limitations in This Area

Being a small entity in both number of students and size of the college, there were limitations in providing opportunities for the students to link with nature and the natural environment. The style of classrooms was not conducive for any professional meeting which would normally be expected from an educational institution. Conducting seminars or conferences on ecological issues or about the exploitation of natural resources, on how to make the natural environment a part of the relational world, or on what they could contribute as students to these ecological questions and threats would have been helpful for them to develop a covenantal relationship with the natural environment. More opportunities for involvement with the natural environment could have been a great enrichment for the students.

Nowadays, both as part of the curriculum and also to create awareness towards natural resources, the students are given the opportunity to work in the paddy field where they themselves do all the tasks from preparing the land and sowing the seed up to harvesting time. Since the land on which the college was situated did not belong to the college, it was not possible to undertake any initiatives such as making gardens or planting trees on the college campus. Such opportunities would have created more awareness about the use of natural resources.

Time factors were another barrier in this process of providing the students with relational opportunities. Any such initiatives need dedication and a good amount of time. Lack of enough hours for classes also discouraged us from undertaking extra-curricular activities outside the college campus. Because the allotted hours were barely enough to finish the syllabus which is given by SCERT,<sup>46</sup> unexpected holidays and strikes<sup>47</sup> also took away some of the planned time.

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<sup>46</sup> The State Council of Educational Research and Training provides the syllabus and the books which have to be used for the Plus One and Plus Two classes.

<sup>47</sup> According to the rough calculation of the news agencies in Kerala there will be at least one strike every month in Kerala. Different political parties declare strikes to show their disagreement with the governing party towards any project or decision which is not in agreement with the policies of other political parties. The educational institutions remain closed on that day because there can be physical harassment from those party followers against the educational

## 6. Linking with Divine (God)

### 6.1 Eucharistic Celebrations and the Sacrament of Reconciliation

In order to deepen the relationship of the students with God, I had to offer different spiritual opportunities in the college. The college already had a religious atmosphere since it is situated on the campus of the Schoenstatt Fathers where the seminarians receive their orientation program.<sup>48</sup> All the teachers practice their faith and accord importance to the religious activities of the college. Every day each section of the college<sup>49</sup> begins their classes either with a prayer or a prayer-song. The leader of the class asks different students either to recite the prayer or to begin the prayer-song. Sacraments like Eucharist and Reconciliation are offered in the college. Holy Mass is offered to the students once a month along with opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I invited different priests to be the main celebrant of the Liturgy and to give a good inspiring message to the students during the sermon. The themes of the sermons included different subjects like being precious to God, challenges in the relationship with God, how to live your faith in the modern world, relational images of God, and different ways to build up attachment to God. The Eucharistic celebration with students was a unique experience for all because praying together as a community was new to them. It created a special bond among the students. Since all of them came from different places they took part in Holy Mass in different parishes near the homes. The liturgical celebration was an opportunity for the students and the teachers to experience a communitarian realm of relationship in the college campus itself.

I also invited priests from outside to hear confessions which also allowed an opportunity for the students who may not have been comfortable making their confession with me. They each had the freedom to choose any priest for confession. The availability for confession encouraged the students to look back into their relationship with God and to see what kind of relational image of God they had inherited or believed in.

The college also used the chapel of the minor seminary of the Schoenstatt Fathers. The handiness of the chapel on the campus encouraged the students to

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institutions which try still try to remain open. Sometimes they may destroy the property of the educational institution too.

<sup>48</sup> It is the first three years of formation to the priesthood along with 11th and 12th Grade studies.

<sup>49</sup> Classes were conducted in four classrooms (Humanities Group 11th and 12th Grade; Commerce Group 11th and 12th Grade).

make frequent personal visits there. There were some students who regularly made a visit to the chapel to spend time in personal prayer either in the morning when they reached the college or during the break. I observed those visits as a personal initiative of the students to improve their relationship with God and encouraged them to take time for such practices.

Most students and teachers belonged to one religion but also there were students from other faiths. From the beginning onwards, I had mentioned to those students and teachers that they did not have to attend the liturgical celebrations and prayer services. But to my surprise they were the first ones to occupy the seats in the chapel. The liturgical celebration was not familiar to them; they did not know what was going to take place in each part of the liturgy. But the way they took part in the liturgical celebration was admirable. They felt at home with those celebrations. These celebrations motivated the students and teachers of other religions to also think about their relationship with God.

## **6.2 Spiritual Preparation for the Examinations**

Spiritual preparation before the final examinations<sup>50</sup> played a vital role in linking the students with God. The goal of the spiritual preparation was to be an emotional support for the students to prepare well for their examinations. The whole program took place with Holy Mass. Prayers were specially written for this occasion and fitting psalms as well as songs were selected to elevate the students to a deeply prayerful atmosphere. The Mass readings were specially chosen to contain the message that God is the stronghold and that his continued care and protection are with us always. The whole liturgical celebration centered on invoking the Holy Spirit to enlighten the intellect and minds of the students and the Holy Mass was offered for their intentions. Such a celebration ensured a relational image of God who is accompanying them in every time and in every thing, that they do.

The most important part of this spiritual preparation for the examination was the personal blessing each student received. Before the final blessing each student came to the altar and the priest laid his hands on each student's head and prayed for him or her. At the end of the prayer the priest gave a blessing to each student individually. When the students came to receive the personal blessing most of them brought along with them their pens which they were going to use for their final examinations. Some of the students brought their

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<sup>50</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> Grade examination. It is common in many retreat houses to have a prayer service for the students who are about to take their final exams. Special prayers are said and the writing materials are blessed in this prayer service.

writing materials and placed them in front of the altar. This whole ceremony had a great impact on the students and deepened their faith to realize that God was with them giving them the inner courage to take the examinations. They understood the blessing as a sign of assurance that God went with them with His blessing and it remained as connecting link to God.<sup>51</sup> It also strengthened their self-confidence which helped them perform well in the examinations. Through this prayer service and personal blessing, they were assured of God's presence with them.

There was also a small prayer or silence<sup>52</sup> before every examination began. This helped the students to calm down and allowed them to invoke divine assistance to enlighten their thoughts and intellect. The goal of all these liturgical and non-liturgical services was to provide a link for the students to connect with the divine. It aided the students to develop a positive relational image of God and to believe that their relationship with God did not depend on their performance, but was an unconditional acceptance of them by God.

### **6.3 Annual Retreat**

The annual retreats which we conducted in the college played a vital role in linking the student with the divine. It is not unusual to have retreats in educational institutions.<sup>53</sup> The retreats included talks on relevant themes which would help the student's entire advancement towards developing their relational skills. The three day retreats encouraged the students to review the relationships in their relational world. The themes were arranged in such a way so that they helped the students review their relationship with God and enabled them to take the necessary steps to renew their relationships with others and themselves. The talks usually highlighted what kind of a relationship each individual should have with God, how this relationship needs to be nurtured and how different situations can create barriers in their relationship with God. The retreat began each day at 9 am and ended at 4 pm with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Adoration was the time for internalization of the different information they had received that day. It was also an intensive time of personal prayer for the students. Besides the different talks, the retreat included Holy Mass, Adoration, interactive sessions and singing.

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<sup>51</sup> Tarango, Yolanda *A Blessed Life*, <http://www.questia.com>, Accessed on 27.04.2014

<sup>52</sup> Silence before the examination is followed in many of the educational institutions. Some of the schools have a particular song or prayer that is recited.

<sup>53</sup> Many of the educational institutions are managed by Christians and they used to have regular annual retreats in their educational institutions.

A good amount of time during the retreat was invested in preparing the students for a good confession. The sacrament of confession took place after preparing the students through the talks and Adoration. The talks about confession dealt with the different areas of their relationships, especially with God. It encouraged the students to look for the traces of God's intervention in their daily lives and to work on the negative relational concepts of God each of them were having. The songs during Adoration were selected in such a way as to recall to their minds the moments when they felt the presence and providence of God in their lives, when they felt distant from God, when they felt misunderstood and neglected by others, and finally included an invitation to amend the relationship for a new start. I had requested the priests to spend enough time with each student who wanted to share more about their lives during confession. Students have shared with me that the retreats with confession<sup>54</sup> was one of the highlights in their college life. The Sacrament of Confession was a very influential factor during the retreat because it strengthened the individual to be able look at where they stood in their relationship with God and where they had to improve that relationship. The annual retreat always provided a new spirit of renewal in the relationality of the students.

The annual retreat in the college had a communitarian element too. Not only the students but also the teachers took part in the retreat. Having the teachers as part of the retreat was a positive support for the students. As a whole, the Eucharistic celebration and confession every month, the prayer services before the examination and the annual retreat provided the students the opportunity to evaluate and reflect on their relationship with God and to draw the necessary steps needed to deepen the relationality with God.

## **7. Roles of the Pastoral Caregiver**

### **7.1 Personal Facilitator**

In order to guide the students in improving their relational world, I had to assume different roles as pastoral caregiver. The roles had to cover all the relational dimensions of the students. My role as a personal facilitator always included ways of supporting the students in developing positive attitudes towards themselves and their lives. This was possible only through helping them with relational self-identity, relational self-esteem, relational self-acceptance and

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<sup>54</sup> There are always large numbers of students who come for confession in the educational institutions. Since the number is big most of the time the priests are not able to take quality of time for each student.



relational self-love. To enable them to believe in their own God-given talents and abilities was challenging. But through my unconditional trust I could help them to believe that they have such qualities.

As a pastoral caregiver I had to correct them when they made mistakes or did not behave according to the rules and guidelines of the college. To help the students feel comfortable with themselves included showing them areas of improvement so that they could relate with themselves better. It was important for me to correct them in a proper manner. I was sure that any improper way of correction would be contra-productive. The words I used and the tone of my voice were significant. I had to avoid the danger wherein the students thought that they were corrected because I was angry or did not understand them well. I tried to do the correction out of an inner relaxed and balanced mind so that my suggestions and observations were more appealing and acceptable for the students.

The role of the personal facilitator is to ensure that the atmosphere is conducive for the development of the relational world of each student. That means providing opportunities for the students and making sure that negative influences from the outside would not affect the growth of their relational abilities. The enrichment of the relationality of the students depended on how and where the relational world of the students was formed. Accompanying each student was the main responsibility of the pastoral caregiver in fulfilling his role as personal facilitator. Treating the individual with dignity and respect, being with them in the moments of ups and downs, and giving them proper guidance was part of accompanying them. Being a priest I had the privilege of enjoying the moral authority which is normally associated with the priesthood. My vocation as a priest made me automatically more acceptable to the students and it was easy for them to develop a trusting relationship with me.

## **7.2 Spiritual Facilitator**

To be a spiritual facilitator did not mean teaching them to memorize prayers but to facilitate the connection between the life situation of the student and God. Since many of the students lacked a healthy self-esteem and self-confidence, their relationship with God or their image of God was not constructive enough to support them in developing a personal relationship and personal relational image of God. It does not mean that all the students suffered from this drawback for not all did. As a spiritual facilitator it was my responsibility to help the students to find God in the here and now, tangible in their daily lives and surroundings. They compartmentalized their spiritual lives as separate from their daily lives. They carried an image of God in their hearts

corresponding to their childhood experiences at home. Their understanding of God was narrow and it was difficult for them to believe that God is someone who wants to go with them and intervenes in their daily lives.

Another responsibility of the spiritual facilitator was to offer the students the opportunities like liturgical and non-liturgical celebrations to improve their relationship with God and to show them the methods possible for them to work on their personal relational image of God.

To be the interpreter of faith was also part of being the spiritual facilitator. I had to help the students to find out what God wanted of them depending on the different situations they ran into. That meant being with the students in their process of discernment in helping them hear voice of God from among the surrounding voices. Life situations are not always supporting and appealing but can be challenging too. It was demanding for me to work with the students to help them find traces of God even in the midst of their negative life realities. Guidance from me enabled the students to realize that God speaks not only through the positive but also through the difficult life situations.

I had to work with those students who had a conditioned image of God who believed that God loves them according to their good performances and who punished them for their faults and failures. It affected their self-confidence too because they thought that if they failed once on an examination, they would never be able to pass it. It was difficult for them to trust that God is with them in their failures and difficulties. They always connected the performance of their examination or achievement as the criteria to experience the loving presence of God.

### **7.3 Social Facilitator**

As a social facilitator, I had to make sure that there was a good atmosphere for the students living their relational world both at school and in their own families. It was necessary for the development of the students' relational world that they have a comfortable environment where they could develop relationships with others. Picking on the weaker students or any sort of ragging was forbidden. To make sure that all the students were treated with their own dignity and individuality was also the responsibility of the teachers.

My role as social facilitator included pointing out the areas where the relational worlds of the students were affected. The family atmosphere of certain students was not helpful in developing their relational skills. There were families in which the students were mistreated because of the alcoholic habit of the father. In some cases I tried to make the parents aware of how the studies of their child

were affected because of the particular environment at home. Some of the parents had never understood how much their words affected their children. I recommended that some of the parents go for treatment. Once I asked the father of our student Jaya<sup>55</sup> to go for treatment. Jaya was upset most days in school because at home her father quarreled after drinking. I tried to make him aware how his behavior after drinking affected his daughter. After many conversations with him, he was ready to go for treatment in a detoxification center which was in the same district. When he came home after the treatment, he came to meet me and told me that only then did he realize how he had been behaving in the past years. He was very grateful that I suggested that he undergo the treatment. He was so happy that he offered to support the financial cost of the treatment of another person if I had to send anyone else for treatment. It is very important to keep in mind that most of the parents never had any conscious intention to hurt their children. In their uneducated ignorance, they believed that what they did was right. It is not common for the child to confront the parents in such cases. Children normally do not ask the parents why they react so negatively; they don't easily share with their parents how their words or comments hurt them. It was my task to strengthen the students so they could let their parents know how that behavior hurt them.

## **8. Competence of the Pastoral Caregiver**

In order to take up my role as personal, spiritual and social facilitator, I needed to have the corresponding competence. Professional studies along with the formation from the Schoenstatt Fathers community, as well as experiences in the different pastoral areas contributed to my competence. It is to be said here and now that all the competence which I believe necessary for the pastoral caregiver has been due to the reflection and application of Schoenstatt spirituality which I live, and which is imbued in me as a Schoenstatt Father. My goal is not to give the exact explanation of each fragment of spiritual thought, but to show how I applied it in the Indian context and how it was fruitful in the pastoral care of a school.

### **8.1 Personal Competence**

Being the pastoral caregiver, I had to live a life in which I had appealing relational self-identity, relational self-esteem, relational self-acceptance and relational self-love. Personal competence demands that the pastoral caregiver believes and lives what he expects from the people in his pastoral field. This is

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<sup>55</sup> Not the real name of the student.

very important in pastoral care in the schools because the students look for role models as people whom they can imitate. Students knowingly or unknowingly accept the values of the pastoral caregiver and to a certain extent adopt their values as their own.

When the pastoral caregiver does not live what he/she preaches or teaches then his/her life can influence the lives of the students negatively and it will be contraproductive. A pastoral caregiver who is very pessimistic about life cannot teach the students to be optimistic. It was very important for me to practice what I expected from the students. Punctuality in school was demanded and an explanation had to be given if the students arrived late to class. It may be good to keep in mind that many students came late to school since they depended on the public transport system. Some of the students had to catch two buses to reach the school. Whenever I was not able to come on time to class, I gave an explanation for my late arrival and expressed my regret for the inconvenience. I heard from the comments of the students later that it had a great impact on them.

The moral authority I received from the students was a supporting factor for my personal competence. One cannot demand or expect moral authority. It has to be gained through one's personal character and behaviour along with one's interaction methods. In the Indian context, the moral authority of the pastoral caregiver was very important. A respectful private life of the pastoral caregiver had a certain influence on his pastoral ministry in the school. For example, } a teacher or pastoral caregiver who has a drinking habit may not be well accepted in the college though he may be very competent in his teaching skills and the subject he teaches.

As part of my personal competence I tried to be transparent to the students. Being a pastoral caregiver did not mean that I was a super human being. Transparency meant to present myself as I was without putting on any masks. Along with my strengths, I was very much aware of my limitations. Whenever they had doubts or asked for clarification about any matters related with them and I did not have the answer, I used to admit it. Later I would study the subject and gave them the answer. I had to accept my limitations in front of the students and it had a positive outcome on the students. I was at the service of the students with my limitations and abilities.

## **8.2 Relationship Competence**

The ability and competence of the pastoral caregiver to maintain relationships and take care of individuals in his pastoral circle, especially in an educational

setting, was a very challenging and demanding concept for me. Each relationship required special attention and care from me. I tried to relate with the students equally and without prejudice as part of the relationship competence. While giving care and consideration to each student, I also had to make sure that I was impartial. I was aware that if the students received the impression that I was partial or I favoured one group of students it would create unnecessary blocks in them relating with me freely and spontaneously. So I was very careful to be impartial in my relationship with the students.

An important part of the relationship competence consisted in the ability to terminate the relationship when the students finished their studies in the college. It was necessary for the growth of the students that the relationship came to an end when they finished their studies. The termination of the relationship did not mean that they were not allowed to come to me. Contact was suspended on my part but they could come to me at any time. I did not any longer make any efforts to continue the relationship. Relationship competence demanded that I keep the confidentiality of the students to protect them from others. It was important to avoid loose talk among the teachers and also not to make uncommitted comments about the students to anyone.

Perseverance and continuity in my relationships with the students was part of the relationship competence. Remembering the details about their families, remembering the names of the people who played vital roles in their lives, or recalling incidents which were important to them was significant in the relationship. A relationship is like a web. My competence enabled me to help them to be comfortable in this web.

### **8.3 Psychological and Counseling Competence**

In order to accompany the relational world of the students and to equip them to develop their relational skills, my competence in counseling and psychology was very supportive. My post-graduation studies in psychology and one year of counseling studies in United States gave me a good foundation in the field of psychology and counseling. There were students from different backgrounds and each one carried very different interaction patterns and styles. Some of the methods and ways in which they related with others or with themselves were influenced from the special and unique social environment in which they were brought up. The family and social atmosphere can influence positively or negatively the relationship skills of the students. My studies were very helpful in enabling me to enter into the world of the students and to understand them.

Counseling and psychological competence empowered me to understand the hidden influences personality traits made in the lives of the students and which may have affected the relationality of the students. In certain cases the students were not aware of their behavior patterns. To understand the different defense mechanisms which students made use of knowingly or unknowingly, psychological and counseling competence was necessary.

My studies and training enabled me to assist the students to open themselves up so that they were able to share more about their lives. Helping students open up is vital for guiding them. To understand the body language of the students and to listen beyond their words, to listen to the students without prejudices and judging would not have been possible for me without the knowledge of psychology and training in counseling. When the students felt that I understood them, then there was a flow of communication between me and the students. They could share anything with me which helped me to understand them better.

My psychological studies and counseling competence also helped me personally reflect about my own experiences, about how I fought with my own inhibitions, about what my challenges were and how I dealt with my limitations. This experience of mine helped me to understand the students better. It was important for me to keep in mind how much energy it took me to overcome those hurdles of my life. My own reflected experiences served as a good platform for me to show understanding towards the students and to make them comfortable with me.

Psychological and counseling competence helped me to know the areas in this field which I could not handle. It was important for me to know my limitations and send the students who needed it to get help from experts. Very often I ran into certain cases where I felt that I could not handle their issue and that they needed help from the experts. It would not have been possible for me to acquire this practical sense without the help of psychological and counseling studies.

## **8.4 Theological Competence**

My three and half year theological studies were very supportive in the relational paradigm for pastoral care. As I worked with the students on the relational images of God in their lives, the understanding and knowledge about the different relational images of God from the Bible remained as very practical support. The theological understanding of human beings as created in the image

and likeness of God was the solid foundation needed to respect the individuality and dignity of the each student.

The biblical stories of human encounters with God and of how God intervened in the lives of the individuals could be used as a link for the development of the students to help them enter into a personal relationship with God and to help them have a positive personal relational image of God. The exodus experience of the Israelites is a good example to help explain to the students how God is a God of relationships and how God intervened in the lives of the Israelites and formed a relationship with his own people.

Theological competence also assisted me to answer the questions about faith which the students raised, and allowed me to clarify their doubts which was necessary for the growth of their relationship with God. Some of the students were confused and puzzled in their faith life because they were not able to find satisfactory answers for the questions they had. I may not have been able to give them the answers they were looking for but I was able to help them think differently. I had students from other religions too. Though they did not come to me with questions or clarifications about their faith, I realized that some knowledge about their faith would have been supportive in my pastoral field.

## **8.5 Spiritual Competence**

In the accompaniment of the students, it was very vital that I looked for my own source of spiritual nourishment. Daily Holy Mass and meditation was an ever-flowing font of spiritual enrichment for me. Being a priest, the celebration of the Eucharist with the faithful was part of my daily life. Daily morning prayer, evening prayer and spiritual reading were the other sources of my spiritual life. Certain qualities of spiritual competence I acquired through my life experiences.

Regular monthly recollections and yearly annual retreats gave me enough time to reflect about my own life and to analyse the different decisions and life processes of the students. Reflection of my own life included observing and understanding my own performance, being in contact with my own feelings and undigested events, healing wounds, and feeling able to hear and discern God's speaking. Receiving regular spiritual guidance<sup>56</sup> enabled me to consult with another person about the steps I had taken and decisions which I had made. Spiritual guidance encouraged me to look for my own spiritual support and to

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<sup>56</sup> It is usual that many of the priests have a regular confessor and spiritual father.

update my spiritual life. The personal guidance I received from my spiritual guide enhanced my supervision competence.

Having a community of priests<sup>57</sup> on the same campus gave me other spiritual support through the different people who gave me guidance and insights in certain areas and who enlightened my mind with their way of thinking. The support and encouragement of the community was decisive for my spiritual enrichment. The spiritual treasure of our own Founder and his spiritual insights always remained as guiding stars in my spiritual competence too.

## 8.6 Mystagogical Competence

Along with spiritual competence, I needed to have mystagogical competence in order to fulfil the duty of the spiritual facilitator. It was necessary for me to challenge the students to see God who was at work in their daily lives. From their former understanding of God and from the different relational images of God which they had, it was difficult for them to believe that God was present right there and then in their lives and that God is a God of providence. To convey to the students that God is a God of life and that God is in constant relation with us, God gives us opportunities and chances to awaken us through challenges. This would have been very difficult without the mystagogical competence.

To find God in their lives and to live their lives out of their relationship with God is sign that the student is in tune with God or is in a right relation with God. The aim of my relational pastoral care was to lead the students to this goal. To help the students to be in right relationship with God, I had to work with their relational images of God. For that process, my mystagogical competence was an aid for me in supporting the students in finding the God of their lives. Mystagogical competence was so necessary for me as the pastoral caregiver because some of the students thought that since they were not performing well academically they were useless. Using the examples from the Bible of how God made use of weak human as his strong instruments, I was able to encourage them to develop a positive relatedness with God and to convince them that God takes into account their identity and individuality and enhances it.

As part of my mystagogical competence, I was familiar with the religious traditions and rituals. Complementing the students in seeing the God of their lives as a God of providence and living their lives out of the relationship with God,

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<sup>57</sup> The Community of the Schoenstatt Fathers has a filiation in Aloor. Fathers who are working around this area live together as a community.



was made possible for me by making use of the rituals and practices of our faith. It was important to use the rituals and traditions in such a way that fitted to the life context of the students. Being a priest my knowledge about liturgical and non-liturgical services complemented my competence in this field. Celebrations of the Eucharist, prayer sessions and personal blessings were helpful not only for the students of Christian faith but also for the students from other religions. Those who took part in those services felt at home during the whole program. It was encouraging for me to know that students from other faiths could benefit from the prayers sessions and liturgical services.

## **8.7 Prophetical -Critical competence**

Prophetical-critical competence was indispensable in my role as the social facilitator. This competence included the critical analysis of the social system, questioning actual social standards, knowledge about customs and principles, correcting misbehavior and moral deviations, all while keeping in view future trends of the society in which we actually lived.

The relational world of the student is knit closely together with the different social and value systems and their parents are highly influenced by them. In supporting the students to live their relationality, it was necessary for me to question the decisions of the parents or to look critically at social traditions. For instance, prophetical-critical competence equipped me to help the students be aware of wrong patterns of thinking about the education of the girls.<sup>58</sup> India is known for its male-dominated society. This trend has also affected the mentality of the parents, especially those who are not educated. They may think that it is not necessary for the girls to study and pass the examinations because they are going to look after the children and take care of home once they are married anyhow.<sup>59</sup> There was a student named Jiss<sup>60</sup> who had prepared for the final exam very well. She was a below average student. When the examination results were listed, she had failed in one subject. It was not unusual that the students fail one or two subjects because they have one more chance of the

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<sup>58</sup> From the beginning onwards the unwritten social custom was that the man is the breadwinner and the woman takes care of the family. Many parents, due to their ignorance, think that educating the girls is not going to achieve anything great since girls are not expected to have a career.

<sup>59</sup> This is not a generalization. There is a big change in the attitude of the parents nowadays after the emerging of the IT field and nursing opportunities.

<sup>60</sup> Not the real name of the students. To protect the privacy of the students the details of their family and religion are not mentioned.

SAY exam.<sup>61</sup> When it was time to pay for the examination fee, Jiss did not turn up. When I asked her parents why their daughter did not appear for the examination, their reply was that she is getting married and it was not necessary that she should pass the examination. Though I tried to convince them otherwise, it was in vain. Certain social systems have taken deep root in the decision process of the parents and they think very practically from their life experiences to only look for what is necessary for daily life. There may not be any deep rational analysis behind their decisions. They may not even be aware that their decision may affect the personal dignity and esteem of their child.

In the beginning it was not easy for me to convince the students and parents that relational pastoral care cannot be limited only to the academic life of the student alone, but is concerned with the whole person. Some of the parents tend to compartmentalize the lives of their children to life at school and life in the family. They do not see the lives of the students as a whole. They do not think that everything is interconnected. There was a student who was physically abused by her father every time she was not able to finish the work he demanded or did not do as well as her father had expected. When she shared with me her difficulties, I decided to visit her home thinking that I would be able to speak with her father. Normally before visiting the family, I informed them and asked whether they would be available at that time. To my great surprise, the father told me that he was not in favor of my visit to their house and it was not necessary that I should interfere in their family matters. Since her father did not welcome me to their house, I thought of making use of the help of the parish priest. But the intervention of the parish priest did not bear any fruit either. The girl stopped coming to the college two months later. In fighting against the social system I could not guarantee that I would be able to convince the people, but it was my duty to point out the situation or system that blocked the relational growth of the students. I was convinced that the relationships of the students were not limited to one aspect of their lives but involved the entire person. In some cases I was not able to convey my conviction to the parents.

It was part of my prophetic-critical competence to make the students aware of natural resources and how to deal with nature. The conscious use of natural resources and seeing nature as part of our relational world was something new to the students. They did not have much awareness about the exploitation and manipulation of natural resources. Another reason was that exploitation of the

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<sup>61</sup> Save A Year (SAY) examination is the second chance for those students who failed in the first appearance.

natural resources was not a burning issue at that time.<sup>62</sup> Through different opportunities provided to them to link with nature and natural environment, I was able to create a respectful awareness towards nature and the natural environment because it is part of our relational world. Prophetic-critical competence allowed me to look for different ways which may enhance the relational world of the students. As a pastoral caregiver, it was my responsibility to look out for the entire growth of the person.

## 9. Multidimensional Relational Pastoral Care

Pastoral care in school is challenging because each section of the school has different expectations from the pastoral caregiver. School authorities, teachers, parents and students expect the service of the pastoral caregiver to help them to improve their faith and their relationships.<sup>63</sup> The challenges of pastoral care and the expectations of pastoral care in the school made it clear to me that only a multidimensional relational pastoral care would be effective in an educational setting. Technological developments have changed the relational world of the students drastically. The influence of the communications media has created positive and negative impacts on the relationality of the students.

Multidimensional pastoral care is not just giving information but accompanying the student in the process of learning about and developing their relational abilities which includes their entire world of relationships. “The pastoral care of schools is not I do a lot or we do now (any) something. It’s more about making a contribution to shaping the school life which flows from a spiritual attitude of what really matters to me and which is in tune with my authenticity.”<sup>64</sup> The pastoral care service is extended to each and every student and has to be different from person to person because of the social environment, as the biographical sketch and the need of every student are unique.

The challenging task of school pastoral care is having in mind that it is not only a learning centre alone but also a moulding centre for the life of the students. Pastoral care has to be comprehensive from all aspects and cannot be restricted to one area alone. A multidimensional approach is necessary in pastoral care. “The diversity of work in the pastoral care of schools is for others and for ourselves fulfilling and rewarding, to the extent that we contribute to the school –

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<sup>62</sup> I am writing about the experience from 2004-2007

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Geissler, Ulrich *Spiritualität in der Schulpastoral*, 117

<sup>64</sup> „Schulpastoral ist nicht: Ich tue eine ganze Menge oder wir machen jetzt (irgend) etwas. Es geht eher darum, aus einer spirituellen Haltung heraus das, was mir wirklich ist, in die Gestaltung des Schullebens einzubringen. Dies sieht für jede und jeden anders aus.“ ( Geissler, Ulrich *Spiritualität in der Schulpastoral*, 119)

which is a 'learning centre' – so that it will be also be experienced as a 'life space' where relationships can grow, problems are overcome, people can find themselves and find God."<sup>65</sup> We have to look at the school life of the student which is where the foundation for the relational world is laid. And it is the responsibility of the students to enhance the different relational areas of their lives.

Multidimensional relational pastoral care puts very high demands on the pastoral caregiver. Many various dimensions of multidimensional relationships have to be taken into account and knit together in the pastoral field. The caregiver is expected to combine in himself and in his pastoral dealings both flexibility and firmness, insisting on rules and making meaningful exceptions, setting priorities which are demanded by the actual situation, a clear sense of structures and sensitivity for the changing sense of structure trends, developments and needs. Wisdom of life, adequate discernment and decision making, broad-minded overview and attention to the details of the individual are qualities which are rarely found in one and the same caregiving person.

Multidimensional relational pastoral care includes integrating all the relational fields of the students such as linking with oneself, linking with others, linking with nature and linking with God. Each relational aspect of the student is interconnected with the other aspects. So if we try to separate them, we lose the holistic approach in the relationality. The society and the lifestyle of people change rapidly as technology makes life easier and more comfortable. All the developments show how much our world is interrelated and interconnected. This interrelation has led us to interdependency in all areas of human life which are connected with relationships. Multidimensional relational pastoral care was helpful in my experience to build up the interrelated and interdependent relational world of the students. Multidimensional relational pastoral care was helpful to link the students to build up their relationality with themselves, others, nature and God.

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<sup>65</sup> „Die vielfältige Arbeit in der Schulpastoral wird für andere und für uns selbst erfüllend und bereichernd, indem wir dazu beitragen, daß der Lernort Schule auch als Lebensraum erfahrbar wird, in dem Beziehungen wachsen, Probleme bewältigt werden und Menschen mehr zu sich und zu Gott finden.“ (Geissler, Ulrich *Spiritualität in der Schulpastoral*, 120)

## VI. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Every pastoral care concept enriches the pastoral care field for it enables the pastoral caregiver to better understand and support the individuals under their care. The objective of this scientific research was to analyze and concretely suggest how a relational paradigm can be followed in pastoral care service in an educational institution, and the guiding thread throughout these reflections is a relational dimension of pastoral care. At the end of my research, I would like to briefly retrace the long way we have walked in order to gather the fruits of our analysis.

In beginning of this analysis, we studied the foundations of this concept: a *theological foundation* was necessary to prove that God is a God of relationships, and an *anthropological foundation* narrated relational elements integrated in the human being. Both foundations remain as pillars to form *a relational paradigm for pastoral care*. Finally, the *practice of this analysis in an educational institution* proves the credibility of this pastoral concept.

*When did God start to relate with human beings?* It all goes back to creation history. God maintained his relationship with humans, remaining loyal and faithful to his chosen people, through the different covenants he made with the leaders of the communities. The exploration of the different relational images in the Old Testament proves that relational images of God can be found through the stories of the people's experience of God. Those illustrate how God intervened in the lives of Israelites and supported them and how they associated their experiences with different relational images according to different situations. The forging of these relational images demanded loyalty from the Israelites and determined a vital role in their development. They experienced the closeness of God in their journey from Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. Their encounters with God were not always comfortable nor was there always stable relational behavior in their lives. There were frictions and distances in the relationship of the Israelites with God. On the one hand, they experienced the intimacy and lovingness of God, and on the other hand they experienced God's disappointment in their inconsistencies and infidelities.

An *analysis of the relationships of Jesus* shows that they are not different from the relationships of God the Father. Jesus lived on earth like one of us. He must have acquired the necessary relational skills from his family, and certain questions about the family relationship of Jesus remain as a further area of research. Jesus related with his parents and relatives like any one of us in a normal family. The parents of Jesus would have corrected and complemented him

to help him develop his relational world. The outreaching attitude of Jesus showed that he had a special relationship with the marginalized, sinners and outcasts of society. The disciples were the privileged class of people who were chosen to be the closest in the relational world of Jesus during the many important occasions of his life. The way Jesus empowers the Samaritan woman proves that Jesus interacted with both men and women. What was the source of the relationships of Jesus? Can we conclude that it was the Father-Son relationality which guided Jesus? His relationships began with the Incarnation and even his death could not end them. Jesus continued his relatedness after the Resurrection too but there is a turning point when the disciples began to experience the divine side of Jesus and realized that it was the Son of God who had lived with them.

The *relational dimension of the Holy Spirit* takes us back to the Old Testament. The Spirit of God was active and present from the moment of creation. The Spirit was often compared with wind in an effort of the Israelites to understand the workings of the Spirit in their lives. They believed that the prophets, kings and judges God appointed for them were instruments of the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit of God remained as the motivating factor in leading a sanctified life. The New Testament narrates more profound instances of the relational dimension of the Holy Spirit. The Baptism of Jesus exhibited the relational dimension of the Holy Spirit openly and the Pentecost experience reaffirmed this fact. The disciples of Jesus experienced the relationality of the Holy Spirit in the formation of the community and a relationship with the Holy Spirit was understood as membership in Christianity. They viewed the coming of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of Christ's promise to send the Comforter. The disciples understood the power and presence of God in the lives of the people in a different way after the Resurrection and Pentecost, but the question arises of how we experience God today. In answer, the Holy Spirit as the God of today is not anything new and is the continuation of the Incarnation through each one of us. The relational dimension of the Holy Spirit is one that everyone can experience everywhere since we are created in his image and likeness. There are many feminine images related to the experience of the Holy Spirit as the God of today and they complement those relational images. Additionally, those images of the Holy Spirit are not limited to one gender alone. We find different genders used for Holy Spirit in different places, although it is sometimes difficult for us to think differently from our traditional ideas where all the images of God are associated with the male gender. What is important is to look beyond gender issues at the working of the Holy Spirit as the God of today. An interesting observation in the relational dimension of the Holy Spirit is

to look at the way the Holy Spirit relates with each one of us. The Holy Spirit uses unusual relational modes which are not limited to just the comfortable and pleasant situations of our lives, and in fact, makes use of uncertainties and irritation to relate with human beings. Over the course of time, these uncertainties and irritations grow into a relationship. The lack of a relationship with the Holy Spirit in the lives of today's leaders allows them to become evil-minded. God makes use of his Holy Spirit to prepare individuals for a close relationship with him, but in unusual ways.

The *Trinitarian dimension of relationship* reveals the relationships of the persons of the Holy Trinity among themselves and to the rest of creation. There is unity and differentiation in the Trinity and it is complemented in their network of mutual relationship. The Trinitarian presence in the lives of each individual begins at the moment of baptism. The Trinity is presented as the relational model for the creation of communities. The Trinitarian dimension of relationship shows different relational models for our relationship with God.

The whole search for God's interventions in the lives of human beings, and how those individuals experienced God in their lives, shows us that we cannot have one particular relational image or experience of God; but leads us to *multiple choices of different relational pictures of God* and of how people responded differently to God's interventions in their lives. Each relational image of God depicts one particular quality of God which complements other relational images. It is a panorama experience of God. Combining all these different relational experiences and images brings us to the *multidimensional experience of God* in the Bible. Limiting God's experiences to one aspect alone is not the right way to look at the experiences of God today. All the relational images of God and the synthesis of the different God-experiences of people contribute in a unique way to the multidimensional experience of God.

The *anthropological foundation* looks into the question of who the human being is. This question has been voiced repeatedly since the beginning of time and points to the complexity of the human being's self-image. The Bible provides us with the Christian vision of a human being. Being created in the image and likeness of God is the outstanding character of being human. The dignity which each human being possesses makes each one different from other creatures in their relationships with God. The relational quality of the human being is elevated to its highest when the human is chosen as the covenant partner of God. In spite of the distinguished dignity of human beings, they remain perishable because of natural limitations and death. The New Testament portrays well the lost relationship of human beings with God because of their sin and

suffering from guilt. Human beings are not left in their sinfulness and guilt but are redeemed and their relationship is renewed by Christ. The human being is accepted by God fully and unconditionally because the relationship is amended. The Christian vision of the human being described in the Bible teaches us that there is not just one image of the human being, but many different images which unveil the spiritual and temporal qualities of being human. Certain images display the dignity and uniqueness of the human being whereas certain other images show their transitoriness and limitations. A balanced image of the human being is necessary to begin the anthropological foundation of their relationships. All the deliberations of the different qualities of humanness are articulated in the relational quality of those images. That means that basically through creation human beings are relational.

The relational world of human beings begins with their *relationship with themselves*. Our relationality is very much determined by the psychological dimensions of our self-relationship. How one thinks, makes decisions, expresses feelings, perceives realities and so on affects our relationships. The ability to adapt to different social situations and environments and to filter the information as one requires is the ability of the individual in relation to oneself. Every human being has his/her own history. This history is very much knit together by the events that have affected the human's relational world and history.

How does a *human being relate with others*? The relational world of human beings depends upon their interactions with fellow humans. The physical body remains as the platform for our relationship with others. The body is used as the means to express our relationships and to dialogue with the rest of creation. We could not possibly think of a relationship with others without our physical bodies. As social beings, we are interdependent on others; we need others for our existence and for relationships. A human's relationships always take place within a particular context. That contextual dimension involves all cultural, social, ecological, environmental, political and religious circumstances which influence the relational world of the human being in any particular context. The cultural dimension of the relationship is the heritage passed on to succeeding generations. The ongoing traditions in a family as well as the different social practices, customs, and faith education that exist in a society impacts the relational world of the human being.

The relational world of a person is not restricted to relationships with other human beings alone but encompasses *nature and the natural environment*. The whole universe is the creation of God and God communicates with his



entire creation in a unique relationality. Human beings are also part of this entire creation. All creatures of God form a community in relationship with God, and human beings are called to live in harmony with the rest of creation. The relationship of Jesus with his surroundings and nature was very respectful. The use of natural images and metaphors by Jesus to teach the people shows his familiarity with nature and its rhythms. Like any other human being Jesus also nourished his body with natural products. To be respectful and thankful towards nature means to safeguard creation. The human being is created as the steward and caretaker of the entire created world. The relational attitude of human beings with creation must be one of service. Respect towards nature does not just include animate beings but also inanimate beings and includes the dignity of nature which is revealed through the creative mind of God. The tension between God and human beings is sometimes projected into the natural world. There are instances that reveal the correlation between the behavior of human beings and the health of the earth. The relational world of human beings is very much connected with their relationship with nature.

The spiritual dimension of the human being makes them distinct from other creatures and because of that they have a special *relationship with God*. Human beings have a relationship with God because they are created in the image and likeness of God and are covenant partners with him. The essence of the human being depends upon his/her relationship with God, and the spiritual dimension of the human being allows new experiences which helps them draw energy for their daily lives. By being God-bearers, human beings do not have a static relationship with God but a dynamic one which can transform their lives. That means changes in the lives of the individual can take place as an effect of their relationship with God, but this change can take place only through a close personal relationship with him. The relationship of the human being with God endows him/her with the responsibility to be the representative of God in this world. A relationship with God remains as the foundation for the entire relational world of the human being.

A study of the different human relational images in the Bible leads us to an inference that the relational world of the human being cannot be compartmentalized. Each relational world contributes to another relational world. Each relational world of the human being is complete but not perfect in itself. A *multidimensional image of the human being* can encompass all the relational worlds of the human. The anthropological foundation of the relationship of human beings is built on a multidimensional image.

The theological and anthropological foundation of relationship provides the basis for the formulation of *a relational paradigm for pastoral care*. A *relationship with oneself* is the starting point of the relational paradigm. Relational self-identity unveils the uniqueness of every individual. To be proud of one's own abilities and talents is relational self-esteem. Accepting one's own abilities and limitations and knowing oneself better belongs to relational self-acceptance. Relational self-love is to nurturing and being content with oneself. All four of these dimensions are necessary in order to develop a healthy relationship with oneself.

*Relationships with others* can be established when opportunities for interaction are provided. Linking with others can take place through relational solidarity, which means to enter into the relational world of others by sharing different talents, energy, time, abilities and so on. The area of relational solidarity varies according to different pastoral fields. Community experiences strengthen the relational world of the human being. Different competitions and programs in which students work together are some such channels in educational institutions. Participating in the lives of others who work in community programs reinforces the relational abilities of the individual. Empowerment is the aim of all relationships and enables the individuals to be responsible for their own lives. It points to an integral development of the relational world of the individual.

Relationality of the individual is also very much *connected with the natural world*. Linking the individual with nature means to be aware of our God-given nature and its surroundings. The awareness about different environmental challenges human beings face today is part of that connection. Environmental problems increased when human beings neglected their relatedness with the natural world. As a result, human interaction has been substituted with technological interaction. Awareness alone does not help the individual to link with nature but rather, the individual has to get involved in environmental issues. Conducting awareness programs about ecological issues and living in ecological harmony are some of the possible ways to be in touch with nature. Since environmental changes affect human behavior, any kind of participation in it will positively influence the relationality of the human being. Active involvement in environmental issues encourages the human being to look for a solution for these challenges, but the first solution is a change in our attitudes towards nature and natural resources. Instead of exploiting nature, the human being has to control the use of natural resources. A relational-covenantal approach to the natural world will enable the individuals to live in harmony with nature. It involves a right view, right appreciation and right use of nature. This approach

expects the human being to relate with all the creatures of the universe as part of our neighborhoods and community.

***Relationality of the individual with God*** is possible when the religious experiences of the individual are strengthened. Each individual has his/her own unique religious experiences which they inherited or were taught by their families. Sharing one's faith with others is a process of strengthening one's own religious experience. The relational dimension of mystagogie offers the opportunity for individuals to find God in their lives by reflecting on their own life histories. Liturgical celebrations and the administering of sacraments also can be an aid for the individuals in reflecting on the intervention of God in their lives. Religious education is also a good opportunity for individuals to build up relationships with God. Evaluating one's own religious experiences and strengthening the relational images of God can complement the individual's existing image or help find a new relational image of God. It demands the individual's inner conviction to know that God takes an active role in their lives.

The ***pastoral caregiver plays a vital role*** in the process of linking the individual with oneself, with others, with nature and with God. The pastoral caregiver, through the different roles as personal facilitator, social facilitator and spiritual facilitator, connects the individual with his/her respective relational world. It belongs to the role of the pastoral caregiver to make sure that a fitting environment is guaranteed in which the relational abilities of the individual can live. ***The fulfillment of the roles of the pastoral caregiver depends upon his/her competence.*** That the pastoral caregiver, being a man of relationships, can support individuals in forming relationships is a self-understood competence. Professional studies can assist the pastoral caregiver in understanding issues in the field of relationships. It belongs to the competence of the pastoral caregiver to accompany the individuals in seeing God's intervention in their lives here and now. Along with other challenges, the pastoral caregiver has to constantly be aware of and find a source of inner nourishment.

A study of the human being's relational fields shows the difficulty in defining human relationships. Each sphere of relationship brings forth its perfection in human life. It is necessary for us to look at all the different relational worlds of the human being as just one package, since they are all interrelated and interconnected. Avoiding one dimension of the human's relational world will make the definition of relationship inadequate. ***A multidimensional view of relationship can integrate all the human being's relational spheres.*** To understand the importance of each dimension and to see relationships from that point of view leads us to multidimensional relationship.

***My experience at Mary Matha Schoenstatt College*** verifies the credibility of this pastoral concept. A brief explanation of the Sitz im Leben of the students serves as background history. In helping ***the individuals to link with themselves*** enabled me to make use of the pedagogical guidelines of the Founder of the International Schoenstatt Movement, Fr. Joseph Kenenich. The aim of education through trust was to demonstrate trusting the students and supporting them as they built up trust in themselves. This was accomplished by education through attachment and love which targeted the development of their relational self-love, and accepted them with all their talents, limitations, and unique family backgrounds. Motivational guidance served to keep them striving to become better.

In order ***to help link the students with others***, I had to make sure that different opportunities were presented to them. Parents, teachers and fellow students determined the relational world of a student. My visits to the homes of the students gave me more information about their social environment and allowed them to create a rapport with me. The teachers interacted with the students with concern and understanding which was vital to their relationship with the students; and the parents' role in their education was assured through PRE meetings and personal conferences. Different programs like Arts Day, Sports Day and College Day created additional occasions for interaction with fellow students. All these opportunities were meant to enhance the relationship of the students with others.

The external structure and college buildings created a nature-friendly atmosphere on the campus which supported the students in their ***relationship with the natural world***. Making use of Gandhi Jayanti to create a bond with the college surroundings was part of linking the students with nature. The availability of monthly Eucharistic celebrations along with the Sacrament of Reconciliation nurtured the students in their relationships with God. Prayer services before the examinations imparted the image of a loving, caring God who accompanied them in their successes and failures. An annual retreat conducted in the college was a great source of nurturing a relationship with God.

***My role as pastoral caregiver*** was to remain as a bridge-builder to help them develop their trust and talents, and to make sure that they had a healthy environment in which to live their relational world. In order to fulfill my role as personal, spiritual and social facilitator, ***my formation in the community of the Schoenstatt Fathers and professional studies equipped me with enough competence***. My relational ability along with my guidance in showing them the right way at the right time was decisive. Supporting the students as they

worked to find God in their daily lives meant that I had to make sure I had enough inner resources of spirituality, energy and strength.

My experience taught me that a multidimensional relational pastoral care is necessary in the educational institutions in India in order to empower and strengthen the students in their relationality. *A holistic approach to the relational world of the students makes this pastoral concept different from other pastoral methods.* Looking back to those years where the students benefited from the creation of this pastoral care concept, I am very confident that this concept will be effective in many other educational institutions.

This scientific research and study enabled me to learn more about *the relational world of human beings and how they are interconnected and interrelated. Pastoral care can be more effective and useful for people if the pastoral caregiver is able to link all the relational spheres of the human being.* It was also an opportunity for me to look back at my own life. A review of my own relational God-images strengthened my relationship with God. That negligence of relationality with nature can lead to drastic changes in human behavior was an eye-opener for me. *The role of the pastoral caregiver does not just mean to work with the given situation but also to question the system and show where human dignity is not respected.* The prophetic critical competence of the pastoral caregiver enables him or her for this task.

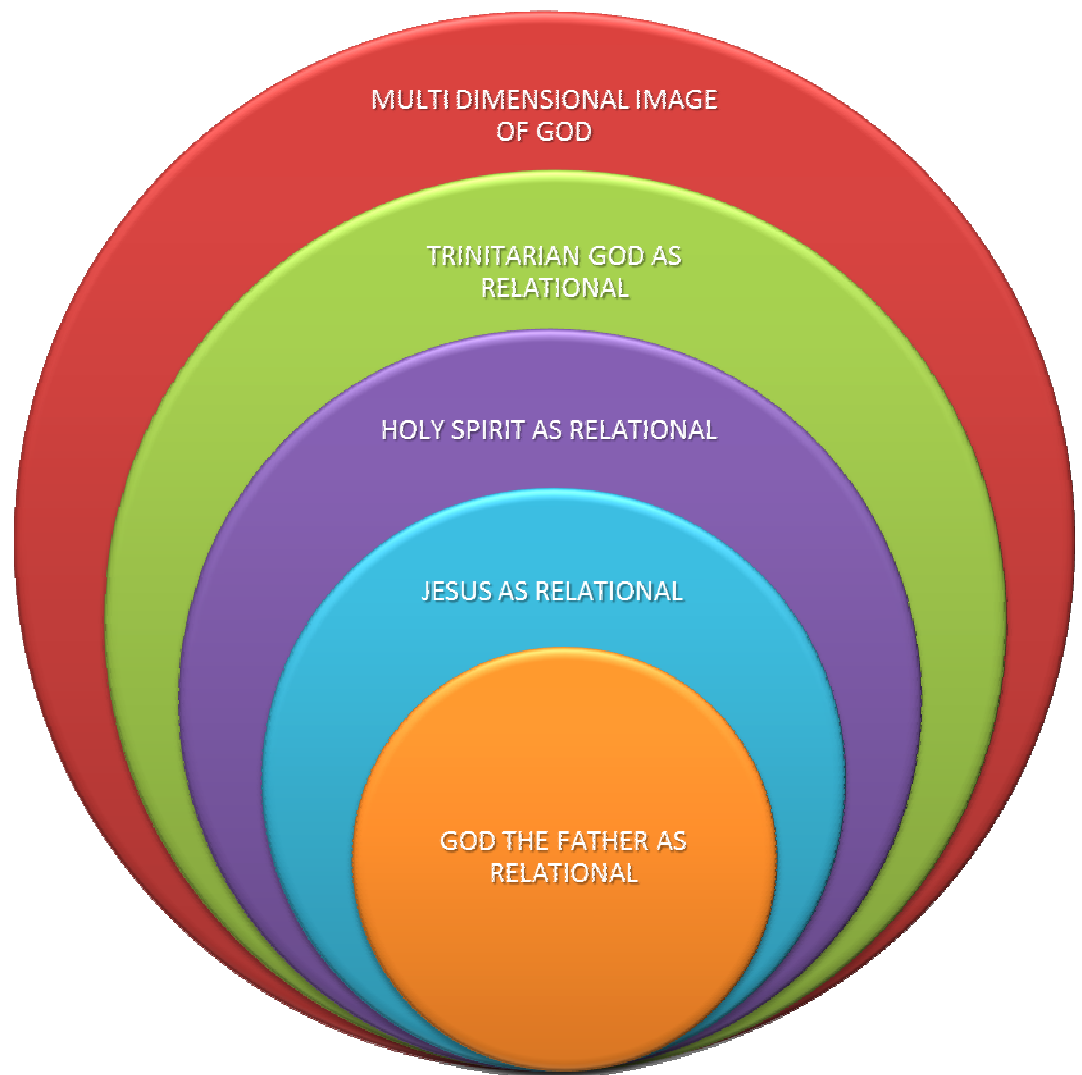
This pastoral concept does not claim to provide perfect pastoral care in educational institutions. This relational paradigm for pastoral care can be effective in many fields but certain elements of this concept make it difficult to practice. Individual accompaniment will be a challenging job for the pastoral caregiver if there are not enough co-workers to share the responsibilities. How attentive the pastoral caregiver can be to each individual is questionable since individual attention and care on the part of the pastoral caregiver can lead the students to dependency on the caregiver. The termination of relationships with students will not be an easy task because certain students may misunderstand this process if they are not matured enough to realize the aim of pastoral care. The effectiveness of this pastoral concept is solely depended upon the abilities of the pastoral caregiver.

The relational world of pastoral care is a wide area of research. My research was limited to one particular age group of students 16-19 years old and was done in the State of Kerala in India. It will be interesting to explore a relational paradigm of pastoral care with other age groups such as students who are in 8th through 10th grade and who are from 13 to 15 years old. Another area of research could be done with students 19 years old and above and are doing their

graduate studies. India is a multicultural society. Every state has its own rich traditions and different languages, and many interesting cultural elements can be found in each of our 29 States. Educational institutions play vital roles in the development of the relational skills of the students in all of the states in India. The scientific study of a relational paradigm in other states in India according to different age groups will be also enriching to the relational world of the students. The research conducted and insights gained in this thesis can be instrumental in changing the relational world of not just students, but of all human beings. As we humans grow and develop in relationships, we can effectively change humanity and our natural world for the better.

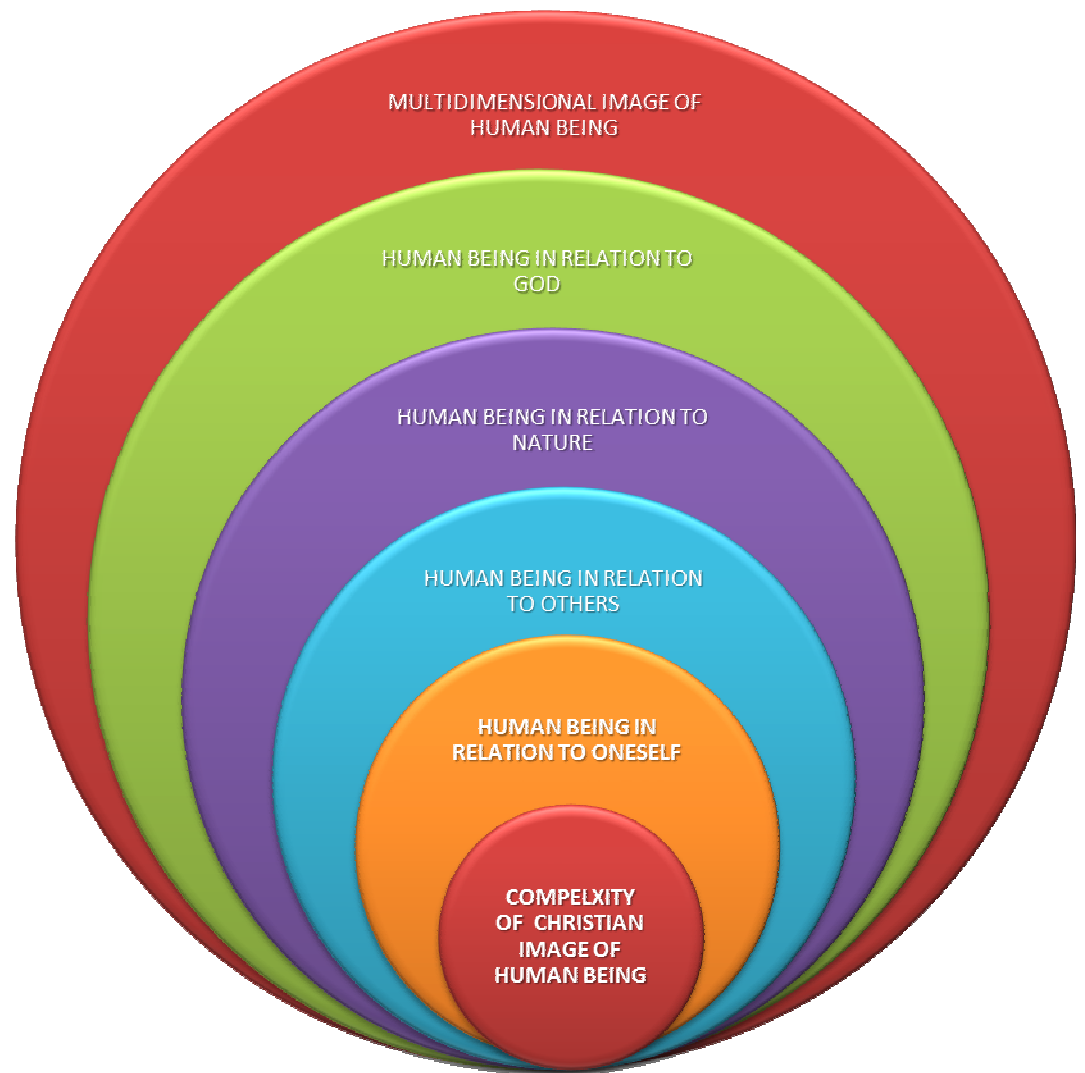
## APPENDIX

### 1. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION



Graph 1

## 2. ANTHROPOLOGICAL FOUNDATION



**Graph 2**

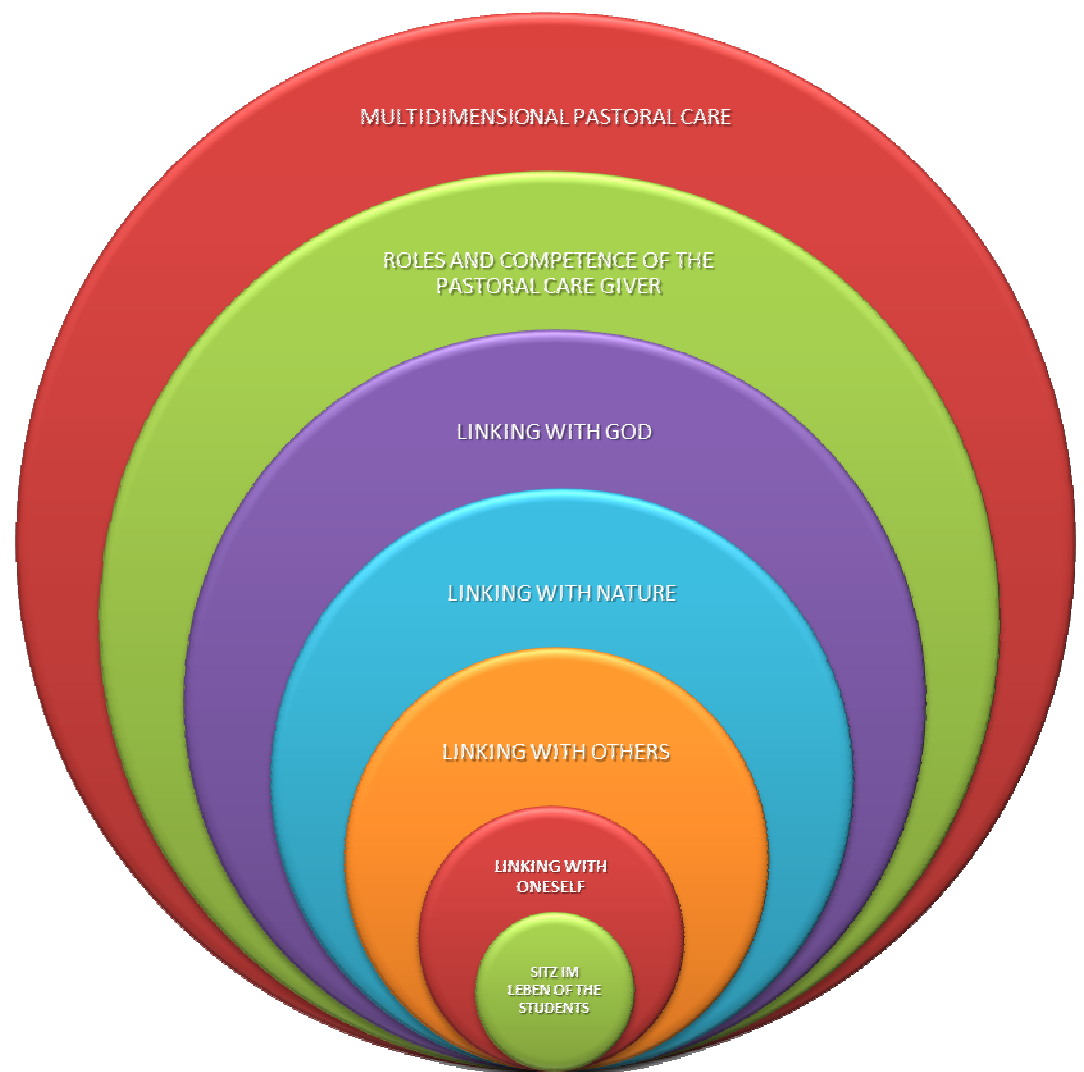


### 3. A RELATIONAL PARADIGM FOR PASTORAL CARE



**Graph 3**

#### 4. CASE STUDY: PASTORAL CARE IN AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN INDIA



Graph 4

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**Eidesstattliche Versicherung**

Ich versichere an Eides statt,

- dass die vorliegende Dissertation mit dem Titel A RELATIONAL PARADIGM FOR PASTORAL CARE selbstständig verfasst wurde und alle von mir benutzten Hilfsmittel und Quellen angegeben worden sind
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