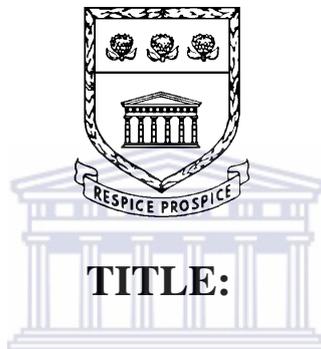


**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**MAGISTER THEOLOGIAE – IN THE DEPARTMENT OF  
RELIGION AND THEOLOGY, FACULTY OF ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**



**TITLE:**

**Integrating Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT) into a Biblical  
Theological Approach to Marriage Counselling**

**STUDY LEADER:**

**PROFESSOR CHRISTO LOMBARD**

**STUDENT:**

**FRD BEUKES**

**STUDENT NUMBER: 8213528**

**DATE: MARCH 2013**

## ABSTRACT

As a minister who is deeply involved in Christian counselling I am constantly reminded just how many problems marriages are facing today. There is no question that the failure of this fundamental relationship has unquantifiable devastating results in the lives of couples, their children, and society as a whole. The more one works with people one realises that many couples in relationships are just hurting individuals in search of happiness and wholeness. Marriage provides the perfect relationship with elaborate promises and expectations of love and warmth, where all needs and dreams are to be met by the husband or wife. Sadly, however, as substantiated by divorce statistics, too many couples find this sacred space intended for love and fulfilment become the most vulnerable, unsafe space.

As a minister searching for a systematic process to unravel this mystery of failed or failing marriages, I discovered a psycho-social model for therapy, called Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT), which not only produced excellent counselling results, but also seemed compatible with more theological approaches to couples therapy. IRT unravels for me the “why” and gives me a quantifiable aspect to my work which helps me grasp conceptually that which I instinctively have discovered and known theologically.

I have embarked on this research, firstly, *to understand the problem and the extent thereof* facing our society; secondly *to identify the strengths and shortcomings in Pastoral Care theory and praxis* (such as the recurring problem of a realistic and workable Biblical counselling model for pastors), and thirdly *to investigate the feasibility whether and how the Imago Relationship Theory could be integrated in Pastoral Care praxis*. The intention was, and remains, that after I have done this research to make it available, in appropriate format, to help pastors in assisting couples to avoid pitfalls in their marriages. In turn, it is hoped that this new found perspective would also benefit the pastor and his wife, since many pastors find their marriages also under strain.

Every pastor who works with the lives of congregants understands the volatility of relationships. This understanding has been built over long periods of time with them and he has witnessed how their lives have morphed under pressure due to problems that at times have been overwhelming. Sadly some of the pain is self-inflicted or has been inflicted upon them. As one delves into this subject matter one becomes aware of just how inadequately equipped some pastors really are and how important it is to equip them to effectively help others.

I chose to examine Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT), knowing its efficacy, and wondered how this would fit into a Pneumatological counselling model. Various practical theologians (such as DJ Louw and JJ Rebel) have recently been discovering Pneumatology – the reflection on the work of the Holy Spirit, through whom the work of God the Father and God the Son is being applied and appropriated *in the person, in the congregation, and in the fullness of life in the world* – as the framework for practical theology, especially Pastoral Care. I thus deliberately explored Pneumatology as such a theological *Sitz im Leben* for reflecting on IRT integrated into a Biblical model for counselling. I needed an affective therapeutic model which would could be integrated, and enhance the biblical framework in counselling. Furthermore this therapeutic mechanism needed to be subservient to attain the greatest goal of God and that is to serve and help transform humankind created in His Image.

I conducted a systematic literature review of IRT and relevant theological insights from Pastoral Care theory. This investigation is to establish the viability of an integration of IRT into a *Pneumatological Pastoral Care theory and praxis* to be used as a Pastoral Tool for ministers dealing with the crisis of broken marriages. It was surprising to see how well IRT fits into the theological framework and can enhance an already effective psychological therapy process.

## KEY WORDS

Pneumatology

Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT)

Dialogue

Practical Theology

Broken relationships

Pastoral care

Divorce Vibrancy Childhood wounds Abuse

Marriage

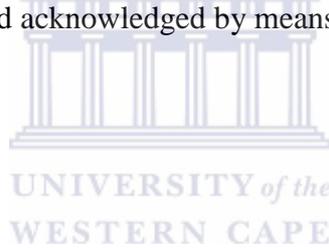
## DECLARATION

I Fredrick Randolph Dereck Beukes hereby declare that *Integrating Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT) into a biblical theological approach to Marriage Counselling* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Fredrick Randolph Dereck Beukes

4 March 2013

Signed: .....



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

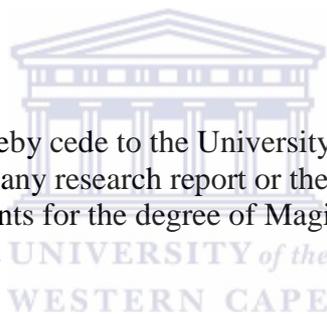
I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor Prof. Christoffel Lombard for his professional and thorough guidance. He has patiently been there to offer structure to my thoughts and assistance in formulating them systematically. His assistance was invaluable. I also wish to warmly thank my wife and best friend, Susan and my children, Victoria and Jon Dereck who unconditionally supported me through this project, as well as friends, close and far, who always had a word of encouragement to offer when the task seemed arduous and never ending.

## **DEDICATION**

First and foremost without equal, my Lord and saviour Jesus Christ who has inspired and sustained me and to the Holy Spirit that empowered from within during these past few years amid some difficult challenges to complete this task I have started. Secondly to my wife who stood by my side unconditionally and thirdly to two wonderful little girls who inspired the writing and research for this thesis: Georgia and Madison your faces kept on inspiring me!

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# CHAPTER ONE

## PROBLEM, BACKGROUND, MOTIVATION AND RESEARCH METHOD

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Due to the visible presence of broken relationships, the extent of this problem in our society, and a personal concern as a minister about this reality, I have embarked on this investigation in search of an integrated pastoral counselling approach to marriage partners who are struggling to save their relationship or re-energise it. Convinced of the fact that theological and psychological insights helpful in marriage counselling can best be integrated within a pneumatological model, i.e. within the wider horizon of the work of the Spirit of God interacting with the human spirit, I shall explore the possibility of integrating the well-known Imago Relationship Therapy into what I wish to develop further as a pneumatological approach in pastoral care.<sup>1</sup>

As a minister the researcher has a personal concern about the reality of broken marriage relationships and has embarked on this investigation, firstly, *to understand the problem and the extent thereof* facing our society<sup>2</sup>; secondly *to identify the current pastoral theory and praxis and its shortcomings*<sup>3</sup> (the possibility that there exists latent weaknesses in our preparation of ministers or pastors), and thirdly *to investigate the feasibility of integrating Imago Relationship Theory (IRT) into a pneumatological pastoral care theory and praxis*. The intention is to construct a clearly defined *pneumatological* pastoral counselling model which will serve as a framework to bring structure to Christian pastoral care praxis.<sup>4</sup> The desire in turn is to enhance pastors' effectiveness in pastoral marriage counselling, equip them better to identify personal pitfalls and in turn enhance their own marriages.

The research was triggered by a growing awareness of the increased complexity of our society and the associated marital problems. The results of these marital problems and breakups, if not addressed are that they not only have an impact on our core family structures, the family which is the building block of our society but also feed societal instability. Given the complexities of their

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<sup>1</sup> The clue towards such an approach has been found in the work of A.A. van Ruler, as developed by Rebel and Louw.

<sup>2</sup> This aspect is dealt with in the introduction as a background to the other two major concerns on which the rest of this study will focus.

<sup>3</sup> One major problem is for instance the occurrence of transference taking place between pastor and counselee.

<sup>4</sup> The work of the Spirit of God in and through human agency, as represented by the pastor in pastoral counselling, is the core issue within a pneumatological approach. Christ's work is appropriated, applied, and extended in human

work pastors also have to face the reality of their own inadequacies and own marital problems. This study will thus begin with a focus on the diversity of the problems married couples face, as reflected in relevant literature. Official statistics confirm the large number of marriages being dissolved.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND: CRISIS IN MARRIAGE AND THE PASTOR**

This study is prompted by the crisis that not only exists in marriages, but also in Pastoral Counselling. There is a real need for a model which will blend theological and psychological perspectives to enhance the pastor's effectiveness to meet the relationship needs of the couples they serve. The question that needs to be asked is whether Christian counselling is effective to remedy the issues surrounding marriages in crisis.

### **1.1.1 THE PROBLEM AND ITS MAGNITUDE**

Statistics from religious organisations indicate that marriages are no better off between religious couples than non-Christian couples. In an article by Christine Walker in the *Dallas Morning News* in 2000, she expressed concern for the increased divorce rates and referred to a study by the *Barna Research Group* (2006) in the United States. They discovered that divorce rates among conservative faith groups were higher than among other groups. It also reflected that these rates among agnostics and atheists were lower. 'The Barna Research Group's national study showed that members of nondenominational churches divorce 34 per cent of the time in contrast to 25 per cent for the general population. Nondenominational churches would include large numbers of Bible churches and other conservative evangelicals. Baptists had the highest rate of the major denominations: 29 per cent. Born-again Christians' rate was 27 per cent. To make matters even more distressing for believers, atheists/agnostics had the lowest rate of divorce, 21 per cent' (Walker 2000).

The latest available Southern African statistics, released on 1 December 2009, painted the following picture: 'Despite the general fluctuations, the proportions of divorces from the mixed and the African groups have been increasing whilst that of the White group has been declining in the past ten years. In 1999 the African, Indian /Asian, White and mixed groups made up 18%, 4%; 5,3%; 39,9% and 1,0% of the number of divorces respectively. However, in 2008 the contribution of the African, Indian/Asian and mixed groups increased to 35, 0%; 6,2% and 3,1% respectively whilst that of the White group declined to 32,8%'. The impact on children is also included in these statistics and the extent of the problem is immediately clear: 'In 2008, there were 26 947 children

(younger than 18 years old) involved in divorce. It is observed from Table 19, that 16 370 (56, 6%) of the 28 924 divorces had children younger than 18 years indicating that, on the average, there was between one and two children per divorce' (*Marriages and divorces* 2009:3-4). One can only assume the problem to be worse than quantified here as these statistics are from those of *marriages registered*. It is even more alarming when one considers that many couples who do come for counselling and therapy are not married and are living in unmarried committed relationships.

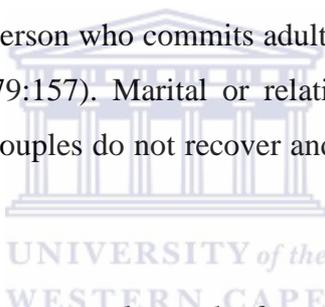
The further crisis is the fluidity of the societal trends in which the pastoral counsellor must function. The areas as mentioned by Collins are: the pace of life that is changing, people becoming overwhelmed with busyness, ever changing technologies and the way we are doing our work, the ever escalating flood of information, and the impact of biotechnology (Collins 2007:11). There is no question that with all these changes in our society the counsellor has to become *au fait* with the world in which the people to whom he ministers. It becomes more apparent that these changes and the rate at which they are happening are placing additional pressure on everyone.

### **1.1.2 INTERNAL MARITAL CONCERNS POINTED OUT BY RESEARCH**

Studies assessing the nature of the relationship problems surfacing in counselling have discovered that frequently the partners have been in a marriage for an extended period of time with no mutually satisfying relationship. Broderick (1979:14) cites a study done by Cuber and Harroff of four hundred occupationally successful men and their wives in which it was found that after between fifteen and twenty five years of marriage they had sorted themselves into four groups, ranging from the happiest to the unhappiest. He categorised four levels of marriage relationships: Vital, Congenial, Devitalised and Combative. The value of the study is that it broadly presents identifiable categories as well as the reasons why partners stay together. These reasons describe the nature as well as the motivation for couples to stay together rather than leave. It is interesting to note why they do stay. As an example, partners in the devitalised group, which accounts for one third of the sample tested, look back at their relationship with a bit of nostalgia and do not hold out much hope for their relationship ever to be revitalised but enjoy the outward display of a successful marriage. The irony is that by and large they live in a state of contentment rather than a state of enjoyment and fulfilment. The lack of active engagement concerning relationship problems can be traced to a conscious decision to avoid the issues rather than deal with them. In the case of many couples it can be assumed that their attempt may have been feeble, thus without the desired outcomes, and that they have become resigned to the state they are in.

Living in an unconscious relationship would be what Hendrix suggests as the reason couples live in an emotionally dormant relationship. Hendrix (1988:88) would define a conscious marriage as being a marriage which ‘fosters maximum psychological and spiritual growth; it is a marriage created by becoming conscious and cooperating with the fundamental drives of the unconscious mind: to be safe, to be healed, and to be whole.’ If this is the reality in so many cases, the obvious question is how partners can be assisted to consciously deal with problems, to restore an honest, open and vibrant relationship.

Marital unfaithfulness plays a major role in relationship problems and this issue has become increasingly prevalent. Dollahite and Lambert (2007:290-307) offer a quantitative research polling behaviour and how society views marital unfaithfulness. It is interesting to note that in spite of its prevalence, its practice is strongly disapproved of by society. It is important to analyse this behaviour in order to find out why partners engage in such relationally destructive behaviour. Broderick applies Kohlberg’s six stages in the development of moral reasoning to help us understand the mind processes of a person who commits adultery; the rationale such a person bases his/her decisions on (Broderick 1979:157). Marital or relationship unfaithfulness can mean the death of that relationship and often couples do not recover and repair their relationship after such a tragic breakdown in trust.



To rebuild trust between the couple is extremely tough after an affair is discovered. Various studies and approaches, both from theological and psychological backgrounds, which may offer help in healing this difficult relationship, are explored. Bagarozzi (2008:1–17) states that marital unfaithfulness is multifaceted and he delineates and reviews seven broad categories of unfaithfulness. The factors that trigger this behaviour are complex and so too the dynamics around forgiveness as an option to undo this behaviour and restore the relationship. He raises background information that is important for the therapist to be fully *au fait* with, such as the marital structure, family structure, couple dynamics, intergenerational influences and contextual factors, before deciding on a course of action. (Bagarozzi 2008:14)

The reality of marriage infidelity or relationship unfaithfulness is a real challenge to every relationship and its repair and restoration need to be explored. Butler, Harper and Seedal (2009) deal with the reality every minister and therapist has to confront and the crucial question, after the discovery of the infidelity, about how much information should be disclosed. They find another dilemma: that the pastor inadvertently could be coerced into collusion to withhold vital information

from the injured party (2009:125–143). This dilemma in itself creates a real ethical problem for the minister amidst the trauma of the relationship in crisis.

The results of broken marriages have a huge impact on the children who are the innocents in this. Extensive work detailing the emotional impact on the now wounded child details how these emotional wounds resurface in adult relationships. Bradshaw outlines and explains how this inner child, when it later becomes emotionally wounded, finds gratification in destructive relationships. He also details methods as how to reclaim that hurt inner child, and in so doing hopes to help the adults who are in a relationship to become whole individuals again. Their unique reclaimed wholeness reduces the relational expectation that the other partner in the relationship will make them whole. This study in understanding why current marriages are under pressure emphasises the need to understand the human psyche that predisposes a person to emotional vulnerability. It is helpful to see that where there has been a distortion of the self, this factor is instrumental in subtly coercing individuals to not only be attracted to but to stay in toxic relationships in the hope that the relationship is either “normal” or that it will become better (Bradshaw 1990:42).

The pastor functions in an environment where he has to deal with single-parent households and with that he may have to deal with the reality of dealing with fatherless children. Many children are being raised without the presence of a father in their homes. Dave Blankenhorn’s work, *Fatherless America* (1995), unveils the full impact of absent fathers in our society. Finding accurate data quantifying the problem in South Africa is highly unlikely at this time due to a lack of statistics from remote rural areas. In research conducted in South Africa it would seem that although the exact numbers are not known, the factors certainly are. These are that families are critical for the wellbeing of children (Nsamenang 2000). The UNESCO report of 1991 observes that, ‘in the family system of every human society, incomplete families emerge due to various reasons – demographic, economic or social: such as the death or divorce of a spouse, partition of the family, or migration’ (UNESCO 1991:11). The link between single parents and poverty in South Africa has been confirmed by research (Barbarin & Richter 2001).

Defining the complementary needs of men and women and how these needs are created and also how expectations are satisfied, is core to this study which focuses on the assessment and integration of IRT as a pastoral tool for ministers dealing with the crises of broken marriages. Books consulted in this regard are Harley (2005), Eggerichs (2004), and Wright (1998) and they help define what good balanced relationships are about. It is a matter of identifying the needs of each partner and

being able to meet them. A clear understanding of what these needs are and where these needs come into play in relationships is an important area to be explored.

### **1.1.3 COMPLEXITIES WITHIN WHICH PASTORS FUNCTION**

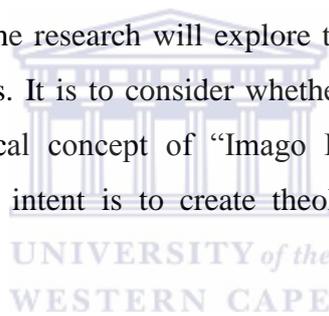
It would be remiss at the outset of the thesis not to mention some of the challenges the pastor faces. The expectations linked to growth of congregations are complex and for pastors to function optimally in such circumstances is often unrealistic. Below are some of the areas which have been selected that may give the reader an indication of that complexity.

It is evident from accounts in newspapers and the media that ministers' marriages are also under pressure, e.g. Ray McCauley, a prominent minister whose impending failure of his second marriage made big headlines (*Mail and Guardian*, 2 January 2010).

The reason for marriage failure often given by ministers is their over-commitment to the ministry. Many of these ministers, remarks Armstrong (1995:25), started out with very high spiritual goals and entered their ministries longing to serve and help people. Not taking care of their own relationships, they have ended up hurting the people they were called to serve. It is safe to assume that the magnitude of the tasks of ministers and the stresses that come with them must impact negatively on their own primary relationship at home (Armstrong 1995:25). In light of these demands it is wise for ministers to keep their own marriages vibrant as a pre-emptive measure. It is unwise to ignore the needs in their own marriages. If genuine marital needs are not met or even surpassed, this neglect will guarantee the inevitable, as with many marital relationships: abandoning the relationship (Hendrix 2008:78-81). The need for counselling for ministers is a very real one and although misconduct has not adequately been quantified in the South African context, its prevalence in America has been confirmed by research. Such research has been done by the Fuller Institute of Church Growth and other agencies and confirms the findings that as many as 37% of ministers have had problems in the field of sexual misconduct with members of the congregation (Armstrong 1995:18-21). One of the main problems seems to be, ironically, the impact of transference and counter transference within counselling sessions: the minister, trying to help the counsellee, becomes too entangled emotionally and unhealthy dependencies develop. These perceptions are built on a wrong attachment to the "image" the various actors in the crisis have of the other and themselves. It would also seem that ministers who are not aware of what happens in the therapeutic setting could easily become entangled in emotions being transferred and inappropriate relationships starting. "We

may expect the counsellor to find it especially difficult to refrain from reciprocating the client's love if (1) he is unmarried, (2) he is unhappily married, or (3) his dating prior to marriage was confined to so few partners that he never became satiated with playing the field. But we should not delude ourselves into thinking that any counsellors, no matter how happily married, etcetera, are completely immune to the temptation to fall in love with those clients whom they find unusually attractive—physically and/or emotionally. In the first place, it is always gratifying to the ego to find that other people think we are wonderful” (Blood 1958:376).

This is exactly where shortcomings in established pastoral care praxis can possibly be dealt with by means of insights from an integrated psychotherapeutic approach, developed by a theologian and his wife (a psychologist by training), the so-called Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT). Having identified problems faced by pastors in marriage counselling, and being aware of shortcomings in theologically based theories, this research aims to assess the viability of the IRT therapy, which protects the pastor in his task and contains the transference between the couple (see the work of Hendrix, Hunt, Hannah, Luquet). The research will explore the feasibility of integrating IRT into pneumatological pastoral care praxis. It is to consider whether there is a relationship between the “Imago” of IRT and the theological concept of “Imago Dei” (human beings in relationship reflecting the image of God). The intent is to create theologically and psychologically sound counselling tool.



The pastor’s ability to function optimally within an information-saturated world places additional pressure on his ability to stay abreast. Depending on his ability to cope with this changing world of changing information, and also sometimes conflicting information, the pastor is constantly challenged to stay connected with his or her congregation. Each generation also brings with it its own needs and expectations. The greatest danger for the pastors, in the context of their ministry, is that they do not relate to their congregations and their world, and the relevance of Christianity is not adequately translated to their generation.

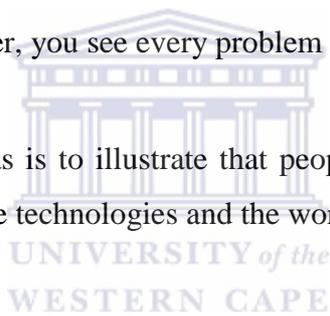
Since the fall of apartheid which brought a democracy craved by the majority of the population, economic shifts have changed the way each economic and ethnic group functions. Many previously disadvantaged members of the population now have access to seemingly scientifically proven techniques of psychology, which may create the impression among them that these are more reliable, tangible and less archaic than the pastoral models currently used in churches. This previously disadvantaged sector of our society can now pay for professional counsellors who are

perceived to be “better equipped” and contextually seem relevant for this new age in which we live and function.

Collins (2007:12) mentions that in the past very few counsellors gave any attention to spirituality in the counselling dynamic, but recently there has been a flood of spirituality that cannot be ignored. The pervasiveness of various views on spirituality does not allow the counsellor to be ignorant or dismissive of other people’s spirituality.

Collins further says, ‘Older counsellors and other mental health professionals, along with perhaps the majority of churches have clung to the traditional ways of caring, communicating and bringing change. Yet with the explosive growth of post modernism, the foundations of our work have begun to shift’ (Collins 2007:12). We must take note of this and although it seems we might at times be resistant to change, the realities are there and if we are not careful we may just find that our methods become archaic and proven ineffective and derail the church’s aim to transform the world. ‘If the only tool you have is a hammer, you see every problem as a nail’ (Maslow 1986:60).

The value in highlighting these areas is to illustrate that people change through the influences of television, media, internet, interactive technologies and the world in which they function.



## **1.2 A COMPLEX FIELD OF RESEARCH**

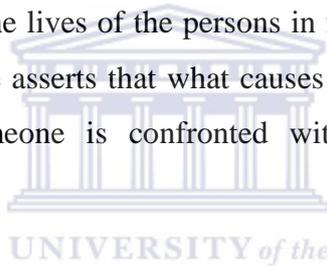
### **1.2.1 A FRAMEWORK FOR COMBINING THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY**

Pastoral counsellors are expected to intervene in situations which are complex with a limited variety of tools at their disposal. This is the situation for a majority of the pastors with great intentions and high hopes in approaching this complex subject. There does not seem to be a standard pastoral conceptual framework from which many of the pastors operate from.

According to Polit, Beck and Hungler (2001), the conceptual framework of a research is mostly implicit while Burns and Grove (2007:189) view a conceptual framework as a brief explanation of the theories, concepts, variables or parts of theories.

Crabb (1977:31-56) developed a framework, which can be fruitfully used by the pastoral counsellor who wishes to use psychological insights complementary to theological ones.<sup>5</sup> Crabb offers four approaches when trying to establish whether psychology and pastoral theology can be integrated - one of the main issues at stake in this study. The four types of integration he highlights are: firstly, the *Separate but Equal* division between psychology and biblical counselling; secondly, the *Tossed Salad* approach where both Scripture and psychology are integrated into a mixture in which the components are barely discernable. In the third approach, *nothing buttery*, the view is held that all of our answers are to be found in Scripture and that the basic tenet of biblical counselling is nothing but faith, Christ, grace and the Word of God; the observations of psychology are to be rejected outright. (See Crabb 1997)

We can agree with with Buswell (1977:40-41) that psychological or other secular “concepts are acceptable if Christ sustains them and is revealed in them.” Crabb however criticizes the negative assumptions about counselling of the third model: the role of the counsellor seems only to be to detect sin and wrong behaviour in the lives of the persons in front of him and to command change based solely on biblical patterns. He asserts that what causes the greatest spiritual growth and life changes in people are when someone is confronted with a loving God who loves them unconditionally.



The fourth model, which he favours, is the *Spoiling the Egyptians* approach. Here Crabb uses the analogy of the Israelites who, when they left Egypt, took with them some Egyptians who went along in anticipation of a blessing. In this model it remains the task of the pastoral counsellor to carefully sift through the concepts before the one swallows up the other. The danger for many psychologists, who spend up to nine years studying their field, is that they develop certain “mindsets” in which Scripture is only viewed through the eyeglasses of psychology, with no consideration of the reverse process also taking place (Crabb 1997:48). He proposes that the biblical counsellor who tries to integrate Christian views and psychology should meet certain qualifications, such as agreeing that psychology also comes under a hermeneutic of suspicion; that the Bible be accepted as the authoritative word of God, and that Scripture, read with a responsible hermeneutic, has fundamental insights about human relationships to consider seriously in counselling situations (1997:48-49). In this study such an approach is followed: where both partners on the journey can be a blessing to the other, while still asking critical questions openly.

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<sup>5</sup> My early formation in Pastoral Care was influenced by Crabb, and although I have in fact shifted significantly in my own approach, I still find his playful *typification* of major approaches regarding Psychology and Theology interesting and useful.

## **1.2.2 COMPLEXITIES IN A CHANGING SOCIETY**

The pastor has to respond to a society that constantly diminishes the value of marriage or committed relationships as part of human reality. We can see marriage as an ever-changing historical sociological phenomenon, or as a psychologically convenient manifestation, or as a theologically verifiable institution of God. The concept of marriage is spoken of in the Bible in many ways. It is mentioned throughout the pages of Scripture and frequently mentioned in the New Testament by Jesus and Paul. The imagery of marriage is used to illustrate the depth of love a man needs to have for his wife, as being the same love that Jesus Christ has for His church. The purposes of marriage, the role of the husband, the importance of coitus between husband and wife in marriage and the responsibilities of parents are all discussed in various passages in the Bible. (Collins 2007:546) While taking into consideration the historical, sociological, psychological and other perspectives on marriage, the pastoral counsellor needs to relate all of these to sound biblical and theological understanding of what marriage is about. In this study a responsible biblical exposition of a Christian concept of marriage, love, and the importance of fidelity will thus be developed.

## **1.3 ISSUES IN MARRIAGE COUNSELLING**

### **1.3.1 THE ROLE OF POWER IN MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIPS**

Relational power in marriage and how the pastor views this tenuous dynamic, influence the counsel that he offers to address this vital issue in the relationship. Feminist psychologists made a major contribution to this discussion, as do feminist theologians. At first glance they seem to place the pastor in an invidious position of creating a harmonious relationship within the marriage by solving power struggles. Knudson-Martin (1997) has contended, ‘just as one cannot *not* communicate, one also cannot *not* do gender’ (see also Blanton and van der Griff-Avery 2001:296). Although this topic is unpopular and potentially incendiary, it is an important aspect that needs to be explored and acknowledged as relevant to the overall enrichment of the dialogue. The reality is that the Bible sanctions patriarchy but not in any way the abuse of gender power in marriage. This important dynamic needs to be clarified and deserves a critical biblical perspective. We need to look at positional, economic and relational power and the role of authority in marriage and why there is this power struggle for dominance. Blanton and van der Griff-Avery (2001:303) report on how couples actually deepen their connection when they learn to narrate their lives and to speak emotionally about issues where they feel powerless or aggrieved. The pastor needs to find a creative way to

deepen the partners' regard for the each other's background and position, role and contribution to the relationship.

### **1.3.2 TREATING A PERSON AS OPPOSED TO TREATING A RELATIONSHIP**

The pastor in his marriage counselling is faced with the challenge of distinguishing between treating an individual and treating a couple-in-relationship. Wade Luquet (1998:4) traces the relationship paradigm and its development from Freud to where Imago changes from individualized therapy to relationship therapy. He mentions Carl Rogers and Kohut who although they did great work towards understanding the self they still only worked with individuals in therapy. 'The effectiveness was in that the client's trust of the therapist was more significant than the client's trust of the significant others' (1998:4). Luquet (1998:5) speaks of a leap of faith on the part of the therapist to treat a relationship differently from dealing with an individual. In working with a couple as a couple a new connectedness can be facilitated through dialogue. The power of the relational paradigm is revealed when, in dialogue, the "shadow side" of one's partner is revealed, and vice versa. Through a process of direct dialogue in the presence of a counsellor about such sensitive issues, partners become more authentic in their dialogical relationship, which makes healing possible. This change in relationship-treating requires a whole new skill set and a whole new counselling paradigm.

The pastor functions within an ever-changing world. His effectiveness in counselling would require a thorough knowledge of counselling and a clear set of desired outcomes. Effectiveness is enhanced especially as he deals with difficult aspects like sin. This requires theoretical attention on how to relate the biblical concept of sin to a particular context or problem. Being able to help the couple to talk about this will play an important role in speaking about marriage and relationship problems. This dialogical platform is versatile and can engage with the humanistic mindset in dealing with problem relations, such as "mistakes", "wrong choices", and "irreconcilable differences". It becomes particularly difficult when the person's actions are sinful in God's sight and make reconciliation and forgiveness difficult. It is within these ambivalences that this study is seated.

### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE FOR THE PASTORAL COUNSELLOR**

An aim of this research is that this study might eventually be presented as a workable document which could form the basis for future discussion groups of ministers and lay people working with couples who are facing problems.

The intention is to deepen ministers' understanding of this aspect of their pastoral work. Through this investigation into the field of marriage and relationship-related issues, the intention is to propose using a specific pastoral care model. This study should raise awareness of the value of understanding a therapeutic, dialogical approach in dealing with marriage crises. The pastor's role is to serve as a facilitator who merely creates safety for the couple and facilitates an ongoing conversation as they aim to reclaim their wounded selves.

The IRT model will be investigated as to its flexibility as a dialogical platform to engage such a difficult problem as human failure. Its viability will be examined against a pneumatological framework and assessed as to whether it can be included in a biblical framework. Sins like adultery will be evaluated within the scope provided by IRT and a biblical framework of counselling. In this study I will endeavour to establish whether there is any connection between the concept of "Imago" and the so-called *Imago Dei* (the image of God) found conceptually in the Bible. Can we accept that God uses himself as a model for creating humans; an image which was tarnished by sin but could again be restored through the work of Christ and especially the Spirit of God inhabiting human beings?

I will endeavour to clarify the theoretical underpinnings of the IRT model and to test these practically. Bearing in mind the theological considerations, the practical testing of IRT will be especially engaged with the psychological underpinnings of IRT. The testing of this model for its practical value in counselling will be demonstrated by case studies as reflected in journal articles, which endorse this therapy or express reservations about it. This means that only existing case studies, as done by experts on IRT, and as reflected in academic literature, will be cited.

This study intends to open possibilities to remedy broken relationships, to revitalise relations that have got stuck, rather than to accept hopelessness. The assumption, or hypothesis, of the study is presenting IRT as a practical tool, coupled with a better understanding of what the Bible and theologically-based Pastoral Care theory really say about relationships. The question will be asked whether this combination can serve to restore and overcome the effect of trauma in broken marriages and relationships. The purpose is to establish whether the internal therapeutic dynamics of IRT is compatible with a Biblical view of marriage.

As has been analysed above, the pastor functions in a very complex world with all these varying approaches, models and frameworks at his (or her) disposal as he (or she) endeavours to assist couples in their relationships. My conviction is that at the end of this study I would have been able to deepen pastors' understanding and would have assisted them on a rudimentary level to consider using a model which includes a basic set of dialogical skills to increase connection between the couple and enhance his or her effectiveness to counsel.

## **1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Divorce has increased dramatically in our country. In research undertaken in South Africa, specifically looking at fatherhood, it becomes abundantly clear that both parents are important to the wellbeing of children (Richter and Morrell 2006). The church is faced with congregants with marital problems such as divorce, single parenthood as a result of divorce, children born out of wedlock, spousal abuse, incest, teenage pregnancy, teenage suicide, teenage drug and alcohol abuse, double income homes that can lead to neglect of children, and the list goes on. How does the church respond to and deal with this multifaceted problem? Is the church engaging in the dialogue at all? Is practical theology providing the guidance and earnest reflection to chart a course to help the average minister able to engage this crisis with more than just the Bible and some common sense as his or her only guide? How is the church responding in tangible ways in relating God's Word meaningfully to these post-modern realities in the lives of its members? These are pressing questions which cannot be addressed in this thesis explicitly. They however all underline the need to investigate the current discourse regarding marriage and divorce across denominations, and how this glaring fissure in our society is being dealt with, theologically and practically.

A first focus of this study will be to address the question how pastoral care theory can help ministers to restore vibrancy into the broken or troubled marriage relationships of church members, and also within their own marriages (Swindoll 1978:21-53). Being members of the body of Christ, ministers should be cognisant of the fact that the church needs to respond by strengthening biblical marriages, considered as one of the sacraments in some denominations, as ordained by God. The importance of the institution of marriage in the life of the church makes it important for Christian ministry to find healing responses to the crisis (Kaspar 1980:13). Healing responses will have to be found within the discipline of Pastoral Care and Counselling, within a Christian understanding of what marriage entails. Recent scholarship in Pastoral Care as a discipline has been emphasising the need for a Trinitarian, specifically Pneumatological, framework within which God's work and

human agency can be integrated, also the work of the pastor and the psychologist, or the theological and psychological perspectives on healing.

In view of the rationale for this study, a specific counselling model, Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT), has been identified as a possible therapeutic tool that could help ministers. This could be added as an important adjunct to assist couples in the healing of stressed or broken marriages. IRT, used as a communication tool helps the couple to understand the causes and intricacies of the problem and through a process of various dialogues, assists them to define the causes of and suggested responses to issues that threaten their relationship. IRT turns the partners toward one another through a dialogical process, which equips them with skills to manage and enhance their relationship. It is interesting to note that a theologian and his second wife, who is a psychologist, developed the Imago model. They combine theological principles and sound psychological theory to help couples understand who they are. They provide an understanding that conflict can be resolved without shaming or demonising one another. By deepening an understanding of each other, couples are enabled to identify and articulate their own needs for wholeness and in this new knowledge they help each other feel safe enough to be able to change behaviour and so achieve the desired needs in their relationship. This dialogical dynamic re-establishes the unity created through marriage and empowers them to own, and work toward, a wholesome relationship that is vibrant.

The second focus would be to see how this psychological model can operate within Christian pastoral counselling. This research will evaluate how Biblical, and specifically pneumatological perspectives, can be joined with the psychological insights found in the IRT model. The intention is to deepen pastoral counsellors' understanding of the pathologies that exist within people and raise their effectiveness in guiding the couple. The investigation will essentially walk on two legs to achieve the objective, i.e. on theological insights from Scripture as well as psychological relationship therapy. A major challenge for the study is to present a pneumatologically sound theoretical framework within which the extant psychological model IRT can be placed to achieve the goals of intervening in, repairing and enhancing relationships that are under pressure. The theological framework explored in this thesis is one provided by a specific pneumatological approach which confirms that the Spirit of God can work through the spirit of the counsellor and the human agents to bring about deeper understanding, reconciliation and healing.

## 1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question can be formulated as follows: How can present and future ministers be assisted with a carefully considered pastoral tool, based on sound practical, pneumatological pastoral theology and psychologically relevant approaches, specifically the Imago Relationship Therapy model, engaging together to curtail the problem of spiralling divorces and deteriorating marriages in our society?

## 1.7 AIM AND PURPOSE

The aim of this study is to explore the complex problem of spiralling divorces and deteriorating relationships in our society and to assist ministers with a carefully considered pastoral tool they can use to curtail the problem.

### **The objectives within the field of Practical Theology are:**

- To determine and assess the types of practical theological interventions ministers are using for assisting families with marital problems, especially different pastoral care approaches being used.
- To understand the theoretical background of pastoral counselling as the backdrop into which marital counselling falls.
- Understand the theological foundations of marriage according to the Bible.

### **The objectives within the field of inter-disciplinary cooperation are:**

- To look at the possibilities for Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT) to be integrated into the pastoral counselling praxis as a possible tool to assist pastors to effectively deal with marital problems.
- To understand the theoretical underpinnings of Imago Relationship Theory (IRT).
- To present Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT) as a pastoral tool to enhance the work of the pastor in the congregation as he or she helps couples with relationship problems.
- To further develop a Pneumatological pastoral model (**DE/MAGO**) as a framework for pastors to effectively assist families with marital problems.

## 1.8 RESEARCH METHOD

The research will start with the study of the praxis of pastoral care and counselling, its origins and theoretical underpinnings, in order to investigate the overall framework of pastoral care within which pastoral marriage counselling occurs. Here a systematic literature review will be done on this subject. The character of Christian biblical counselling will be stated as well as the methods used within various approaches in this category. This aspect of the study will also rest on a literature review and a careful treatment of selected texts relevant to the subject matter. I shall endeavour to present two ‘models’ (my own version of a biblical approach to marriage and the IRT model), identifying their strengths and weaknesses as well as accentuating converging aspects. A comparison of the key aspects of each approach will be studied, as well as backgrounds to selected progenitors of the various theories and why in theology there may be a reluctance to consider integration of these two disciplines.

The feasibility of an integrated model which places the *Pneuma*, i.e. the Holy Spirit prominently inside pastoral counselling praxis, with relevant allied sciences, serving God’s ultimate purpose of caring for humankind and making human beings, created in God’s image, partners in this goal.

## 1.9 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Having dealt with the complex world in which pastoral counsellors’ function in the introductory chapter, Chapter two focuses on pastoral care giving as a discipline and how marriage counselling fits into the overall framework of pastoral counselling. I will present a brief historical overview of pastoral counselling’s rich heritage in church history before opting for a pneumatological model.

Chapter three focuses on presenting a theological framework within which marriage, in a Christian environment, can be understood biblically. Scriptural perspectives on relationships are presented to delineate the relationship between husband and wife and also clarify the roles prescribed for them.

Chapter four focuses on the character and nature of IRT as a psychotherapeutic model, presenting its theoretical underpinnings, and describes its dialogical character. The practical aspects of this theory will be presented and considered as a supplementary tool within pastoral counselling.

Chapter five focuses on comparing the IRT model with the biblical approach to counselling. The fundamental differences in the two ‘models’, will be outlined, potential weaknesses in both will be pointed out, and suggestions made about some areas where they can augment and enhance each other as they share the same intent of helping couples.

Chapter six focuses on designing a new pneumatological model for pastoral counselling as the overall operating platform, with IRT as the dialogical praxis within the overall theological framework.

## 1.10 KEYWORDS

The following key words are used frequently in this study and are therefore briefly defined hereunder:

**Broken relationships** – Relationships that lack vitality and congeniality and include marriages that exemplify brokenness through divorce.

**Deimago Pneumatological Transformation Model (DPTM)** – This is a proposed pneumatological model which has as its aim to transform relationships within a pneumatological perspective on God in His creation. Deimago is a word constructed out of a contraction of two words that has been swopped around. It is derived from the theological concept of “Imago Dei”. The concept of DE/MAGO places the “I” inside of the creation of God surrounded by the power of the Holy Spirit. This power works inside the person to the end where God’s image overwhelms that of humankind to the extent that the inhabitation of the Spirit of God is visibly discernible. The pastor is then placed in his rightful place as the human agent of the Spirit in facilitating the spiritual transformation of the church into the Image of Christ.

**Dialogue** - This is a structured communication process, by which couples engage one another in a guided dialogical process. Partners are helped, through guided phrases, to identify and articulate their frustrations. The process also provides dialogical space for the listener to mirror, validate and also empathise with the sender. The aim is to effect behavioural change through deepened understanding and enhanced empathy for the partner.

**Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT)** - It is a therapy that enables couples to not only identify problems in their relationship, but also through dialogue express their feelings and ask for behavioural change that heals their relationship. It is a therapy that which is a careful blending of various effective psychological theories and therapeutic processes.

**Pastoral care** – This refers to the care given by designated church agents within a congregation to serve individuals, couples, families, to alleviate material, spiritual, relational and other problems faced in daily living.

**Pastoral caregiver** refers to a designated person for such care, for example the minister/shepherd/elder that assists the couple and family with problems.

**Pastor** – This is the most common name for a pastoral caregiver. Pastor usually refers to the biblical idea of ‘pastoring’ i.e. *‘shepherding’*. The pastor is the one who guides and is intimately involved in the life of the people he serves. When I refer to the pastor I do not refer to him as a title but as performing a caring *function*. The accent is to be understood as on the function, not the title. This role can and in many congregations are performed by females who care for women and their families who are in troubled relationships.

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**Pneumatology** – The doctrine of the Holy Spirit. An important aspect of a ‘pneumatological’ view of creation is the idea that God envisaged having a relationship with humankind prior to the event of creation, while everything existing was still only a concept in God’s mind. A revisioning of pastoral theology, in view of what God’s Spirit is thinking, creating and empowering, results in a theology that places the work of Christ (Christology) within its proper eschatological context. It elevates the purpose of humankind and places the indispensability of Christ and His Church within the comprehensive plan of God’s salvation.

**Practical Theology** – In this study “Practical Theology” does not simply refer to heology in its practical *application* (for example in preaching, pastoral care, diaconal service etc.) In the context of this paper it refers to “theology *in practice*”. This paper intends to go beyond the transmission and application of biblical knowledge and intends to create congenial *reciprocity* between God’s word and how humans grapple with life. The role of the pastor is elevated to spiritually facilitate and mediate the working of the Holy Spirit practically.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PASTORAL CARE GIVING AS PRAXIS

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the theological framework of pastoral care giving. The present state of current pastoral counselling theory and praxis will be explored. Pastoral counselling needs to be seen as part of the pastor's work as he translates the Word of God into practical living of the Christian's belief system. An overview of the broader discipline of pastoral care and counselling will give the pastor a clearer framework within which the care of married couples takes place. Understanding of the practice of pastoral counselling and care, and how it relates to the pastor in practice, will be explored. The aim is to plot and define the relationship between the pastoral counselling function and Practical Theology.

There are various aspects to the role the pastor fulfils in his congregation. These roles are inter alia: leading worship, preaching and teaching. Other than these, there are also less public roles, such as the one of counselling. What makes counselling different from among the many relationships he manages, is that in this interaction, the pastor brings to the session the sum total of his experience, his acquired knowledge of the Scriptures and any other humanistic training which would be ancillary to his function. His Christ-like character is at the forefront as he comes to the aid of the congregant. He<sup>6</sup> also needs to demonstrate in his behaviour a transformed life through his relationship with God and His Holy Spirit, which empowers him; alternatively, the absence of submission to the Holy Spirit severely constricts his effectiveness. It is in the pastor's interest to realize that the obligation shifts to him, to ensure that he is capable and equipped to do what God has called him to do.

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<sup>6</sup> I need to clearly articulate at this point that the researcher wishes to be gender sensitive and thus would for the rest of this paper occasionally refer to the pastor in the male and female gender, since the caring is being done by women and men. When describing the generic role of "pastor" or "shepherd" I shall mostly use the male designation, but then clearly in the generic sense. I am fully aware that the biblical designation of pastor is male, but recognise that this caring function can also be assumed by females, as happens more and more in the practice of the church.

## 2.1 DEFINING PASTORAL CARE

In this section of the research Pastoral Care and Counselling as a sub-discipline of Practical Theology will be defined. Attention will be given to tracing the roots of this discipline as they can be found in the Bible, as well as reflections in secular scholarship. An overall picture, including a short historical survey of the developments in this field over time, will hopefully facilitate better understanding of the unique character and dynamics of the discipline.

It was Theodore Wezel who mentioned that the perennial problem the Church is confronted with is its urge and drive, 'not to become irrelevant' (Clinebell 1984:14). Pastoral care is the *relevance* that the pastor brings to the faith of Christianity in the lives of everyday people.

The pastor's role within this encounter is to provide contextual counsel, relating the relevance of God's Word in the lives of the counsees, in order to make sense of their circumstances. In this role of caring, the pastor is to be seen as a valuable instrument in helping people in their most vulnerable moments. The language of pastoral care is one of care, and the healing of divine and human relationships.

The pastor's contribution to the church as the Body of Christ is to maintain, and even heighten, the aliveness of congregants. The pastor translates the Cross, with all its overt sadness (including the wickedness of humanity toward a sinless saviour), and teaches his congregation to look beyond the tragedy of a crucified Saviour, into the heart of a God who loves them, through Christ. The pastor presents to them the possibility of change, through Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit as Comforter. People who are counselled are gently guided toward this grace found in Christ by the pastor, who through his presence, facilitates the presence of God and visually represents the hands of a loving God to them. The counselling sessions become an avenue where the pastor assists the deepening of the counsees' awareness that they have, through the atoning work of Christ, a newly defined identity and belonging found through Christ. There are times when the counselling session becomes a moment for the proclamation of the Gospel. These moments are vital when unbelievers, who may have sinned, desire a relationship with God to help their healing. The overall objective of God, and then also of Pastoral Counselling and Care, is to facilitate this reconciliation between God and man. In this sense the pastor then becomes an ambassador for Christ.

Pastoral counselling also has a deeper significance in that it offers help and grace to those who are oppressed, or even to the oppressors themselves. Pastoral counselling can offer release from their shame and guilt to those “who are the oppressors” after repentance, and offer restitution to those “who have been oppressed”, and empower them after being helpless and defenceless. The practice of pastoral counselling recognises the assumption that we are living in a “fallen world”, with people whose view of themselves and others has been distorted by values foisted upon them or even socially ingrained by said “fallen” environment.

In defining Pastoral Counselling, we should not only define it biblically, but recognise that it can establish its own identity and stand among the other sciences as a discipline that has its own anthropology, psychology and methodology. It can indeed stand as a discipline that is able to hold its own among many disciplines that would otherwise discount its efficacy.

### **2.1.1 WHAT IS PASTORAL COUNSELLING AND WHAT ARE ITS ROOTS? HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

It was in Thomas Oden’s treatment of the development of pastoral care during the medieval period that the immense contribution that Gregory the Great (540-604 C.E.) made to the study of pastoral care was acknowledged. He states in his paper that “Gregory’s *Pastoral Care* is the most influential book in the history of pastoral tradition’. In his treatment of Gregory’s writing in *Pastoral Care*, he makes some observations that are worth mentioning. Beside the one on one dialogue which occurs between pastor and congregant, there is the other part of his pastoral duty, and that is public speaking, which should be carefully looked at. He mentions that within this realm, the pastor needs to be especially aware that the members of his audience have ‘various needs, ploys, and passions’” (Oden 1984:1).

Gerkin agrees that Pastoral Care indeed has an impressive history: ‘Pastoral care did not spring out from the shallow soil of recent experience. Rather, it has a long history; thus we have many ancestors who have shaped for us the way we approach the care of person’ (1997:23). He states that pastoral counselling has a rich history and that, ‘our most reliable source regarding the beginnings of pastoral care is of course the Bible’. From this vantage point, he lifts up the specific means by which God cared for His people, and this is evident in the designation of roles He assigned to those caring for them. He points out that a ‘custom was established that three classes of leaders emerged, the priests, a hereditary class that had particular responsibility for worship and ceremonial life; the

prophets, who spoke for Yahweh in relation to moral issues, sometimes rebuking the community and its stated political leaders; and the wise men and women who offered counsel of all sorts concerning issues of the good life and personal conduct' (1997:23). Gerkin emphasises that although it is difficult to specify to which group we can trace our ancestry, each of these groups were intrinsically involved with the discipline and care of Yahweh's people. It is important to note that the span of their influence and responsibility included the individual as well as the community as a whole. 'Thus our narrative approach points us toward recognition that in the long story of the people of God the metaphor of care has multiple origins. Its meaning embraces many roles within the historic community and varying emphases, which from time to time have asserted themselves as primary for the care of God's people in particular situations' (Gerkin 1997:23). He makes a distinctive observation which could easily be missed with just a cursory study, and mentions that if pastors only saw themselves as leaders of worship, then they would more closely be identified with the 'Israelite priests as their spiritual ancestors' (1997:24).

In Gerkin's historical overview of the origins of pastoral counselling and care, he makes some valuable observations as he scans the periods of the church within which this discipline developed. It is valuable for the pastor to see that as history unfolded, so too, the methods of pastoral care were put under the spotlight. He makes it clear that 'many of the current issues and problems of the discipline of pastoral care have historical roots' (Gerkin 1997:28).

Gerkin proceeds to highlight the periods in Christian history and how the pressures from society and inside the church caused it to have the character it currently has in its praxis. It is important for the pastor to have a historical overview of the historical context within which pastoral care has developed. The advantage of this overview is that it places the major praxis under the spotlight, and also allows the pastor to see where he as pastor is in his current praxis, and how this developed into what we currently have.

What follows is a brief summary of the afore-mentioned periods, tracing aspects of the history pertaining to pastoral care (Gerkin 1997:28-51):<sup>7</sup>

The first period of importance to highlight is the *early or 'primitive' Church*. What stands out from this period is the overwhelming anticipation and preoccupation with the imminent *parousia*. As time went by, this urgency to keep the Church pure and uncontaminated from surrounding cultures

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<sup>7</sup> The historical development of pastoral care is divided into 9 distinct periods of history by Gerkin.

changed into a reduction of a mystical expectation far into the future rather than an urgent immediate reality. The emphasis fell more and more on keeping the story alive and open to a future, and initiating people into the faith, while straining under an increasingly secular world.

In the second period, the *Age of Persecutions*, Gerkin sketches the life of a Church which tried to remain distinct amidst a very hostile culture, which eventually turned on it. The dominant concern for the pastor amidst this tumultuous uncertainty was the “care and protection of the community” (29). The overwhelming preoccupation was to keep the flock faithful by disciplining those who ventured off. It is during this time that Greek thought became more pronounced, especially in its language usage and practices. The word *metanoia* (repentance) and *exomologesis* (confession) became part of the Church vocabulary especially connected to discipline. It became more pronounced in the writings of Tertullian (160-220) as he developed the concept of confession and repentance as pastoral requirements that made reconciliation possible. He held that any member be shunned after being rebuked publicly in the congregation. “Privately the offender was counselled to confess his sins in the presence of the congregation (*exomologesis*).” (30) The congregant was also banned from attending worship with the community and also prohibited from partaking of the Eucharist. Offenders could only be reinstated after a stated period of penance. The pastoral role was preoccupied with this disciplinary role that developed into an elaborate system that was finally challenged in the time of the Reformation.

The *Imperial Church after Constantine* is the third period distinguished. In this period, Gerkin mentions that Christendom acted as the unifying factor behind the uniting of the Roman Empire under Constantine. The Church was suddenly elevated from caring for an isolated community, to now caring for society as a whole. Liturgical practices took on more pomp and ceremony. It was in this period that the greatest enculturation of secular thought was evident in the writings on Christian pastoral and religious practices. Although they remained faithful to the wisdom literature, contextual wisdom was continually becoming part of the biblically based wisdom. It was during this period that the chief occupation of the pastor became the conduct of public worship, and the presenting of the Church with its rituals. Anointing with holy oil became part of the routine. The role of pastors changed, not only to be responsible for their own parishioners, but also for the broader community as well. We can clearly see as this history is unpacked that “context both influences our understanding of the caring aspects of the church’s ministry and becomes itself an object of the church’s caring ministry” (35).

The fourth period was the *fall of the Roman Empire*, and the resultant spread of Christianity across Europe. At the time of the fall of Rome, the Church already formed part of the Empire. The movement was in “basically two directions: toward the establishment of an elite class that represented the continuation of classical Roman civilisation, and toward the indoctrination of ordinary folk in Christian descriptions of life and prescriptions for their troubles in life” (38). It was in this period that Gregory the Great wrote his Pastoral Care.

The fifth period treated by Gerkin is the *Middle Ages*. It was in this period that the analogy of pastor, being portrayed as the “physician of the spirit,” and the medical doctor, being the “physician of the body,” began (40). There arose what is known as the Celtic Penitential Manuals, which, according to John McNeil were “poorly written and often wretchedly copied.” These lists of sins, and of penalties, “mark them as products, no less than correctors, of a primitive society” (40). In this period, Francis of Assisi emerged and established the order of the Benedictine monks. He was favoured for his humility and “his administration of penance was as often as not designed to humble the proud and invite other into his lifestyle of selfless service rather than to punish wrongdoing” (41). His pastoral care became a model of life for ordinary people.

The sixth period is the *period of the Reformation*. One can see that the Church, through Martin Luther, responds to the abuse of the poor by criticising the Church very sharply. On the other side, sadly, the medieval Catholic Church would use the practice of Penance, which was originally designed to free believers, to now fleece the Church through the system of Indulgences. Luther responded to the needs of the poor, and in his letter to Frederick of Saxony, emphasised his concern for them. In this letter he also expressed that the suffering of the people was not only of concern for the priest, but should also be of concern for all Christians. In this, we see him emphasising the “priesthood of all believers” (42).

The notion that Luther introduced was a great call to the church of his time, allowing people to see that they were all part of God’s plan, and that his role was not just the exclusive role of the pastor. The Reformation heralded a renewed look at pastoral care. Even though Luther is predominantly spoken of in this period, he was not the only one who helped shape this renewed view on pastoral care. Men like Martin Bucer and John Calvin also contributed to pastoral care variations and renewals. Calvin, however, was “more institutionally prescriptive and systematic in his efforts to provide avenues of reconciliation to God and neighbour for his followers” (42). His contribution also emphasised that the individual’s salvation was dependent on his own individual faith in God.

This new view of accessibility to God would mark a liberating way for people who had previously felt imprisoned by professional clergy. They could now feel free, and find God to be accessible.

The seventh period is the *period of Enlightenment*, which marked the beginnings of Modernity. This age marked the rise of Secularism, and a belief that life could be understood without speaking to God. This period marked the basic trust in human rationality and confidence in human learning which leaned on trusting empirical methods to discern truth. Gerkin mentions that this period pioneered the quest for proofs for the existence of God. “The contest between revealed theology and empirical methods began” (45).

This marked a more scientific, “practical” mode of operation in administering pastoral care. The most influential writer of that time was Richard Baxter, an English Presbyterian pastor who published *The Reformed Pastor* in 1656. His book was focussed on two primary concerns: sustaining people through their difficulties and pitfalls of earthly life in their quest for eternal salvation, and upholding personal morality. His efforts were systematic, and included his once a year pastoral visit. He espoused three fundamental purposes: to know the spiritual health of his people; to reveal to people the source of their true happiness, their chief good; and to provide them with the proper means to attain this true happiness. He also practiced great care in shepherding the sick and dying. Pastoral care for Baxter was also the fundamental way to care for the moral life of his people (Baxter 1656:37). Richard Baxter provided a model for taking care of the moral and ethical life of members of a congregation.

The eighth period is the *Age of Voluntarism and Religious Privatism*. This period, marked by Friedrich Schleiermacher, who, as the theological voice of the nineteenth century, “advocated a separation of social affairs into public and private spheres and placed the life of faith and religious practice within the private sphere” (47). This period witnessed the occurrence of voluntarism in the life of the Church and thus, of religious privatism. The Church moved away from official arbiter of society, to a private community of faith made up of volunteers. The Church shifted from control of public life, to the redefining of the pastor’s task as nurturing the life and belief of those believers under his care. The primary purpose of pastoral care became the fostering of the “culture of self.” This heralded the way for the development of psychological sciences. The interest in Psychology goes back to John Chrysostom, when he expressed an interest in the Greek Stoics. The interest in Psychology must not be seen as a modern innovation, but rather as a natural outgrowth of the turn toward the privatization of religion.

By the end of the *19th century*, two major changes took place: the practicing of the pastoral presence, and the change in style of congregational life. The second of these changed the Church into a parlour for social activities. “Church facilities were built for Sunday school concerts, church socials, women’s meetings, youth groups, boy’s brigades, girl’s guides, singing classes, reforming societies, and a host of other organizations and activities” (50). Thus, in the “*Modern Era*”, the role of pastoral leadership and the individual care work of the pastor are being placed in the hands of the ordained pastor. The developments into the 20th century will be dealt with in more detail as contemporary discussions in this thesis.

## **2.1.2 CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ON PASTORAL CARE AND PSYCHOLOGY**

Roger F. Hurding, in the introduction to his book *Roots and Shoots*, mentions that the origins of pastoral care lie deeply rooted in the ‘soil of God’s calling, its trunk and branches growing in obedience to Christ and its life vitalised by the Spirit’ (Hurding 1985:16). He says there have been times that the tree of pastoral counselling has not always been strong and at these times other influences have sapped the inner strength of the tree. ‘Apart from inner weakness due to distortions of biblical perspectives and quenching of the spirit, outside influences have at certain periods threatened to sap the vitality from Christian caring’ (Hurding 1985:16). The threatening influences are generally seen as coming from outside but, as Hurding correctly observes, Christendom is at times its own worst enemy and does more harm to its own witness under the guise of scholarship. It is like having an enemy inside the camp.

Hurding further observes that the tree of pastoral counselling has been influenced by surrounding ideologies. He says, ‘Whether the influence is baleful, neutral or even companionable, it is perhaps inevitable that the nature and quality of the Church’s pastoral care is affected to some extent by surrounding ideologies’ (Hurding 1985:17). In his introduction Hurding further quotes from Clebsch and Jaekle, who said that pastoral care has ‘always utilized current psychologies’ and that ‘it produces no psychology of its own’ (Hurding 1985:19).

Louw defines the nature of pastoral counselling as the caring for the soul. He uses the words *cura animarum*, which is the classical formulation of the fact that humankind is not just functioning in an environment with economic, physical and material problems; the human being also functions as a soul with spiritual needs. He acknowledges that the rise of Psychology as a scientific discipline has been putting pastoral counselling under pressure (Louw 1998:1). The pressure on the part of

pastoral counselling would be to translate the Gospel into a workable model that can offer answers to a world in crisis. Louw makes it clear that the challenge is essentially a hermeneutical one. ‘What is at stake is the communication of the Gospel in terms of life experiences of human souls and vice versa’ (1998:1). Man’s relationships need to be considered not only as an individual, but also as a “fallen” human being who has been given grace by God, and who has been enabled not merely to remain in a helpless state, but to transcend this by becoming a child of God through Christ; someone who has been redeemed by his Creator.

Public speaking is often not recognised as an important part of a pastor’s functions, as it may be seen as an activity which does not require much skill. The ability to preach effectively is very important, as it deals with an entire congregation at an appointed time, with a specific message from the Bible. In Gregory’s *Pastoral Care*, it is argued that many people come to the worship assembly with expectations that need to be met. The pastor should be keenly aware that he is to be the conduit for God, to facilitate dialogue with God’s people. The content of his messages should include lessons valuable to life.

“Humility is to be preached to the proud in a way not to increase fear in the timorous, and confidence infused into the timorous, as not to encourage the unbridled impetuosity in the proud. The idle and the remiss are to be exhorted to zeal for good deeds, but in a way not to increase the unrestraint of intemperate action in the impetuous. Moderation is to be imposed on the impetuous without producing a sense of listless security in the idle. Anger is to be banished from the impatient, but so as not to add to the carelessness of the remiss and easy-going. The remiss should be fired with zeal in such a manner as not to set the wrathful ablaze’ (Oden 1984:1).

It is against this background, recognising the tension between biblical and humanistic ideas and influences, that pastoral counselling needs to assert itself. The impression is created that these neighbouring disciplines have seemingly overtaken pastoral care in meeting the needs of people. Brister speaks of a minister needing to be able to define the nature of persons biblically. He says, ‘The Christian minister needs to define a biblical anthropology before fully exploring various other views of personality. In light of their specialized interests and education, ministers should be disciplinary (theological) prior to becoming interdisciplinary (perspectival) in dealing with persons’ (Brister 1992:59). It is against this perspective that one finds value in Hurding’s observation that pastoral care has a psychology and a contribution of its own. ‘This is no obscure or fanciful system of psychology but is a psychology that is rooted deeply in the way God has made us’ (Hurding

1985:19). He goes on challenging his reader not to reject the neighbouring disciplines outright, but to learn to understand them and to ‘reject what is false, to discern where God speaks through them and to grasp once more the wonder and distinctiveness of his call to give ourselves gladly in caring for our fellow human beings’ (Hurding 1985:19).

### 2.1.3 THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING

Louw says that counselling is about dialogue and communication (1998:256). What determines the unique character descriptive of the care that pastoral counselling offer?

Various models exist in which the *Kerygmatic* model of Barth is followed. In general, this model is seen as a “homiletic event.” ‘The reaction has been to transform the encounter into most models focussing on the concepts of acceptance and empathy’ (1998:257). Louw summarises Estadt, who says that ‘the idea is to move away from a directive model of counselling, which provides answers towards a non-directive model of counselling, which concentrates on insight and feeling’ (257). Keywords in a Psychologically orientated model include: understanding, clarification, acceptance, mutuality, freedom, responsibility, and inner resources. These concepts have less to do with directives and instruction than with the personal needs and emotions of the person being counselled. The Empathetic approach, according to Louw, is when the pastor does not directly lead the counselee into an encounter with God, but rather they grow together so that this confrontation develops naturally and spontaneously (257).

Pastoral counselling’s task is to facilitate an encounter with God and His will for the counselee’s life. For Louw there are four critical factors that need attention when positioning pastoral counselling theologically (1998:258-259).

- 1) The Word and the Spirit are the major factors in pastoral counselling, thereby establishing the dialogue as a *trialogue*.
- 2) Pastoral counselling is essentially a *hermeneutical process* of interpreting and understanding the Christian faith within human contexts.
- 3) The *covenantal character* of the communication between God and humankind implies that parishioners are being approached by the pastor in terms of *grace and love (agape)*.

4) A pastoral diagnosis in counselling deals with a very specific issue: the association between God images, faith development and growth (maturity). Pastoral care assesses the value of faith in a *particular human quest for meaning*.

What makes Louw's views so valuable is that he sees the pastor with the counselee in relation to the Word of God, and hence the pastor acts as facilitator in engaging God in this process, through that which is written. It gives an external dimension to the engagement, additional to that of just the pastor with the counselee. The assumption is that God's Word is inhabited by the Spirit of God, and is as such, life giving. An acknowledgement and awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit which inhabits the pastor, and is part of the counselling event, is vital to the process of counselling. It not only enhances the counselling session, but elevates it to an awareness that God is in their midst and is part of the entire process.

The counselling event is a hermeneutic event, since it is the pastor's role to make sense of the counselee's predicament in light of Scripture. It is an act of interpretation which gives hope and promise to the counselee. This interpretive role cannot be overstated, as the inability of the pastor to be able to do this could just exacerbate the problem the counselee may have, and may even make him or her see God as being against them. The truth is that the pastor functions in a "fallen" world with "fallen" people who need to see that God, although He condemns sin, does not condemn humankind and leave them helpless, to perish. Even at "the fall", God showed His intent to never leave humankind, even though they had sinned. God, through His revealed Word, and its narrative style of writing, offers many examples of the lives of people who have experienced extreme difficulties, and who still managed to find hope in God, the Creator of Earth.

The covenantal nature of God's relationship with the parishioner is crucial in the session as the counselee needs to know, and be reminded, that he has been offered grace through Christ and the Cross. Although he may feel destroyed by his challenges, he can change that feeling to one of being empowered. This can be achieved by the knowledge of a God, who through Christ has changed his helplessness into hope, and now, after stepping into that relationship, is a part of the covenant written in His blood. This covenant contains the promises that God will always be there for them and that the counselee need never fear abandonment. The redemptive significance of Christ is a critical part of the session, since although the negative emotion resultant of sin is acknowledged; the counsellor/pastor points the counselee to the One who can make the difference in his life. Although people have sinned, and sin separates them from God, in the same way, Christ has come to do what

is impossible for man, and that is to save the soul of man. Inasmuch as God is not slow to punish sin, He is also a gracious God, who, through Christ, has chosen sides, not to destroy His creation, but to save it.

These factors of hope concerning the nature of the relationship with God need to be in the forefront of the counsellor's mind. This knowledge enables the Holy Spirit to be introduced into the dialogue as being present, and to enter into discussion. When the Spirit's presence is acknowledged, the nature of this intervention or dialogue, which has everything to do with God and His people, is altered by the pastor, and the session changes into a triologue. The acknowledgment and awareness that God is present in difficult circumstances in their lives, is important for the pastor and the counselee to bear in mind as it removes the weight of having to deal with these difficulties alone. The counsellor then acts as a facilitator of God's presence and allows God's strength, which works in both of them, to do its work. The increased dependence on the resident divinity within redeemed humankind elevates the session, and transforms it from an emotionally debilitating moment into a deeply reverent moment in the presence of God.

The assessment parameters for the pastor that Louw offers are interesting, as he mentions three areas: 'God images, faith development and maturity' (Louw 1998:259). These parameters help focus the pastor on specific areas to work on during the session. Migliore agrees with Louw here. 'The term "growth" must be used with care in reference to the Christian life. Any suggestion of an undisturbed process of development or a neatly ordered sequence of stages should be avoided. There is, to be sure, real movement in Christian life, but it is neither quantifiable nor predictable' (Migliore 2004:240). He further adds that, 'If we respect the freedom of God's grace and the limitless disguises that sin assumes, we will avoid oversimplification in our portrayals of the process of growth in Christian life. Yet we will also insist that, in the environment of the Spirit of God who is at work in the Christian community, real growth in Christian faith, love, and hope does occur' (Migliore 2004:241). The pastor primarily works with the counselee's problem, as well as the context of his life in relation to God. The counselees' view of God is of cardinal importance as an erroneous view of God could influence and distort their ability to see themselves as being God's children in this "fallen" world. The dialogical processes in the session need to be theologically answered thus all the more reason for the pastor to assess the counselees' personal trust development in relation to their faith and knowledge of who God is.

The humanity of all counselees needs to be at the forefront of the mind of the counsellor so that he treats them not as perfect beings, but as people who are in the process of being transformed into God's image. In any counselling encounter, the pastor needs to emit the very gentle character of Christ as He worked with sinners while He was on earth. Through God's Spirit, Who, though invisible indwells the person, the pastor enters into a relationship which Louw calls the *communio sanctorum*, reflecting the gentle nature of Christ visibly as God (Louw 1998:261). The role of the Holy Spirit is crucial to the relationship in the counselling environment, as He is the ultimate Counsellor.

The pastor needs to be able to assess the counselees' view of God correctly, and also how the counselee's faith has developed. The pastor needs to be able to see how counselees react to the situations they find themselves in, as this will be a good indicator of how strong or weak their faith is. The trials which the counselees face may be designed by God to build their character, in order for them to become more resilient and learn how to persevere. The pastor needs to assess whether the counselees adopt an infantile response, which casts blame on God and others, in favour of an obedience to God's counsel and application of His will to their life, which would enable them to proceed in trust and obedience to God and His Will. The latter response may include that the counselees repent of certain behaviours and realises that they need to take responsibility for their present condition, and appreciate that with God's help, trials can be overcome. We accept that we live in a "fallen" world where it is easy to become a victim of circumstances not of our own doing, but through Christ, the pastor can present a victorious aspect absent in the life of the counselee. The Counselees can be shown how to see themselves as a victor, and not a victim, through Christ who strengthens them.

Benner (1992:14-15) regards pastoral counselling as an activity which takes place within the broader context of Pastoral Ministry and Pastoral Care. 'While pastoral ministry is broader than pastoral care, so too is pastoral care broader than pastoral counselling. To attempt to reduce all pastoral care to counselling is to fail to recognize both the breadth of pastoral care as well as the distinctive nature of counselling' (Louw 1998:260).

Louw would broaden this concept to mean that this type of counselling specifically embraces and delineates the relationship between pastor and parishioner within the context of the communion sanctorum. The principles which undergird pastoral counselling are also applicable to all other forms of Christian counselling (1998:260).

The terms “counselling” and “conversation” are closely connected, making it difficult to distinguish between the two. 'Conversation' can be used to describe the more general event of communication and pastoral encounter, while 'counselling' refers to the specific procedures, responses and methods that are applied in a more structured form of communication within a therapeutic situation. 'Counselling' thus involves a more professional approach, and applies communication skills in order to deal with specific problems in a more effective manner. 'Counselling' is a more technical term when used with regard to change and therapy (Louw: 1998:261).

#### **2.1.4 WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING?**

We need to acknowledge that pastoral counselling occurs within the context of the church primarily. When we look at pastoral counselling, we need to be careful not to define it too narrowly or too widely. It is fair to assume that the counselee would be a part of a body of believers who worship God together. The counselling relationship is not exclusively with the pastor solely as leader of the congregation, but more importantly, it is also with the other congregants who form part of the fellowship. The church is fundamentally about relationships, and these relationships are an important aspect to the overall effectiveness of the counselling sessions.

The function of pastoral counselling according to Clebsch and Jaekle (Clinebell 1984: 42-43) in their survey of four centuries of pastoral care, can be reduced to, firstly: *healing* - a pastoral function which aims at overcoming impairment by restoring the person to wholeness and by leading him to advance beyond his previous condition; secondly: *sustaining* - to help the person to endure and transcend the present circumstances; thirdly: *guiding* - to guide the person by offering alternative choices and so enable him to make sensible choices amidst his feeling of perplexity; and, fourthly: *reconciling* - in this the pastor seeks to re-establish broken relationships between humankind and God. In addition to this model, Clinebell adds the aspect of nurturing the person, enabling him to develop his God given abilities through all “its valleys and peaks, and plateaus” of his life (Clinebell 1984:43).

For Margaret Cornfield the aim of counselling is to cultivate wholeness and restoration (1998:21). She suggests that the person being treated be seen as part of a larger community; the person functions as a father, a mother, or any other type of relative depending on the relationships they find themselves in (1998:17-21). The unique advantage of being a pastoral counsellor is being acutely aware of the relationships in which people function. The treatment of the problem is then

not only done for the benefit of the individuals, but that treatment is given within the context of the broader relationships as well. She makes mention of the power of communal living, and even communal healing, referring to the power of groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. She says that people function in community, and the reason one needs to be aware of this is that people do better when their changed behaviour is validated by others during their recovery, “Religious communities do not exist as an end in themselves, they are created to respond to a call. Faithfulness to the call comes first. Community follows” (Cornfield 1998:17).

According to Clinebell, there are *six dimensions of wholeness* (Clinebell 1984:51-55).

The first one is seated in the fact that “the Hebrew understanding of person was essentially non dualistic” (51). This involves the whole person, who should be seen as a whole: body, mind and spirit *in community*. The notion that the human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit raises the way we view the human body to a higher level other than just as a set of organs which function together biologically to sustain life and all its complexities. It is this new Godly inhabitant, the Holy Spirit, who ensures that the body is realigned in its aim to “glorify God in the body”. The human body, which is seen as fallible and transient, it is now regarded as a vessel which not only has a Divine inhabitant, but now also has a divine purpose. The whole body then becomes an instrument of righteousness rather than just a vessel deemed to be used for mundane natural functions. The human body is referred to as a place of worship, and in light of man’s sinfulness and the biblical position of the redeemed man, it is also elevated to that of divinity.

The second dimension that is raised by Clinebell is referred to in Mark 12:30. Jesus exhorts the people to love God with “all their mind”. Clinebell places this exhortation in a modern Psychological context and emphasises the importance of “the cognitive-intellectual as well as the emotional and spiritual aspects of our minds” (53). He mentions that this would imply for the Christian that he needs to engage God, with the aim of working toward the “continuing unfolding of one’s mental and emotional potentialities through lifelong learning” (53).

Relational wholeness is the third dimension, and is also a persistent motif in the Bible. In his treatment of this aspect, Clinebell mentions that wholeness in the context of Scripture has many aspects and speaks of a community whose aim it is to maintain and attain wholeness.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In the Hebrew Old Testament the concept referred to is “Shalom” and in Greek in the New Testament it is “Koinonia.” “Shalom” means “sound or healthy space (as well as peace) is nurtured in a *shalom* community.” (53) It is interesting to see that this concept that is raised by Clinebell is endorsed by a careful reading of the Old Testament specifically Gen

Ecological wholeness is the fourth dimension proposed by Clinebell (53). This notion has biblical roots, and is traceable in the Genesis account where we find the “mythic wisdom in the first of the two creations stories of Genesis” (53). The idea of stewardship is the overriding sentiment in the Creation story of Genesis, which states that humankind is entrusted by God to superintend His creation. Man is to manage it and ensure its multiplication and expansion.

The fifth dimension is the notion of liberation where God is evident and engaging His people through the message of the prophets, who proclaim freedom to God’s people. Here Clinebell refers to the ways “in which our relation to institutions stimulate or stymie the development of our potentialities” (54). This liberation notion is again reiterated by Jesus in John 8:32. In the discussion on this passage and this notion of liberation, Clinebell refers to the practice of mankind aiming to nurture rather than negate human wholeness (54).

Spiritual wholeness is the sixth dimension with which Clinebell caps his treatment of these dimensions, and states that “wholeness is like life, is a gift of the creating spirit of the universe” (55). It is at the core of God’s aim to restore not only man, but even His “fallen” world and recreate it. He points out that in Romans 8:19, Paul makes mention that even nature groans as it earnestly awaits the coming of the Christ to be liberated. With this renewed view of nature being in a state that it also eagerly awaiting liberation, one cannot but wonder what nature would look like in this liberated state. When one transfers this notion to man, then, of necessity, we have to agree that man is not functioning at his full potential. The role of the counsellor then becomes a challenging one when humankind is seen anew under a perspective of “we have a lot going for us when we seek to facilitate wholeness in ourselves and others! We are never alone in the development of the full image of God within persons” (55).

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42:23. Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on Gen 43:23 say that “The steward, who was initiated into Joseph's plans, replied in a pacifying tone, “Peace be to you (שְׁלוֹם לָכֶם) is not a form of salutation here, but of encouragement, as in Jdg. 6:23): *fear not; your God and the God of your father has given you a treasure in your sacks; your money came to me;*” and at the same time, to banish all their fear, he brought Simeon out to them. He then conducted them into Joseph’s house, and received them in Oriental fashion as the guests of his lord.” (Keil and Delitzsch 2009:305) The entire story and thrust of this narrative is restorative and reciprocal in people sharing a safe space. Although traditionally only seen as a greeting it also carries with it the profound notion of goodwill and mutual sharing of affection and wholeness.

## 2.2 TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING

A clearly articulated theology needs to be stated that is completely different to the Humanistic Sciences. This theology needs, of necessity, to be biblically based, and be able to provide the theological framework for the pastor in designing his therapeutic approach to the presented problem. This theology becomes his matrix and frame of reference and together with his theology and biblical anthropology and knowing the relationship between the two disciplines, he will be able to see his work clearly. Such an approach also means that Practical Theology is not simply an “application” of theoretical insights of “real” theology: it is theology *in practice*; it assumes a circular movement between theory and praxis, both inter-twined in grappling with human quests for meaning in real life.

### 2.2.1 THE NEED FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON PASTORAL COUNSELLING

When one’s reading and definitions of pastoral counselling has been limited to Crabb, and one studies the whole array of material that is available, one soon starts to develop a deep appreciation for the desire to holistically make sense of our world. The question then to be asked is, “What then is Practical Theology?” It is the role of Practical Theology to find innovative ways for the Church to engage the problems the congregation is facing. According to Thomas Groome, this is the standard paradigm for training ministers. “We begin with heavy doses of theology’s theoretical disciplines (systematics, church history, scripture studies, etc.) and then tag on, almost as an afterthought, some training in pastoral skills in order to apply this theory to practice. Such a paradigm “presumes a one-way relationship between theory and practice with theory always the point of departure; theory is something from ‘outside’ to be applied and practice something to receive it” (Groome 1987:57). It would seem that there is recognition that this vital role within the task of spiritual formation for the congregant requires that the pastor be more adept with Practical Theology. Practical Theology then needs to really respond to the needs of God’s creation. “Our serene theories with their grand visions of life too often deny to knowledge any origin in the practical difficulties of life, but rather seek to transcend these difficulties into a vision of Being that is pristine and unaffected by human affairs” (Veling 2005:7). Although Practical Theology, from which Pastoral Theology derives, and so too Systematic Theology stems, strive to be systematic, we soon come to realise that life is not at all systematic. “A religious discourse with some chance of being honest will not move too far from the particular, with all its irresolution and resistance to systematizing: it will be trying to give shape to

that response to the particular that is least invasive of its solid historical otherness and that is also rooted in the conviction that God is to be sought and listened to in all occasions” (Williams 2000:xii). Karl Rahner summarises Practical Theology as follows: “Practical theology is that theological discipline which is concerned with the Church’s self-actualization here and now – both that which is and that which ought to be. This it does by means of Theological illumination of the particular situation in which the Church must realize itself in all its dimensions...Everything is its subject-matter” (Rahner 1972:104).

A definition for theology stated by Millard Erickson suggests that theology is the study of “...that discipline which strives to give a comprehensive definition of doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily on the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to life” (Enns 2008:170). Enns (2008) states that Practical Theology can be used, and is relevant to everyday concerns. One seminary describes its Practical Theology Program as “being dedicated to the practical application of theological insights” and that it “generally includes the sub-disciplines of pastoral theology, homiletics, and Christian education, among others” (170). The above author claims that “future Christian leaders need to be equipped not only with theological knowledge but also with the necessary professional skills to minister effectively in the modern world. Often these programs use preaching, Christian education, and counselling and clinical programs to provide opportunities to equip and prepare future Christian leaders” (Enns 2008:149). Out of the study of theology comes a number of ideas put forth by Erickson, namely that theology is biblical, utilizing the tools and methods of biblical research (as well as employing insights from other areas of truth); that theology is systematic, drawing on the entirety of Scripture and relating the various portions to one another; that theology is relevant to culture and learning, drawing from Cosmology, Psychology, and Philosophy of History; that theology must be contemporary, relating God’s truth to the questions and challenges of today; and finally, that theology must be practical, not merely declaring objective doctrine, but relating to life itself (Enns 2008:149).

Pastoral Counselling as a discipline finds itself nestled in the arena of Practical Theology. According to Louw, pastoral counselling addresses the following issues (1998:4):

*Communication and interpretation/understanding:* Practical Theology is concerned with the dialogue and encounter between God and human beings. Salvation must be understood and

interpreted in terms of human context and vice versa, the human context must be understood in terms of the Scriptural text. This requires a hermeneutical approach.

*Realisation and action:* Practical Theology concerns itself with the effect salvation has on a person's life, and assisting with the process of the development of a life of faith. A 'doing' theology, as a concrete expression of one's Christian faith, has the task of generating meaning in life. The importance of the interaction between theory and practice in a study of Practical Theology is cardinal.

*Liberation and transformation:* Practical Theology is also concerned with meaningful change and purposeful transformation. Salvation implies, and therefore imposes, radical change through Christ. Both salvation and justice are important ingredients of the eschatological interpretation of our being human, that is, our humanity being assessed in terms of grace and reconciliation.

The transformation of the person, and a closer look at the development of a person's faith, are at the core of pastoral counselling. In the development of the process of transformation, Louw offers a process by which pastoral counselling can be evaluated (Louw 1998:5). He maintains that one could measure the process of transformation, and even assess it in terms of maturity in Christ, which is the aim of the Spirit. He also maintains that through the Gospel, the person is liberated from the constricting grasp of sin, which clouds his mind, but after the process of liberation has been achieved through Christ, the person then moves on in transformation toward the character of Christ (Louw 1998:5).

Louw emphatically recognises the need to connect the theological notions of Christology and Pneumatology (Louw 1998:5). The distinct nature of pastoral care includes the presence of God in the world and among humanity. The Holy Spirit acts as a consoling agent in man, and has his highest interest at heart, and that is the restoration of God's image in humankind. This recognition of the Holy Spirit's presence gives the nature of pastoral counselling a renewed pneumatological emphasis.

Gerkin argues that the pastor needs to embrace a "more holistic understanding of ministry, grounded in a narrative, hermeneutical approach to pastoral care theory which requires that we lay a broader ancestral claim than simply that of wisdom tradition and its earliest practitioners" (1997:24). He makes it clear that the scope of pastoral care is broader than just the care of human

beings, and even reaches beyond them, to the care of that which sustains humanity, which is the earth itself. God's caring nature is displayed in the "prophetic acts of leadership and confrontation with the implications of the will and purpose of God for the mutual care of His people, indeed for the care of all human affairs and for the earth itself" (Gerkin 1997:24). The manifestation of the metaphor of pastoral leadership embraces the conviction that part of its task is to establish and return to God's purpose which is the care of humanity and further extends to include the care for all of nature.

Clinebell claims that the practice of pastoral counselling and care has a rich biblical background. "In counselling, the biblical truths are illuminated by being applied and tested in the arena of human struggles and growth! It is in this sense that pastoral care and counselling are ways of doing theology!" (Clinebell 1984:50). He says that it should not surprise one when a rich Hebrew-Christian heritage comes alive in pastoral counselling relationships. The roots of pastoral counselling and care, according to Clinebell, are found in Scripture. In his treatment of the roots of pastoral counselling and care, he emphasises that it is not only objectively seen in the written Word, but also in the lives of human beings, as those eternal truths are manifest. Clinebell quotes from his mentor David Roberts who observes, "Whatever is valid in Christ's disclosure of God is universally operative in human life, and therefore is verifiable within experience" (Clinebell 1984:50).

Clinebell further gives reasons why it is important to integrate Biblical truths within the practice of this ministry (Clinebell 1984:50-51).

Firstly, the Bible is the wellspring of Western spiritual tradition, and the value of keeping in touch with it, can help keep one rooted in its wholeness-nurturing truths.

Secondly, the pastor needs to be in constant dialogue with biblical insights, and this engagement can generate attitudes and awareness in the caring person that facilitate both healing and growth.

Thirdly, in working with people from different backgrounds, archetypal images can be used as instruments of creative transformation. Living biblical images, stories and metaphors are right-brain ways of communicating profound truths about life. These can be valuable for people who have been disempowered.

Fourthly, biblical wisdom about the nature of wholeness is needed to critique, correct and enrich contemporary psychological understanding of wholeness. In several important respects, there is a deeper, more realistic understanding of wholeness in the Bible than in humanistic Psychology.

Clinebell is unapologetic about the fact that he rates the impact which biblical truths can make above that of Humanistic Psychology. He maintains that although Humanistic disciplines are valuable, they do not overshadow the biblical view of man and God's ability, through His Holy Spirit, to empower human beings to reach into the lives of others and help them (Clinebell 1984:51).

In terms of cementing his position, he makes a case for the fact that the concept of wholeness is the biblical foundation for pastoral counselling. He emphasises that the "Biblical record emphasises repeatedly the remarkable potentialities of us as human beings" (Clinebell 1984:51). He refers to Psalm 8:5, which states that man is "little less than God". He also refers to the Creation Story, where man is made in the Image of God (Clinebell 1984:51).

For Clinebell, it is due to this fact that man needs to develop his unique personhood into the likeness of the Divine (1984:51). In the life story of Jesus, His Messianic message aims to give man life, and give it to the full. Referring to John 10:10, Clinebell states, "The life-long task of discovering and developing one's unique possibilities is the means by which the image of God flowers and the abundant life is actualized" (51). The images and potentialities found in the Bible sketch an image for the counselees that they have been born with the innate image of God resident in them, and that sin has distorted that image. The Image of God becomes the benchmark of the pastor. His role as pastor is intent on helping restore humankind back to the original image of God (Louw 1998:343).

One must be very careful here not to develop a Christocentric Theology which speaks of God, through Christ, providing salvation to mankind *as an end*. Furthermore, the pastoral theology needs to take into consideration that after restoration of humankind to God through Christ, transformation is facilitated by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The essence of inhabitation by the Spirit is highlighted by the pastor to emphasise to the counselees the desire of God to have a relationship with them and His whole creation.

*A Trinitarian Theology* within pastoral counselling and care, with an understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit within this reconciliation dynamic, is important to be explored. The need exists within pastoral theology to explore, amidst the despair of humankind - within its “fallen” state - a Theology of Hope, which gives human beings an hope-giving eschatological aspect to their lives. The notion that God as Creator, amidst the “fallen” world, does not stand aloof as it crumbles and implodes upon itself, but is intimately involved in its reconstruction and transformation, is crucial for such a Theology of Hope. Pastoral theology not only deals with the “fallen” world in its progressive fragmentation, but also espouses an eschatology which is beyond this life.

The Theology of Wholeness needs to be looked at as the intent of God the Creator, Who through His son Jesus’ salvation role, and through the presence of the Holy Spirit, has as its focus the restoration of mankind to the image of God. Clinebell also makes mention of this aspect of God and speaks of liberation theology to be, “Latin American, African, black, and feminist theology-emphasises that God is understood as liberator in both Old and New Testaments” (Clinebell 1984:54).

This theology cannot ignore the impact of God’s justice, especially within the South African context, when it comes to acknowledging that fundamental wrongs have been perpetrated, and that a process of how this ought to be dealt with theologically needs to be formulated and implemented. After the initial desire to demand justice has been satisfied, the reality of how the resultant fragmented relationships need to be restored, becomes clearly apparent. Allan Boesak quotes Kuitert in his article “The courage to be black”. He writes that the concept of justice in Biblical terms is closely tied to “the covenantal partnership”. The desire to act in justice also means that there is the innate desire to “give recognition to the other person’s humanity” (Boesak in Cone & Wilmore 1993:195). This, as he says, is the basic desire for all of humankind: to live as whole, real people. This desire that is evoked in mankind is closely reliant on the pastor's understanding of the God of the Bible, the God Who is at the same time the Liberator of mankind, and the God who enables them to worship Him. Boesak quotes from the Exodus account to illustrate the very nature of God as Liberator (Cone & Wilmore 1993:195).

The greatest challenge for the pastor to see in this theology is that although God is the liberator from the oppressor, He is also the God of the oppressor, and also wants the oppressor to be redeemed. As strange as this may seem, both the oppressor and perpetrator need God’s grace and

forgiveness. The reality is that this grace found in Christ Jesus, needs to be extended to them for deeds done either in ignorance or through full volition of mind.

For pastoral theology to do justice to its functioning in the hand of a holy God, it needs to see itself as being an instrument of peacemaking as it restores and shapes newly defined relationships. The Biblical notion of peace, *shalom*, is rich in its meaning of compassion, but in some secular descriptions, it can come across as rather impoverished. The possibility that God's embracing love encompasses all people needs to be explored in Pastoral Theology.

It is the researcher's belief that herein lies the greatest contribution of a Restoration Theology of pastoral counselling: offering a solution for our scarred society, not just by raising the lens of justice through which perpetrators need to be seen, but also through the solution offered by God through the *relational restoration* of His children under the economy of His Kingdom. It is important for the pastor always to keep track of, and in step with, God's agenda and that is, the restoration of *all* of humankind.

For the practical theologian and the pastor, there is always the awareness that he functions in a disorderly world and it is his task to bring God's order to it. He facilitates the communication of God's divine intent and makes sense of the world the congregant lives in. He helps them to make sense of the world through the order that God creates in their mind through His revealed Word. Regardless of how complex and challenging the world may seem at times, one needs to engage it within its context. It is within this quagmire of human concern and feelings of helplessness and abandonment, that the Word of God and the practical theologian make sense of the world.

The awareness that God's Spirit, who gives life, is ever present with him, the counsellor, takes away the weight of any burdensome feelings that the work of pastoral counselling is entirely dependent on personal efforts alone. The pastor can free himself of guilt, secure in the knowledge that God, through His Holy Spirit, is an essential part of his efforts to restore wholeness in the "fallen" world. "We can be grateful that we need not, and in fact, cannot create either the potential for growth or élan within people that makes them want to grow. Both are there as gifts from God" (55). In line with this thinking of Clinebell, the role of the counsellor becomes one of facilitating the work of God rather than that of being busy with his own personal agenda. The liberating and exciting thought for the counsellor is that he is part of the Divine work, and that he is an extension of God's intent. This raises the role of the counsellor to new heights. This also frees him from the strain of

having to come up with new techniques to manipulate or force people to do what God desires. The pastor, as servant of God, is an integral part of God's agenda, and is an instrument in the hand of an Almighty, yet loving God.

### **2.2.2 WHAT IS A THEOLOGY OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING?**

A Theology of Pastoral Counselling would describe the love that God has for all of humankind. This next section will look at how the pastor can demonstrate God manifesting Himself visibly, and expose His caring nature on practical levels.

The Biblical images through which God's caring nature is made manifest to His people need to be explored in order to translate His nature, and so enable a human encounter through the pastor, who enlivens the proximity of care as God would have demonstrated had He been here Himself.

The role that is often heralded as central to pastoral counselling is that of being a shepherd to the flock, but it is, in fact, far more than just a shepherd. The metaphor of God as the Shepherd is linked historically to the agrarian context in which Christian faith has developed. One might ask why this image and metaphor are so important. The notion that God would shepherd the people of that historical time, relates the connection between God and the care of His people. It would also be relevant to appropriate the characteristics of a shepherd as he tends to the flock as a daily occurrence, and reference them to typify God's care of His people. Louw wants his reader to know that the transcendent nature of this metaphor has more to do with the nature of the shepherd and his "being than with his knowing and doing functions" (Louw 1998:39). It has everything to do with the human nature of the carer, transformed by his relationship with God, to respond just as God's Son would to the greatest need, and that is to care for His creation. It would then not be unusual or exaggerated to see him in the same light as the carer like God.

The theology, in which this metaphor is birthed, is rich and valuable for the pastor to gain a deeper appreciation for his role, not just as a sheep herder of God's people, but as one acting in line with the expectations of the God who called him into His service.

The metaphor used by Louw to explain and accentuate the nature of God in the world is the servant metaphor. Here he speaks of Jesus identifying with humankind's suffering. The significance of this metaphor, specifically in Isaiah, is that the servant announces the will of God, confirms God's

sovereignty and maintenance of justice, confirms God's comfort, and through suffering, He, the servant, is vicariously punished and abused on behalf of others (Louw 1998:41-42).

Louw not only accentuates the Servant and His role to restore humankind to the Kingdom of God, he demonstrates that a new relationship is established, and a new sovereign is placed over the person. Not only is the person changed, but so too, is his environment of accountability.

Another metaphor used by Louw is that of the wise fool. He illustrates that wisdom is crucial for the people of God. He quotes Murphey: "In short, the wisdom experience is to be described as a faith experience. The shaping of Israel's views of the world, and of the activity of God behind and in it, was done in an ambience of faith, and was characterized by trust and reliance upon God" (Louw 1998:44). The concept of wisdom is not only salvation, but encompasses insight into daily life for those belonging to God.

Louw points out the importance of wisdom for pastoral counselling as it bears on life functions within relationships, and hence, the way life is to be viewed. He states that Creation is an ordered and a structured entity, and that society is based in a type of basic trust in the stability of reality in the faithfulness of God (Louw 1998: 45).

Louw also makes mention of the *paraklesis* metaphor (1998:47). In this, he raises the aspect of care that supersedes the notion that care is control. The role of the pastor is that of equipping the church to serve and also to build it up. Within this relationship of care, the pastor also, of necessity, will need to reprove those who wander off. This does not exclude discipline, admonishment and punishment. The ability of the Church to deal with sin in its midst is critical. The pastor, although he may be dealing with individuals, primarily needs to have an overall view of the entire congregation.

The primary meaning within this context for the *paraklesis* is that the pastor is called alongside. The nuances of this word are rich in meaning and carry the overriding emotional sentiments of care and active comfort. Louw gives a more complete treatment of this word and its meaning (Louw 1998:51-54). The following headings serve to highlight his studies.

- 1) *Paraklesis* and the dimension of justification.
- 2) *Paraklesis* and the Trinitarian foundation of pastoral theology.

- 3) *Paraklesis* and the reciprocity between Scripture and witness.
- 4) *Paraklesis* and the transformation of human lives.
- 5) *Paraklesis* and the process of maturity in faith.
- 6) *Paraklesis* and the eschatological future.

In Clinebell's view, all of Scripture encompasses the restoration of wholeness in the lives of humankind. "Wholeness like life is a gift of the creating spirit of the universe" (1984:55). He maintains that Jesus, who represents God in this world, demonstrates more than just the love of God, but also the unfolding of a dream of wholeness which God has for humanity. God is now "no longer to be sought out there distanced from our human situation" (Clinebell 1984:55). For Clinebell the concept of wholeness is found in the Kingdom of God. This would usher in an age of caring and social transformation based on the new wholeness-making relationship with God (61).

Clinebell raises an interesting aspect to his theology which enriches our understanding of pastoral care and counselling. He makes a valid observation that through the centuries Christian theology has been primarily shaped through the spiritual experiences of men. "The rich contribution of women's spirituality has been largely suppressed and ignored in the Judeo-Christian heritage" (Clinebell 1984:62). The insights are enriching and enlivening, stating that one can introduce "images that enrich, complement, and correct the spiritual heritage shaped mainly by males." A more inclusive theology is favoured by Clinebell, one that does not favour male against female but attempts to create balance of perspective and foster equality (1984:64).

### **2.2.3 WHAT DOES A BIBLICAL PASTORAL COUNSELLING FRAMEWORK ENTAIL?**

For the researcher, the role of a clearly defined Church which knows its mission and purpose is vital to a Biblical Counselling Framework of pastoral care. It depends on a clear understanding of God's Word as it relates to the overall purpose of God, and that is to redeem and restore His creation to Himself.

It should be possible to illustrate to the counselee that hope is part of who God is. The message then of this pastoral framework needs to be hope born out of the redemptive work of Christ, and applied and continued by the Holy Spirit.

A biblical view of what it means to be human, a Christian anthropology, is important for the pastor as he needs to know that this view comes from the rich heritage of the “ongoing message, community and tradition of the church” (Clinebell 1984:17).

This is the ability to articulate that humanity was created by God in His image, as well as the reason why it has been created. This process encompasses the entrance of sin into this relationship, which distorts and hurts man and his relationships from then on. The Creation Story can be seen as an actual event or as a metaphorical enactment of humankind’s propensity to continually fall into sin. The overwhelming reality of mankind’s innate need to be saved from individual sin, and the vital role of the Holy Spirit who lives within human beings, enabling them to function optimally in this world, need to be part of this anthropology.

The role of the Kingdom of God, and how the redeemed person functions in a new community, is vital for humanity’s new understanding under the rule of God and Christ’s Kingdom, the Church. Renewed views of self in context of their functioning in godly relationships are crucial in the development to this anthropology. People see themselves not just as redeemed, but as children of God, with a hope, a future and an inheritance.

Part of the anthropology of humankind is their connectedness, and not only the privilege of duty, but also the responsibility toward one another. The idea of serving as their Redeemer did, to make sure that the Kingdom's reign will expand and enlarge to encompass all those outside of the fold, is central to such an anthropology.

### **2.3 THE PRAXIS OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING**

It is not only important for one to be able to identify where the roots of pastoral counselling are and how the discipline developed over many years, one also need to keep abreast of the complexities of different theories, each of them holding very strong and sometimes divergent positions. Often they converge and enrich each other, and at other times they stand the danger of being absorbed into Humanism. There are also strong reactions from other quarters, which seem to be almost anti-Humanistic, with their own particular characteristics.

Some of the theories and positions are rather philosophical, but the question is always how the theoretical position within the field of pastoral counselling and care will eventually impact the lives

of the people it was designed to help on a practical level. The following section will investigate how these various positions are applied practically.

### 2.3.1 SURVEYING THE VARIOUS MODELS

Inside pastoral counselling and care as a discipline lie the various methods that are applied by various counsellors. They can be categorised according to traditions they follow, and also from whom they originated. It is interesting to note that some methods have developed in reaction to other existing counselling methods.

Louw identifies a few models which are used in pastoral counselling and some of the approaches differ from one another quite substantially. The reason the researcher chose Louw's outlining of these approaches is that he places them in their various traditions and categorises them with those that share similar traits. This is helpful to see how they relate to one another and highlights the overriding character traits of each.

The first model is the so-called *Reformed Model: the Kerygma and Salvation/Forgiveness model*. Louw places Fiet and Heitink in this model, which emphasises primarily two aspects: a pastoral care model which expresses discipline, emphasises admonition and conversion; and pastoral care which converts sinners by means of kerygmatic proclamation of the Gospel. This model implies a movement away from admonition to communication, conversion and counselling (Louw 1998:25). It is interesting to note that Thurneysen (1957:129) is part of this model, also emphasising proclamation of forgiveness to the counselee. The main criticism Louw levels at Thurneysen is that the counselling session is reduced to a homiletic event, which does not allow for the counselee to sufficiently articulate his or her existential and contextual needs. This deflection away from or 'breach' of the counselee's needs, disables the pastor to identify the counselee's needs (26). Thurneysen (1968:77-91) reacts and says that since human beings are sinners, they are unable to save themselves and hence the breach to direct them into an encounter with God is necessary. The encounter does not alienate man, but brings him into an encounter with God during this pastoral encounter. He emphasises that people and their existential contexts should never be disregarded. The proclamation of the Gospel does not ignore, nor negate a person. Both the Word of God and the human being need to be interpreted (1968:91). The main objection still remains that in this approach to counselling, the pastor reduces the entire encounter into a homiletic event. The debate and exchange around this model does not stop here and, as Louw notes, Bolkestein adds (1980:79)

that Thurneysen would have been on firmer ground had he placed the Kingdom of God as the context of the care of souls instead of the redemption from sin. In this model, counselling becomes directive and advisory, and thus loses the true element and intent of the encounter and communication. It is then not surprising that Bolkestein would view pastoral care as communicating the Gospel and the message of the Kingdom of God (Louw 1998:26).

Bohren (1982:204-219) believes that if the Word of God were no longer fundamental to pastoral care, it would lose its substance. Bohren (1982:465), as quoted by Louw, does not make mention or adequately explain the relationship between God and man in terms of a Pneumatology. Adams (1970:50-51) emphasises a relationship between the counsellor and the Holy Spirit through the Word of God in the counselling encounter. He reemphasises the Scripture of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and although it is used often when asserting its inspiration, it also becomes useful for *Nouthetic Counselling*. The Scriptures then, are useful for the nouthetic purposes of “reproving, teaching, correcting, and training men in righteousness” (51). The Scriptures are God breathed and useful for counselling according to Adams (Louw 1998:27).

The second model is labelled the *Client Centred or Empirical Model: Phenomenology and Experience/Observation* by Louw. This model has at its core that the needs of humans, and not the Word of God, should be the dominant emphasis. Counselling in this model involves the dynamic of human relations as they are expressed in communication procedures. In this model, the counselee’s inner frame of reference becomes the focus of the encounter, and the person is perceived as a “living human document, the actual source of knowledges” (Louw 1998:27). People are seen as their own therapists, and have the potential to arrive at their own transformation and self-realisation.

Roger’s Client Centred Model greatly influenced the Phenomenological Model. The purpose of this approach is to focus on the needs of the person rather than the external substrate and standard of the Word of God. “Then ‘structure’ and ‘texture’ of the communication process replaced the structure of the scriptural ‘text’ (Louw 1998:28). Louw further points out that there are dangers when everything is reduced to texture and structure. “The danger of this approach is that the pastoral ministry can be reduced to phenomenology of human needs” (1998:28). The rise of the Empathic Model revealed the unilateralism of the Kerygmatic Model, and robbed pastoral counselling of its theological uniqueness, and so Adams’ response needs to be seen in this light.

The third model found in pastoral counselling, highlighted by Louw, is the *Directive and Confrontational Model: Nouthetic Counselling*. This model clearly came in reaction to Psychology and Psychiatry making inroads into the pastoral counselling fields. Adams uses the process of confrontation to guide the person to behavioural change (1998:28). He maintains that man is sinful, and that sin is the one stumbling block that is the source of all his problems (1998:28). Adams, it becomes abundantly clear in his counselling praxis, is opposed to Rogers' non-directive approach. Adams not only differs in his approach in his communication of being directive, but also severely criticises the influence of Psychology (Louw 1998:28). Adams quotes Mowrer who says, "All this is pertinent to Christians. 'Has evangelical Christianity sold its birthright for a mess of psychological pottage?'" (1970:15). He sees these disciplines of Psychology and Psychiatry as being in direct competition with Christianity. He further says that neither Rogers nor Skinner can lead any person to live a sanctified life (Louw 1998:28). Adams mentions that their views are "not supplemental, but outright alternatives", thus "the relationship between psychology and pastoral care remains strained" (Louw 1998:27). From Adams' point of view he says that it is clear that there are two types of counsel in the world, "divine counsel and devilish counsel" (Adams 1979:4, 9).

Louw points out that Adams' position raises the rift that he sees between Psychology and Theology (Louw 1998:29). In Adams' position, he maintains that there is nothing that Psychology can offer pastoral care. He feels that the rift is in the method and the medium, even though pastor and psychologist could make use of the same medium, for example, listening skills in counselling, where they "must not lose sight that a definite philosophy, system and purpose are always linked to a certain medium. A certain method is always used for a certain purpose" (Adams 1983:28). Adams also points out that methods are also linked to presuppositions, principles and values. Adams urges pastoral care to develop its own methods based on biblical principles (Louw 1998:29). He unequivocally states that the model must be based on the Bible (Louw 1998:29; Adams 1983:29).

Louw points out that there are *four problems with Adams' position* (Louw 1998: 30).

Firstly, Louw questions whether it is possible to derive a distinctive method from the Bible. Louw quotes Nieboer, "Wie de bekering tot een therapeutische methode maakt, toont gebrek aan eerbied voor Gods Woord" (1982: 92). Although conversion has an effect on psycho-physical functions, it cannot be regarded as the only remedy for emotional disintegration and other human problems.

Secondly, Adams separates Soteriology and the Doctrine of Creation in his principle standpoint (Louw 1998:30). When it comes to the therapeutic effect of his Noutheitic Counselling, he blends Creation material with pastoral material (Louw 1998:30). He makes use of thoughts, emotions and behaviour, yet he denies the contribution which the Psychiatric and Psycho-Physical levels could make to generate change. He allows Psychology to operate on the descriptive level (describing psychic phenomena), but distances himself from Psychology as soon as it begins to operate on a prescriptive level (Louw 1998:30).

Thirdly, the disparities mentioned above coincide with the division which Adams suggests between material and spirit. This brings a dualism to his approach (1998:30).

Fourthly, Adams wants to apply Scripture to all human problems. The danger exists that Scripture may serve as a collection of texts used to solve all psychic and social problems (Louw 1998:30).

Louw mentions that Adams reveals a dominant role of God's Word in a Reformed approach to pastoral care. "The uniqueness of the Word, as an instrument conveying the message of grace and salvation, should prevent human techniques from manipulating it. Nevertheless, the Word does not function apart from a doctrine of creation, nor does it exist homiletically apart from the human communication process" (1998:30).

Louw (1998:31) says that the exposition of the problems of a pastoral theology brings one to the basic tensions evident in pastoral theology. "The tensions are revelation and existence; transcendence and eminence; the vertical component and the horizontal component; the history of salvation and the history of the world" (Louw 1998:31). He quotes Bolkestein where he says that pastoral theology continually seeks some or other form of synthesis (Louw 1998:31). Bolkestein feels that the Kerygmatic approach is impossible without including communication, counselling, encounter and openness toward others (Louw 1998:31). He further believes that there is bipolarity in the care of souls: on the one hand, the message of the Kingdom of God; on the other hand, the reality of human existence and its suffering (Bolkestein 1980:106). The real substance of pastoral care is provided by the Kingdom of God, with its promise of light, power and healing as this was mediated through Christ. Bolkestein regards the concepts 'proclamation' and 'confrontation' as rather inaccurate descriptions of the nature of pastoral events (Louw 1998:31). He chooses to use the concept of communication which is capable of more nuances of meaning, and by introducing communication, a bipolarity surfaces as a key issue in developing a theory for a theology of pastoral

care (Bolkestein 1980:106). This approach of Bolkestein refines the counselling experience to one of mutual sharing, rather than that of adversarial tension. Communication has in its practice a gentle participatory element rather than defensiveness at heart.

### **2.3.2 WHAT ARE THE SKILLS NEEDED TO BE AN EFFECTIVE COUNSELLOR?**

Clinebell summarises the skills required by the pastor to be effective in his work. He leans on Carkhuff, who attempted to devise a system for teaching and learning these essential skills in sequence (Clinebell 1984:93-94).

- 1) *Attending and caring behaviour*, including frequent eye contact, adopting a posture that expresses interest in them by leaning forward, not aggressively, but attentively.
- 2) *Inviting the person to talk* about significant issues by open-ended questions and brief comments or gestures.
- 3) *Careful listening and observing* of non-verbal messages.
- 4) *Following the person's lead, avoiding switching topics*, especially in the early stages of counselling. Staying with the here-and-now flow of the relationship.
- 5) *Empathic responding by paraphrasing* the main thrust of the significant feelings and issues one has perceived, and their meaning to the person.
- 6) *Clarification* by summarizing the main points of what the person has communicated, and thus clarifying the counsellor's understanding of their meanings for the person.
- 7) *Exploring significant areas* that the person has not discussed by asking focusing questions.
- 8) *Confronting* as needed and appropriate, in the context of valuing and affirming the person.
- 9) *Understanding the meanings, issues and dynamics* of the problem, and making recommendations for help based on diagnostic insight.

Louw gives a detailed list of all the skills that a pastoral counsellor needs to have, or may need to develop, to improve his effectiveness (Louw 1998:261-263).

Firstly, the ability of the pastor to build trust is one of the qualities needed. People should know one another, and be prepared to open up and trust each other. The degree of self-disclosure depends on the quality of the relationship of trust between the pastor and the counselee.

Secondly, the pastor's ability to accept the person unconditionally as a unique individual within the dynamics of their social relationships is important. Warmth, closeness, love, sympathy and empathy are necessary for a positive atmosphere.

Thirdly, the ability to serve and promote the other person's interests (empowerment). An attitude of selfishness and the intrusion of the counsellor's own interests will obstruct this quality.

Fourthly, the ability to communicate a clearly formulated message, which honestly reflects the intention of the speaker, using simple words and a positive body language will contribute to effectiveness on the part of the pastor.

The pastor needs to have mastered the ability to listen empathically so that he is able to concentrate on both the content of the words, and the person as a whole, with all his or her emotions and feelings. His ability to understand the other person's feelings will improve the process of listening. When pastors encounter people, they often think, mistakenly, that they must speak. Many ministers wonder what to say by way of advice to people because they are so accustomed to their 'knowing' and 'doing' functions being the primary focus, that they forget that pastoral counselling is essentially about their 'being' functions. Who the pastor 'is' to the person, especially early in counselling, is more important than what he says. The ability to listen and understand is crucial to the effectiveness of pastoral counselling. Bonhoeffer speaks of the "ministry of how to keep one's tongue under control" (Knutson 1979:17). The pastor should become aware of Isaiah 50:4 (NIV) "The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught." The importance for the counsellor to listen to the voice of God daily, in his own life, is crucial to being an effective pastoral counsellor. The way he listens to God is the same way he listens to his parishioners. Listening means taking the time, and the patience, to understand people's meanings in their words, and not merely hearing their words. The art is not simply the act of hearing, but with deliberateness, wanting to 'hear' what the other person is feeling while they are sharing the information with the counsellor.

Knutson says that "listening is and can be a natural way for people to discover the life in Christ, the communion of the saints, and the fellowship of believers" (Knutson 1979:23).

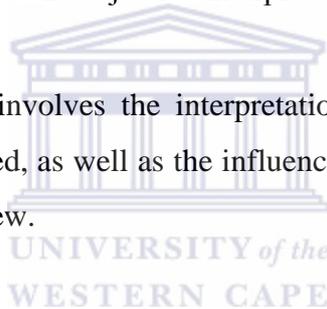
The ability to cooperate and negotiate is important in the quest for mutual solutions. The pastor must not act over-directively, thereby overwhelming the person with advice, nor too non-directively. People want guidance, and it could be cruel to leave them to cope by themselves in the depths of their crisis. An indirective approach enables pastoral care to establish a relationship of trust through which meaning is conveyed, and constructive intervention is made possible.

The ability to identify the role of his own presuppositions and values within general communication is important for the pastor to recognise. There are usually *four possible levels of communication*:

The first level is about the facts of events. These are normally intellectual and rational.

The second level is about the events themselves, the history of the facts and experiences. In this, level the person discloses what happened, and describes the personal 'history' and 'story'. This level therefore, refers to the person's own subjective interpretation, memories, trauma and pain.

The third level of communication involves the interpretation and diagnosis of the events. The meaning of what happened is assessed, as well as the influence of ideas and philosophical elements on the subject or problem under review.



The fourth level of communication takes place when it moves from interpretation and assessment of meaning, to a level of convictions, beliefs and values, so as to establish meaning in life. Louw quotes Knutson in a footnote, where he elucidates the relationship between beliefs and decisions: "Beliefs come as decisions and commitments in our life which have grown out of things, events and ideas" (1979:22). The entire process of counselling is then, not a neutral event, but an event which at its core, directs the counselee forward toward transformation.

The ability for the pastor to be honest and sincere is critical. Honesty and sincerity promote the climate of an authentic conversation. The pastor must engender a climate in which frankness can be encouraged, so that honesty in the exchanges can deepen the quality of the event.

The important part of the communication is to penetrate to the level of deeper disclosure, to deepen the pastor's understanding, to empower him to direct, or "shepherd", the person toward change and transformation.

It is interesting to note that Adams criticises the Freudian approach to listening during a typical session. “Nouthetic counselling, then, necessarily embodies involvement of the deepest sort. There is a prevalent view of counselling which says, “Don’t become involved too deeply with your counselee” (Adams 1977:53). The image of the ideal counsellor according to this view is that of a professional who is stoically clinical, and who maintains a sterile white-coated manner...even though he may feel strongly empathetic inside, ideally he should not respond in any way as to reveal his true feelings. He must not appear shocked. He always must maintain a neutral non-judgemental posture regardless of whether what the counselee reveals is good or bad” (Adams 1977:53). Adams calls this reaction a double standard, even though what the counsellor expects from the counselee is to be completely open (Adams 1977:53). He then states that any such neutrality should be dispelled (Adams 1977:54). He mentions that the counselling session may become so excited and emotion filled as to have the participants in the room pass through a range of human emotions, from laughing to sadness, and even tears (Adams 1977:54).

### **2.3.3 MARRIAGE COUNSELLING AS A SPECIALISED FIELD WITHIN PASTORAL COUNSELLING**

Marriage counselling is probably the most important and complex part of the pastor’s work. He may have a reasonable degree of knowledge on all types of counselling approaches and interviewing techniques to enhance his effectiveness. This field, however, concerns a deeper relational counselling, which requires a higher degree of competence.

This aspect of his pastoral care presents the most opportunities for him to work inside the family dynamic. It is within this type of counselling where his ability to care, and all knowledge that he has acquired, can become his greatest strength, or his lack thereof, become his downfall. During this thesis, the sentiment will become more evident, that as one cares for people, so too must one's desire to improve one's skills, in order to improve effectiveness in assisting those whom the Lord has entrusted to us.

Counselling that deals with the death of family members, alcohol abuse or as insidious a crisis as gambling, exposes the family to undue financial stresses. Pressures, whose origins are usually outside of the relationship, almost always bring themselves to bear within the relationship.

The unique characteristic of marriage counselling is that all the other peripheral issues that cause the initial problem, can be traced to a fundamental problem in the primary relationship between the husband and the wife. Pastoral counselling is different from speaking to a friend or just meeting over a cup of coffee to vent one's frustration. The issues are complex, and even sometimes, the aims of the couple are divergent. The needs and emotional disposition in the environment of a friend is different, and the need may be for the venting couple just to be understood, and even validated in the way they are experiencing their feelings.

The expectations from the pastor are markedly different to those of the friend. The fundamental difference lies in the 'person' of the friend and the 'person' of the pastor. The pastor is bound by moral and ethical constraints, and his primary loyalty is to act in the best interest of the couple as a unit. In marriage counselling sessions, where affect and emotion is high, the primary aim of the pastor may be to just keep the counselees safe.

In Worthington's treatment of this topic, he mentions that "pastoral counsellors should provide a full *a priori* disclosure of their goals to the clients" (Worthington 1999:20). He makes an observation that "the best results occur if both partners attend counselling and if both partners are interested and involved in improving the marriage" (Worthington 1999:21). This is an interesting debate to follow, as many experts would hold the view that efficacy can still be guaranteed even when only one person who has an interest in improving the relationship attends.

In this specific counselling setting, the relationship between pastor and counselee is vital. The reality is that the most private area of their lives will be dealt with, so great care regarding the safety of disclosure needs to be taken.

Interventions into potentially physically threatening situations could also hold some danger for the pastor. He needs an enormous amount of emotional equity built up in trust with the couple, so as to be able to ensure safety for the victim after the counselling session.

The collateral damage of failed marriages requires a much higher degree of competency. The result of not being able to effectively engage with the couple, is a cost factor far too great for the pastor to even contemplate. The cost of not being properly equipped needs careful consideration by the pastor. This issue is not just a matter which may elicit defensive responses from pastors, but it is

one of realising that it is the pastor's duty to make sure that he gives the best of himself, and that he needs to improve his competencies to the best of his ability.

## **2.4 WHAT ARE THE SHORTCOMINGS OF AND POSSIBLE REMEDIES FOR PASTORAL COUNSELLING?**

The role of the pastor is different to any other professional who practices in the area of helping people in crisis: he is closely linked to other persons through their shared allegiance to Christ. He is, hence, in a relationship that is wrought through the Cross, and any counselling relationship is also understood to be under the auspices of God. This heightens the relationship to a level recognizing the presence of divinity in their meeting at all times.

The advice that the pastor gives needs to be carefully considered and meted out to achieve a higher goal, and that is to maintain the agenda of God. He cannot depend on his intellect exclusively, but needs to be deeply aware of whom he represents, and to whom he will be answerable. He has the added agenda of maintaining the interest of the whole community of faith, and keeping its synergy in mind during his counselling sessions.

The pastor, being an integral part of the community's life, runs the risk of having to, if placed in some invidious situations, make judgments. If he is mediating between parties, he would have to favour God's counsel. Although personally it may seem tough to make those choices, as invariably feelings are hurt, he has to be able to navigate the counselee's feelings positively within the community of faith, along the path of acceptance and submission to the will of God.

This could be a serious disadvantage to the pastor as here is where party spirit could easily unsettle the tranquility of a faith community. In making choices "for", by implication the pastor makes choices "against", and these choices can place him in a very unenviable position. Some pastors may even be coerced to just agree with a popular position for the sake of peace, rather than take a position on Scripture which they subscribe to, and so violate their conscience. A possible remedy one could look at is another type of counselling, which places the choices and decisions for their lives "outside" them in the pastor as an arbiter, rather than a mediator. This is tantamount to almost imposing an external will onto the relationship. Personal experience has shown that in events such as these, where such "external" decisions are made, whether they may be right according to Scripture, evoke an internal rebellion, as it implies the counselees have not been a part to the

decision. The importance of dialogue cannot be overemphasised as it helps the counselee to slowly realise that the Lord's will for His life is the correct one.

The advantages in practicing pastoral counselling, especially within a faith community, are that the adherents to this community are held accountable within this spiritual framework, to adhere to what the community deems normative. The community by its sheer proximity provides two vital ingredients for transformation: validation of positive behaviour and positive behaviour modelled in the lives of others in the community.

With the advent of secular and Humanistic approaches to help people in trouble, the pastor increasingly finds himself in a place where his counsel is not rated that highly, as opposed to a secular counsellor who charges a fee. The misconception could easily be made that because it is not charged for, pastoral counsel is of little or no value. This perception can easily discourage the pastor if he compares himself to secular trained counsellors. The advantage of pastoral counselling is that right here, where it can be seen as a potential weakness, is its greatest strength, in that pastoral counselling provides care that is accessible to the poorest of the poor. The communal contribution makes his serving possible and accessible. It again enacts the very nature of God that the pastor makes God's counsel accessible to all, even the wicked and poor in spirit - free of charge.

Another advantage of pastoral counselling is that because of the pastor's proximity to the congregation through weekly contact, he could easily detect any problems looming, and can intervene at an early stage. The disadvantage for the secular counsellor is that he only manages to be engaged at a stage where the problem has developed to a level where the potential break-up of a relationship threatens. What makes it even longer for the therapy to be effective is that it takes a certain length of time for the therapeutic relationship to develop.

As noted, via assessing the development in pastoral counselling praxis, one sees that some methods work and others need to be revised and improved. As seen in Oden's work on Gregory the Great, although his work has been hailed as monumental and admired in its time, it has come under fire for various reasons. The first is that it is modelled on the authoritarian rule of the priest and his pastoral relationship. For him, pastoral authority meant authority over the people. Secondly, his "pastoral methodology tended to be overly mechanical and prescriptive" (Gerkin 1997:39).

It is useful for pastors to be aware of the past methods that have been developed, and that there is no value in pursuing a method that has been proven to be ineffective.

One of the biggest possible shortcomings of pastoral counselling as it stands is the absence of accentuating the nurturing aspects in the nature of God. Pastoral care appears to be unbalanced due to the fact that the feminine aspect of the emotional side of God is not emphasised. Most images used for God's manifestation are male, as these concerns are expressed by Feminist theologians.

There is, however, also a danger to Feminist theology, which feels that it is its duty to unravel Patriarchy. It may be part of its task to unravel and point out Patriarchy's faults, but that cannot be the whole agenda. Raising the positive aspects within the Feminist theology in pastoral care would be far more fruitful and enriching to the debate of growth in this wonderful tradition. Even an Archaic Patriarchal perspective within pastoral counselling needs to be seen as part of our developmental heritage. This history is placed in time, and can be drawn upon to enrich the future, rather than point out to shame of the past. When one nurtures an adversarial approach in pastoral Feminist theology, it could be perceived wrongly that all males harbour the same misogynist sentiments. It places the innocent within an adversarial framework, rather than alongside, correcting past ills. A more inclusive model, viewing marriage as a joint relationship searching for answers is suggested.

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A need for a pneumatological view of pastoral counselling is essential. Migliore warns that: "When the work of the Holy Spirit is forgotten or suppressed, the power of God is apt to be understood as distant, hierarchical, and coercive; Christocentric faith deteriorates into Christomonism; the authority of Scripture becomes heteronomous; the church is seen as a rigid power structure in which some members rule over others; and the sacraments degenerate into almost magical ritual rites under the control of a clerical elite" (Migliore 2004:224). A thorough re-examination of our theological framework will reveal the very essence of our lives on earth within the Kingdom of God and that is that all power vests with God and that He is actively working in us. Power within God's economy is about reciprocity, hence the correct viewing of relationships should reflect that which proximate the relationship God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit have.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A BIBLICAL VIEW OF MARRIAGE

#### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with placing pastoral counselling as a discipline within Practical theology. The fundamental difference between pastoral counselling and secular marriage counselling in general is that pastoral counselling finds its roots in the Scriptures. Pastoral marriage counselling deals with the marriage relationship as an institution of God and provides the counsel from biblical principles.

As previously mentioned, marriage counselling is a specific aspect of pastoral care, which is the overall care of the congregation. Marriage counselling as a discipline deals with a very intimate part of the congregants' life – that of the inner lives of married couples. The pastor deals with the very inner vulnerabilities and emotional insecurities of couples. It is often too sensitive for the couples to even speak about, as it entails divulging necessary details of their relationship which could be embarrassing. It could be even less appealing for the person seeking or needing help, to share the shame accompanying the pain associated with the relationship.

A high proficiency in counselling technique added with sound biblical knowledge is required. The pastor needs to have a basic or in some cases a very advanced and thorough knowledge of the Scriptures especially as they related to marriage. The question can even be asked, “Does the Bible have anything to say about marriage, and if it does what does it say?” The pastor's counsel needs to have clarified whether a specific framework and notion of what marriage is exists or ought to be. If he is unclear in this area, his bias or ignorance could potentially sabotage his effectiveness in providing the counsel needed.

He needs to know what the Bible says on this topic and what God intended for man and woman within their marriage relationship. He needs to be competent in having established a relational template for marriage and in his assessment establish what is needed to rectify aberrant behaviour within their relationship.

Knowledge of what constitutes a biblical notion of marriage is imperative and cannot be overstated in this chapter. The importance of this aspect of the study is that it explores marriage and its constituent parts from a biblical perspective. I have given careful attention to selected aspects in relational dynamics, presenting the prevailing viewpoints in order to deepen the theological position of Scripture on this aspect of marriage.

The study has two benefits, the one in revisiting the age old topic of marriage on a theological plane; we may unearth a possible faulty understanding of this subject. The second benefit of this research is to enrich the discussion and contribute to a deeper theological experience of this crucial area of our practical life. The statistics are disconcerting in that the divorce rate is no different for Christians than those of people who have no Christian basis for their marriage relationships. If our understanding of Scripture is faulty then we need to have the courage to revisit it and identify in what area we have a faulty theological perspective on what we know.

In our understanding of the Christian life under the reign of Christ it is vital for us to grasp not only how this understanding fits into the Kingdom rule of Christ. Knowing how marriage fits into this perspective properly will definitely enhance our lives qualitatively. A faulty theological perspective could easily sanction incorrect behaviour as this primary relationship fits into the general framework of the Kingdom rule of Christ. The marriage relationship must be seen as reflective of the relationship that Christ has with His church (cf. Eph. 5: 21-33). The relationship is defined within the Kingdom of God's context, and the incumbent behaviour synonymous with Christ and His Church then elevates and regulates this very private yet public face of the Church. For now the purpose is to look at our biblical understanding of marriage and later we shall look at how behaviour can be altered to facilitate alignment to God's word.

Clarity for the pastor in this area of his knowledge aims to create a sense of confidence that he has an idea what God expects and that he can shepherd His flock as he himself is in submission to Him toward that eschatological goal.

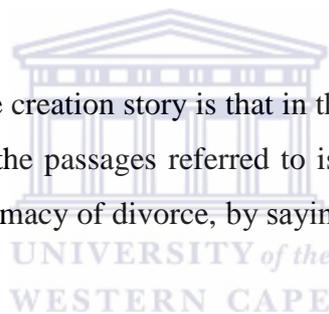
In this chapter we are going to explore in detail selected passages related to specifically marriage as found in Scripture. The purpose is to deepen our understanding of what Scripture has to say about marriage and the specific texts when explored deeper to ascertain what significant ideas flow from them. The researcher hopes that with a deepened understanding of concepts in Scripture, the pastoral caregiver now has a fresh view on this very complex topic.

In this chapter consideration will be given to some concepts found in Genesis that is foundational to the concept of marriage and will lay the groundwork for proposing a new approach of integration of various models of marriage counselling. We are living in an age where these principles are being challenged and there seems to be uncertainty about the concept of marriage.

Clarity of some key concepts needs to be embedded so that the pastoral caregiver has a framework on which to build.

In the quest for a biblical theology of marriage we need to decide how this chapter is to be approached. We need to recognise that much has been written and studied on the creation story and an appropriate approach needs to be clearly articulated that would help us understand from which vantage point we are coming and what our objectives are. I hope the approach followed here will give us proper insight into the religious intent of “creation”, and not necessarily from a scientific perspective.

The reason I am looking closer at the creation story is that in the dialogues with Jesus, he frequently refers to the creation story. One of the passages referred to is where Christ answers the Pharisees when they asked him about the legitimacy of divorce, by saying, “It was not so from the beginning” (Matt 19:8 NIV).



This causes one to enquire what Jesus meant and what He was referring to. It becomes clear that He is encouraging the enquirers to look past Moses and see God’s original intent regarding marriage and the relationship between man and woman. He wants humankind to see the creator and His intent, not necessarily the practice of humankind as they interpreted God’s expectations in a specific situation. This passage does the same for us to extend our enquiry to the place of origins that is to the creation of humankind.

### **3.1 HUMANKIND CREATED IN THE “IMAGE OF GOD”**

In Genesis, where the creation of humankind is dealt with, we soon realise that humanity has a central role. In the first creation story (Gen.1:1-2:4a) humanity is depicted as the height of creation. We see the creation of all other animals and plants and these are all said to be created with the ability to produce after its own kind. Keil and Delitzsch note that there is a difference in the creation account of man in that God does things differently. “The creation of man does not take place though

a word addressed by God to the earth, but as the result of the divine decree, ‘*We will make man in Our image, after our likeness,*’ which proclaims at the very outset the distinction and pre-eminence of man above all the other creatures of the earth” (Keil and Delitzsch 2009:48).

Much is written about what this “image” would entail. Keil and Delitzsch offer a perspective that “this consists rather in the fact, that man endowed with free self-conscious personality possesses, in his spiritual as well as corporeal nature, a creaturely copy of the holiness and blessedness of the divine life” (Keil and Delitzsch 2009:49). They further quote from Ziegler in a footnote that “this breath is the seal and pledge of our relation to God, of our godlike dignity: whereas the breath breathed into the animals is nothing but the common breath, the life-wind of nature...” (49).

What is phenomenal and crucial for the pastor to know is that at the creation of humankind, God does something unusual; God breathes His life-giving spirit into man and humankind becomes a living soul. It is this addition of the divine that changes humankind in their essence from a formed creature out of dust into a living soul. This addition of the creation story helps us see ourselves distinctively different from animals which have only life but not that essence from God which makes humankind a living spirit. This defining aspect for the pastor is to know beyond a shadow of doubt that this fundamental distinction is important for him in distinguishing between the Darwinian view of man and the creation view of man.

As one considers a pattern toward a theology of marriage, it would be wise to revisit the biblical story of creation. The revisit will touch on the issue whether a biblical anthropology exists. A careful rereading of the creation story will of necessity force us to describe what the initial writer intended for us to glean and what this anthropology would entail. This issue needs to be explored, even if only in a limited fashion, to give the pastoral counsellor an anthropological view of man. The pastor needs to have a clear view of how he views the couple as people when they are presented in front of him. He needs to consider what limitations they have and what expectations can be placed on them toward enhancing their relationship.

It is interesting to note that when theologians speak about the concept of *Imago Dei*, it would infer that this would automatically be understood that man is created in the Image of God. Grenz highlights that this concept has been the subject of much study and debate and that theologians are not all in agreement as to what this term means. Grenz delineates two dominant approaches to the Image of God that are being debated. “...the substantial or structural view, which understands the

*Imago Dei* as consisting of certain attributes or capabilities lodged within the person, and the relational view, which sees the divine image as referring to a fundamental relationship between the human creature and the Creator” (Grenz 2001:142). Here Grenz leans on Hall who credits Ramsey for delineating the two approaches clearer. “He notes that the substantial understanding characterizes humans as being shaped in the image of God after a manner of a sculpture or painting, whereas the relational conception sees them as reflecting the divine somewhat like a mirror” (Ramsey 1950:254; Grenz 2001:142).

In his treatment of *Imago Dei* as structure, Grenz refers to man’s innate ability to be like God and refers to “certain characteristics or capacities inherent in the structure of human nature. Because they resemble the corresponding qualities of God, their possessions make humans like God” (Grenz 2001:142). This refers to “something *within the substantial form* of human nature, some faculty or capacity man possess” (Ramsey1950:250). This understanding that man has been created with these qualities reinforces that the qualities are innate to man and cannot be changed or lost. He then is endowed with the ability to reason and the capacity to direct his will.

The second view of humankind is the relational one, viewed by Ramsey as follows, “nothing within the make-up of man, considered by himself apart from a present responsive relationship to God, has the form or power of being in the image of God” (Ramsey 1950:250,254).

It is essential for the pastor to be clear on what this “image” actually entails. The pastor must assess what the state of the counselees’ view of themselves are, so he can know where and what to aim for in their character shaping toward the Image of Christ. With this view of themselves they can strive by God’s grace to see themselves differently. Howe, in his treatment of the concept of Image of God, makes mention of “Being created in the image and the shadow of God truly is a mixed blessing. The more aware we are of the shadows that envelop our own lives, the more painful it is to consider that other creatures roam more freely than we do in the light that God casts over all things” (Howe 1995:33). He mentions that for the “Psalms there is an exquisite attunement both to light and to the shadows that light casts. It is in these shadows that human beings also exist” (33). It is this attunement with God that the pastor is working towards to achieve. Normally counselees arrive in the pastor’s office in various stages of a crisis or crises. In the pastor’s initial and also continual interaction with the couple the pastor needs to affirm this attunement with his presence amidst the crisis within their lives, that God is intimately aware of their needs and wants to be a part of their lives. In the case of sin, where that bond has been broken, God still desires for this attunement to be

re-established with Him. The pastor becomes the one who enables and facilitates this union through Christ toward fullness.

This living toward fullness can be explained in this way that although we have the innate capacities given to humankind at creation, this image has been distorted and now humankind find themselves again living *toward* God, in relation to their adoration and obedience of God. “Upon this view, created ‘according to God’s image’ means created to live in the direction of God, with the divine image the standard or norm toward which we direct our lives and by which we judge whether we are living faithfully by them” (Howe 1995:34).

Here Howe quotes from Object Relations theorist Winnicott who holds that “the divine image ‘in’ us is an internalized representation of God and of God’s will in accordance with which we are to live our lives with intentionality. It is also a representation of God’s image of us and of our place and purpose in the created order” (Howe 1995:34).

An important morphological observation from Howe is that “the Hebrew texts tend to refer to human beings as created ‘in’ the divine image, the Septuagint speaks of our creation ‘according to’ (*kath*) that image. The latter is also worth reflecting upon.” In his treatment of this perspective he mentions that “it both gives us the idea that we have the innate godliness implanted in us and also would live toward this as we imitate it and participate in it” (36).

This reminds me of a passage in 1 Corinthians 10:18: “Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar?” It is when Paul admonishes the Church that idolatry is so insidious that even the seeming casual participation at their altars would give credence and for the Christian it would be placing the image of God who dwells in him at risk.

A critical part of this thesis is to demonstrate that with this, the God-implanted potential into humankind needs to be rediscovered who they are in light of them being created into His Image. The theology of marriage is directly opposed to the view that man is merely part of a continual evolution and that solely humanistic therapeutic methods can be employed without the notion of a God who is the creator of them.

In essence humankind is different to any animals; even though they may have genetic resemblance they have the unique attributes given to them by God Himself.

Howe makes a case and explains the intricate relationship between two different accounts of creation in Genesis, the Yahwist and the Priestly tradition. The pastor needs to be able to engage the story of creation in a way that will help persons see themselves in this light, i.e. in the light of two complementary creations perspectives.

“The priestly account is the normative one, but the Yahwist understanding has its own insights to contribute to the canon, as both, corrective and balance to what is actually the later of the two traditions in order of composition” (Howe 1995:47). The Yahwist account is e.g. taken from Genesis 2:7: “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (RSV). This is a quite different perspective on human nature, compared to that of the Priestly tradition, whose theology of human existence emphasizes form, structure, permanence, closeness with God, community, and, finally active mastering (cf. “subdue,” “fill,” “achieve dominion”). By contrast, the Yahwist presents a theology of dust-formed life which looks at human nature in its fragility, vaporousness, and transience. It is this tradition which is also expressed in Psalm 104:29b, “thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust” (KJV) (Howe 1995:47).

This observation from Howe is pivotal to our understanding of humankind from a biblical perspective: that apart from God humankind is nothing but dust. With this divine character traits being implanted into humankind, they not only have a relationship with God through His spirit that has been breathed into them but also with one another when God created the female and gave her to man.

### **3.2 HUMANKIND IS BORN WITH THE INNATE DESIRE FOR RELATIONSHIPS**

Right in the beginning at creation God demonstrates this principle of human relationality after He created all of nature He recognises that it is not good for the male to be alone. He then parades the animal Kingdom before Adam and Adam then names them. He also realises that every one of the creation animals has a mate, yet he does not have one. God then causes him to go into a deep sleep and fashions a partner fitting for him.

It is here that much of the theology of marriage is to be addressed. The narrative of the creation is to relay the story of God and how He has fashioned the world to fit together. The story of creation is not to be seen primarily from a scientific perspective but from a perspective that would have a

theological purpose at its end. God pronounces that it is not good for man to be alone and fashions his wife Eve. Genesis 2:18 (NIV): The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”<sup>9</sup>

In the creation account it was God who declared it not good for man to be alone. Hence man was created to be in a relationship. It is important to note that at this point Keil and Delitzsch make an observation that man would recognise himself in his wife. He also attaches significance to them being able to fulfil their calling. When we speak of the creation of man and woman we need to embrace the notion of being “part of” and “out of”. The writer hopes to erase through this perspective the erroneous perception that woman was created as man’s servant. She rather should be seen as being his equal before God and as a complementary part of him.

An important pronouncement from God is important to note here. In God exclaiming that it was “not good” for man to be alone, after His creation of man and woman fulfilling His intent and completion of creation, He exclaims, that it is “very good.” Westermann says, “The sentence belongs to the whole structure of creation story with its divisions into the individual works of God. A work which a worker or master craftsman prepares is, from the very start, always in a certain context; it is prepared so that it is good for some purpose or for some person” (1974:61). The important aspect to be clear on is that God’s view is “through His eyes”. When one reads God’s evaluation Westermann warns that our idea of good, *tob*, is coloured by our cultural understanding. “The Hebrew word *tob*, which we translate by ‘good’, has a broader area of meaning than our ‘good’. It can be also include our word ‘beautiful’. We can hear in this sentence the overtone: ‘...and see it was very ‘beautiful’. In the Old Testament the beautiful is primarily an event; the proper approach to the beautiful in this context is not the beholding of something that is there, an image or perhaps a statue, but an encounter. The beautiful is experience in the encounter” (Westermann 1974:63).

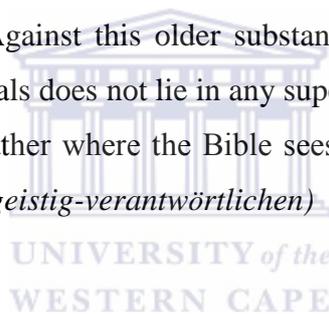
Through the divine charge from God that they are to populate the earth and also “rule over” it, God himself transfers a similar relationship of humankind to not only the divine but also to that which is created. All of creation is placed under humankind’s stewardship and they now act on behalf of God in managing these vital resources He created. The perception in Darwinism, that humankind is not

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<sup>9</sup> As the creation of the man is introduced in Gen. 1:26-27, with a divine decree, so here that of the woman is preceded by the divine declaration, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ, a help of his like*: “i.e., a helping being, in which, as soon as he sees it, he may recognise himself”. Of such a help the man stood in need, in order that he might fulfil his calling, not only to perpetuate and multiply his race, but to cultivate and govern the earth (Keil and Delitzsch 2009:48).

superior to animals, is here relativised. We see that humankind is placed above and in charge of nature.

In an article written by Daniel Miller, *Responsible Relationship: Imago Dei and the Moral Distinction between Humans and Other Animals* (2011), he links the uniqueness of humanity directly to their being created in the 'Image of God'. The article is written in response to an assertion made by Charles Darwin in his book, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. Miller (2011:2) quotes Brunner, saying that the distinction between humankind and animals does not lie in the fact that they can use tools (*faber*), as opposed to animals that cannot, but that this uniqueness of humankind lies in the way the Bible sees it. From the face of it, it would be understandable to limit the distinction purely in that humankind has unique *capacities* like reason and morality. Miller, however, agrees with Barth and Brunner who link human uniqueness to their divine connection. "Both Brunner and Barth define the *Imago Dei* as the human existence in responsible relationship with God and other creatures rather than the unique capacities that humans possess like reason and morality. Against this older substantialist view, Brunner claims that the boundary between humans and animals does not lie in any superior physical or intellectual ability of humans. 'The boundary is placed rather where the Bible sees it: in being created in the Image of God, in the spiritual-responsible (*geistig-verantwortlichen*) personal being of humans'" (Miller 2011:2).



Miller does not lean on a comparison of physical or mental capabilities and in so doing prove humankind as superior to animals, but makes the point that humankind is created for relationship and this makes them distinctive. The relationship he pointed out is spiritual and a spiritual-responsible relationship with humankind and the rest of the creation of God who placed humankind as custodian over it. The raising of humankind's role is very important and hence humankind "is not threatened by the discovery of rudimentary reasoning powers or even 'incipient morality' in some animal species" (Miller 2011:2).

In a paper delivered at the University of the Western Cape, Dr. Kobus Anthonissen gave a brief explanation of Object Relations put forward by Donald Winnicott: "Object relations, briefly speaking, refer to an internal and external world of relationships. Object is a technical term referring to "that with which a subject relates" (Anthonissen 2006:1). The theory deals with the development of the self from the perspective of a child in relation to its mother; on how the child starts to develop from the "good enough" mom's care to an independent person who can then develop its own object

relations. “Good enough mothering, especially holding, allows the infant to move from fusion and merger with the mother to a state of being separate from her and capable of object relationships” (2006:3).

Miller quotes from William Lillie as he explains Brunner’s position: “One of Brunner’s favourite words is responsibility (*Verantwortlichkeit*)” (Miller 1995:12). Humankind’s responsibility is directly related to the one who made him. It is here that man is separate from and unique in his responsibility and that is toward God. Humanity’s responsibility derives from the particularity of our relationships - humans are those creatures that knowingly and freely respond to God’s Word (Miller 1995:13). Humankind has the innate ability to respond to God and conform to the divine intent he was fashioned for, or disobey out of choice. The difference then between humankind and the animals is whether they have a choice whatsoever or whether they have been created and completed. It would seem that humankind has been created with a certain amount of fluidity even though that may be limited. Miller credits Barth for making the observation that although we are not aware of the relationship and even how God communicates with animals, this does not discount that a relationship exists. Barth uses the example of the big fish that swallowed Jonah and also the ravens that fed Elijah (Miller 1995:14).

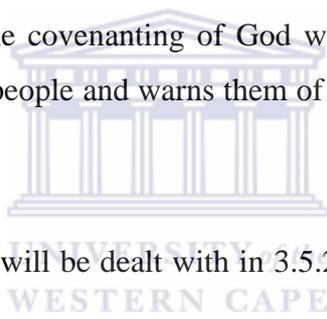
In the biblical narrative one sees the patterns emerging that the entire story is about this relationship between God and humankind and how through various decisions of humankind this relationship is strained.

### **3.3 THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE COUNCELLOR**

Marriage in the Christian context is not an invention of man as a good idea to ensure that man can be placed in relationship. The big question may be: “whose idea is marriage anyway?” Jesus would confidently assert that “Marriage is God’s idea” and the idea of marriage was there, like Jesus said, “from the beginning.” There are many ways in which man and woman form relationships. There are relationships that are sexually intimate friendships within which the woman becomes pregnant through copulation and babies are born into that relationship. In Scripture heterosexual relationships for marriage is specified by God as the ideal one as it not only serves as His idea of marriage but also would serve out one of His primary purposes which is to populate the earth. When Jesus responds to the questions asked of him in Matthew 19: 4 and 9, and he refers to the “beginning”, it

is implied that the answer to the question posed to Him at that time has its answers in the “beginning”, written some thousands of years ago. It would then be prudent to go there and see what the creator had in mind at “the beginning”.

After God created man and woman equally he then could reveal to them the purpose of their relationship. In Gen 1:28 the implication is that the purpose of marriage was then to procreate and populate the Earth. It is helpful to see that after the flood the same language is used by God, telling Noah to “be fruitful and multiply” - three times, in Gen 8:17, 9:1 and 9:7. In Barbara Sharman’s book she makes a case that even in that time God meant for man to have sex with one woman and not with many women. Her main argument is to make mention of the lists depicting the generations and that there is no dispute as to who the father is. “If the women living in Biblical times had more than one male sexual partner, then there would be disputes as to the fathers of sons. However there seems to be no dispute - and the only reason for this would be that women had sex with one partner” (Sharman 2003:5). Sharman makes a case for the significance of the sexual act between man and his wife as proximating the covenanting of God with man. It is an intimate image and often used when God speaks to His people and warns them of spiritual adultery when they run after foreign gods.



The *principles* that govern marriage will be dealt with in 3.5.2 in detail. Here we first focus on the *purpose* of the marriage relationship.

To summarise what Kline (1979:30-31) says about the purpose of marriage we can mention the following:

1. “Marriage is the symbol for the movement from individualization to participation, to use Paul Tillich’s terms.”
2. “Fidelity, faithfulness, constancy, is central to marriage. Vows are given and taken between a woman and a man, and these correspond to the vows of the covenant in the Old Testament and the new covenant in Jesus Christ.” What is important for the pastor to understand here is that this love and faithfulness proximate the love and faithfulness of God. His faithfulness and ability to fulfil his part of the covenant is not dependant on our faithfulness. We need to understand that men and women are to be faithful to one another in the same way as God is to us.

3. “Forgiveness is inescapably bound up with forgiveness.” Here is a very important principle that we need to be clear on and this reverts to the relationship every Christian has with Christ: that when we are unfaithful to Him, he accepts us back when we ask for forgiveness and repent of our aberrant behaviour.

The *purpose of marriage* can then be summarized as follows:

1. In Paul’s theology he asserts that marriage is wherein any conjugal privilege is enjoyed. In simple terms, when humankind’s sexuality is exercised outside of the confines of marriage it is seen as sinful. In I Corinthians 7:9 (NIV) Paul could encourage the Church as follows: “But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”
2. “Marriage has as its purpose procreation, the continuation of the human race, the replication of the parents.” As we can see, marriage seemingly is the safe area wherein children can be conceived. “This understanding of marriage is also central to the Roman Catholic Church and precisely the cause of much struggle today among Roman Catholics. That this is the purpose of marriage is the basis of the prohibition of contraception and abortion. It is also deep in the sacramental theology, in that the material of the sacrament of marriage is the sexual act for procreation, and that until the marriage is consummated it is not finally a valid sacrament” (Kline 1979:32). This area has been the subject of many debates and also although it could be seen positively in light of the sexually transmitted diseases, it may seem that sexual contact would of necessity be only for procreation and never for a couple as recreational.
3. “The purpose of marriage is by some understood to be to provide for the stable context of child-rearing and for family continuity.” Marriage is the ideal place where children can be reared and also socialized. Paul commands in Ephesians 6:1 (NIV): “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” There is order in terms of command in the relationship of parents to children. It is interesting to note in relation to raising children that fathers are cautioned not to exasperate their children. The child would also then as of necessity experience the forgiveness the parents have received from God. One would however not be overemphasising the role of the parents, as though they would model “God” to their children.
4. “Marriage has as its purpose mutual human support and help. The word *help* is used deliberately, for it is a Biblical word. In Genesis 2, what is sought and provided for Adam is a *help* fit or meet for him.” This word has been the cause of many problems and especially in theological circles had caused many women to be seen as subservient help. This view has

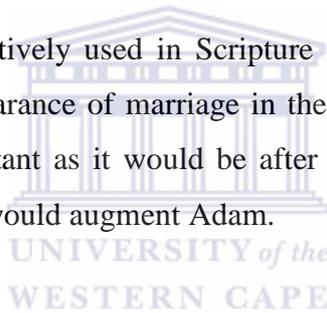
caused men to assume that their superior power position has been legitimised by this specific reference. [This role of the wife is dealt with comprehensively in 3.5.4].

Marriage is the most important crucible the Lord has designed within which humankind relationally grows in their development. We often hear that people grow and develop in relationship for this there is no truer place than the family home which has been sanctified by God through the covenant of marriage.

### **3.4 THE CONCEPT OF ‘IMAGO DEI’ IN MARRIAGE**

The question could easily and reasonably be asked: why even look at the concept of the Image of God in relation to marriage? A careful look at the divine image being transferred to humankind at creation would be a good vantage point to start. The great deal of attention that God gave to make sure that Adam has a wife that is suitable for him calls for our attention.

The imagery of marriage is exhaustively used in Scripture especially in relation of God to His people Israel. We see the first appearance of marriage in the Garden of Eden when God presents Eve to Adam. This image is important as it would be after the creation of the woman that God would present her as someone who would augment Adam.



In an article appearing in March 1979 entitled *Marriage Today: A Theological Carpet Bag*, C. Benton Kline says: “What we find in the Bible most often is the use of marriage as a paradigm for other theological insights. And whenever the Bible uses something from our human experience as a paradigm, or model, or symbol, then there is a double direction of working. First of all the human activity or experience points to or illuminates something of God’s activity or intention” (Kline 1979:24).

In considering the Image of God in the Bible it would be wise for us to see how this metaphor is being used in Scripture and thereby establish which light it sheds on marriage. In his contribution Kline highlights three paradigms.

The first one is where an answer, by means of an aetiological story about how-it-came-to-be-that, is given to the question: why is there marriage? According to the story, marriage is instituted by God to solve man’s loneliness. A second why question which finds an answer in the story is: Why the

unity of marriage? “Because man and woman are from the same flesh, they become one flesh” (Kline 1979:26).

The second paradigm links with the image used of marriage as it appears in Genesis, about the intriguing relation of the sexes, of a man and a woman, from the creation story onwards into history. This second paradigm is also found in Hosea 1-3 and various other crucial scriptures. “The same paradigm is found in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, in Isaiah 40-55, but it is most vivid and extended in Hosea” (1979: 26). The story in Hosea is about a woman who is unfaithful to her husband and the story depicts the faithfulness of God as opposed to unfaithfulness of Israel. Hosea is to find Gomer and marry her again. He brings her back and restores their relationship. It becomes very clear that the story really is about God as He wants Israel to be His spouse. Even though she is very unfaithful to Him He would go to any length to woo her back and re-establish his covenant with her. “And the unfaithfulness of Israel to God is to be understood in terms of the breaking of marriage vows. So a bad marriage, a broken marriage, a fighting-for-survival marriage becomes a paradigm for understanding something about how God is. We learn from Hosea and Gomer something about the nature and character and purpose of God who is faithful in the face of unfaithful response” (1979:26).

This second paradigm is about God writing His story in the lives of people. So the image is rich in its depth of feelings of hurt and yearning of a God who wants a relationship with a people He intensely loves. It also magnifies the human elements of being spurned and the story carries the hearers along an emotional journey of experience which really translates the emotional love of a God, whom they cannot see, into human terms they can relate to. The story carries huge significance for us as people and is clearly a move from duality to unity. “This paradigm also points us to His love, not simply as the move from duality to unity, from apartness to togetherness, but love seen now as grace and mercy and forgiveness in the undeservedness of being loved” (Kline 1979:28).

The third paradigm is found in the letters of Paul as he speaks of marriage in various passages, especially in Ephesians 5:21-33. This passage is a very difficult one especially as it refers to the relationship between man and woman but becomes very difficult especially as it refers to modern day society. The passage is equally difficult for men as it is for women. In this passage he Paul asks women to be “subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.” This passage itself has evoked more resistance from people than any other passage as it would at a first reading have at its core the

subjugation of women to men. It smacks of male power over female but soon the tenure changes to asking the male to love his wife as Christ loves the Church, his body. The husband then is to model loving His wife at the same level and depth of intensity as Christ does for His Church which He died for.

The discussion and intermingling of metaphors are huge but deeply relational. Here again we see the strong connection made by Paul of marriage between man and woman and again trying to in a human way emotionally connect the Church with the emotional affection God has for His people, His Church. The language he uses is covenantal and implies privilege as well as duty. It calls for the wife to be aware of her relation to her husband; of the same obedience as she would have to the Lord, but also for the husband to work toward keeping his wife clean as Christ cleanses the Church.

This passage is layered in so many ways as it reveals the heart of God and his relationship to His Church. It also shows a body of His Church who is obedient to its Lord and would do anything He asks of her. In his article Kline raises two issues from this passage: First, that the relationship of husband and wife, of Christ and the Church, involves both obedience and love, together. We need to think what both of these mean, and especially what obedience means in light of the today's world. A second is that the heart of marriage is the intimacy of human inter-relationship, echoing the Genesis passage and pressing the "one flesh" model on to the way in which I care for, treat, live with my own body: how I am *in* my own body, how I am *with* my own body, how I *am* my own body. That sort of intimacy, which is at the centre of my selfhood, somehow has to do with the kind of relationship marriage is and all that human relationships are (Kline 1979:27).

The richness of these passages have many deep levels and raises the level of husband and wife, that in the past has unfortunately been reduced to a power struggle of "who is in control", to new heights. Sadly, the pastor sees much more of this negative side of this stunning relationship – aspects that will be dealt with a little later in the chapter.

Other passages of Paul need to be carefully considered and looked at as they also have much to contribute to the discussion of marriage in the New Testament context. One such passage deals with heterosexual relationships and is found in 1 Corinthians 7. From the outset of the passage we see the apostle Paul speaks to a Church that is deeply "carnal". Paul is trying to help the Church see what marriage is all about and offers some advice. At the outset of the chapter Paul mentions that it is not good to be married (v 1). He then proceeds to mention to them that because of the present immorality they need to elect to have their own wife. He then encourages the husband and wife to

fulfil their marital duty to one another. In the context from 1-7 it becomes clear that he is suggesting a carefully considered approach of how they would care for one another, conjugally. Paul here introduces a tremendously deep relationship dynamic as to how they need to consider one another. He says in 1 Cor 7:4 (NIV) “The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.” The one flesh concept which is taken from Genesis is re-introduced and we can also see mutual ownership and reciprocity. A deep sense of mutual care permeates his letter in relation to husband and wife. His advice to couples are deeply embedded in the idea that there is a greater war going on and that Satan could use the natural need for sexual gratification as a potential trap to draw them away from their commitment to God through Christ. There is no question that Paul would later in the same passage consider marriage as transient and not essential to embrace, as this world and its agenda is transient in comparison to the spiritual agenda of the Kingdom of God.

In I Corinthians 7:12-16 Paul would speak to the church about their realising in the context of an unbelieving world the reality of a believing spouse and an unbelieving spouse. He advises the believing spouse not to seek divorce and that they keep in mind that the unbelieving spouse is sanctified through the believing spouse. In this relationship, although only one member in the relationship believes, the children are cleansed through the believer's presence (v 14). Paul then asks a rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 7:16 (NIV): “How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?” Here Paul almost wants the believer to see himself or herself in context of God's greater plan that He wants to save all of mankind, including their spouse.

It is interesting to note, from reading these passages, that marriage in the Bible is not seen as a specific religious ritual that is captured by any religion, but is part of God's created order. According to Miller, “marriage is an order of the created world, not an order of some religion... Marriage is the way God has arranged the human creation; it is God's gift to human beings in the created order” (Kline 1979: 29). He warns however that “the church must recognise – even the Church which sacramentalizes marriage – that marriage is a reality of the world before it is a reality of the Church. So ministers perform weddings first of all as officers of the state, and we thereby acknowledge the secular character of marriage which we bless. And we bless marriage as a secular, created relativity which can be claimed in religious ways – in Christian ways – by those who live in this world as those who live by created order” (Kline 1979:30).

### **3.5 THE CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE**

Marriage, is used as a metaphor, descriptive of the relationship between God and His people. The question that begs an answer is, “What governs this relationship?” A whole host of questions can be asked as we approach this issue. What are the terms of this relationship and how are those terms arrived at and regulated? A further question could be asked: how are these terms negotiated? Are, these terms negotiated or are they set by God. Who is in the negotiation of the terms and who has the upper hand? Who assumes the master and who assumes the servant role? What is required from each of the parties and can either party renegotiate the agreement? What if one of the parties is unhappy with the relationship can they renegotiate or if negotiations fails, withdraw from any performance of the agreement? Are the terms enforceable and how? What must be expected from each other?

#### **3.5.1 THE CONCEPT OF “COVENANT” IN MARRIAGE**

This underlying concept of covenant which undergirds and guides the relationship of marriage is vital for the minister to understand as this distinguishes pastoral counselling and specifically Christian counselling from conventional counselling. This concept provides a framework within which humankind’s marriage relationship is seated. It is modelled on how God, Himself manages His relationship with Israel. The Bible is replete of marriage imagery and especially as the ‘platform’ on which God holds Israel relationally accountable. In the story of Hosea we see a grand interplay of this marriage imagery of how God displays his character in the life of His prophet Hosea and graphically demonstrates his covenantal disposition that governs Him. It is interesting that in reading this story we cannot but be overcome with the feeling that even in God’s case there must a stage of emotional saturation. The story relates how Hosea goes to fetch Gomer even after she still prostitutes herself to other men. It is however in this grand metaphor of marriage and unconditional acceptance that God demonstrates, in the life of His prophet Hosea. His love for Israel is displayed even after she prostitutes herself by running after other gods. Yet this is not all that God wants to demonstrate in this story. In Quinn’s article, he makes a few very important observations regarding the character of this covenant between humankind and God.

“The fundamental character of this marriage, and also of the covenant, is the undying fidelity, the steadfast love that underlies the relationship. Hosea’s love, like Yahweh’s, is not conditional; it remains open to the unfaithful partner under the most painful circumstances. The book, then, shows

that this relationship is founded not on externals, not on legal documents, not on verbal agreements, although they are there, but on the interior attitude of *hesed* or love.”<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note that the adhesive properties of the marriage are both the legal and the emotional connection inside of the actual relationship. Why would this be important? The answer is that although the emotional connection and relational issues are important, the crucial question remains: what happens in the event of renegeing? Is there an external enforceable mechanism that compels and ensures the rights of the couple? We cannot ignore the importance of both these components.

When one considers this relationship between husband and wife in the same way as God intends us, the legal imperatives of the covenant needs to be elevated and stated in our understanding. They go together and would include rights as well as privileges; the emotional connection between God and His “wife” Israel is governed by the inter-relatedness of both these dynamics: both internal, emotional, and the external, i.e. the enforceable rights from outside.

An interesting discussion is offered by Bredekamp.<sup>11</sup> He makes a case for the severance of old ties and the establishment of new terms of relationship. Covenant means ‘bringing together’ what needs to be together, even though that may imply sacrifice.

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<sup>10</sup> Quinn, 1971:387-398. In the Bible, marriage is not founded on natural law arguments (that marriage is good because procreation is good), but rather upon the idea of the covenant between God and his people. The classic notion of covenant appears in the Book of Exodus, where God makes the covenant with his people at Sinai. What happens here is more than the making of a legal contract, although it does have a legal form. George Mendenhall (1954: 56-74) has pointed out that the pattern of this covenant is the same as that of an ancient Hittite suzerainty treaty. Although it has a legal form, the basis of it is what the Hebrews called *hesed*. *Hesed* connotes the idea of mutual respect, kindness, love, loyalty, and fidelity. Among the Hittites there were a number of these contracts or treaties made between Kings and vassals, which had a legal form but did not depend upon a legal form for validity. Rather the soundness or validity of the treaty depended on the attitude of the partners. The king showed *hesed* for his vassal and the vassal responded in like manner toward the king. Mendenhall says that the Sinai covenant is also based on this idea. The Sinai covenant, then, is really a relationship based on attitude more than on legality. It has a legal form but it does not depend upon it; rather it depends upon the inner relationship that exists between partners. The covenant has an invisible, really a spiritual foundation. The bond between God and Israel consists primarily of spiritual, interpersonal contact.

<sup>11</sup> Bredekamp (1885:354): “*Berith* (from *barah* - to cut, separate) has been explained as determination, establishment. Then a derivative sense is a settlement made between individuals, and regulating their mutual relation. We cannot agree with this. The original import is not *diatheke* a putting apart (in its primitive sense, *monopleuros*, one-sided) but *syntheke*, a putting together. Thus *berith* comes from the mutuality... This is proved by the frequent construction with the prepositions ‘with’ and ‘between’. The conception *diatheke*, usually distinguished by the construction with *le*, sets out from the fact that every covenant includes individual stipulations. To that is added the special nature of this covenant, in which God as a superior proffers and imposes the obligations without which no covenant can be thought of. Hence also there is little said of Jehovah’s performance of the covenant. His faithfulness makes it certain that he will keep his pledges, and the other party only needs admonition...It lies in the conception of a covenant that it constitutes a legal relation bringing with it obligations and rights for the parties. Jehovah pledges himself to be a faithful covenant God to his people, and in return demands their obedience. It is for this that in the prophets Jehovah so often appears remonstrating and reasoning with his people. Israel on the other hand may expect the fulfilment of the divine promises

In Paul's account and reflection of the relationship the Christ has with His Church he also uses this imagery, but in an interesting way. Paul expresses an expectation of the husband having to love his wife as Christ loves His Church. These love relationships are intensely sacrificial and this relationship is to challenge the husband that he needs to relook at his way he sees His wife and almost re-evaluate his attitude to her and align to what God wants.

### **3.5.2 THE CONCEPT OF “LEAVING AND CLEAVING” AND “TWO BECOMING ONE FLESH”**

This pronouncement from God to the husband and the wife is interesting and deserves to be explored in detail. Exploring the implication of this pronouncement, textual relevance will help deepen our understanding what is required for this relationship.

Genesis 2:21-24: “And the Lord God sent a deep sleep on the man, and took one of the bones from his side while he was sleeping, joining up the flesh again in its place: And the bone which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman, and took her to the man. And the man said, ‘This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh: let her name be Woman because she was taken out of Man’. For this cause will a man go away from his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and they will be one flesh.”

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In this passage we see a few aspects of the relationship which is established between husband and wife. Here the writer deals with the forming of Adam's wife. God takes a bone from his side and shapes his wife and presents her to Adam. In this story we encounter deep insight into the initial forming of relationship between Adam and his wife, especially concerning the ‘chronology’ of the creation.

A close reading of the text helps us see if there is any trace of superiority and inferiority inferred by the text. It is important to see if maybe those who hold either position are justified, and if so, why they would be justified.

The utterance “bone of my bones” is an interesting one as this is uttered by Adam when he recognises his wife as a part of him and has come from him as presented to him by God. De Jong

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in case the people keep the covenant pledges. The question arises whether with these covenant pledges was united the element of public worship. Everywhere in the olden time covenant and sacrifice are kept close together.”

makes mention of a few passages where the phrase is used similarly: “Expressions similar to those in this verse are used elsewhere in the Old Testament (cf. Genesis 29:14; Judges. 9:2; 2 Samuel. 5:1; 19:12,13) to indicate a blood relationship and...an equality of being (De Jong 1979:128). He goes further to state in reference to Gen 2:24 that, “The meaning of the last verse of this passage (v 24) is apparent. Marriage is a relationship of mutuality between man and woman, of interdependence – an organic, ‘one flesh’ relationship. ‘One flesh’ denotes a unity, not a differentiation of being or quality” (De Jong 1979:128). The concept of the ‘one flesh’ could also have conjugal overtones when the man and woman consummate their marriage through having intercourse. ‘One flesh’ denotes the total connectedness between husband and wife. This concept is also repeated by Jesus in Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9.

In this relationship we also see the concept of “leaving and cleaving”. De Jong makes an interesting observation regarding this: “Finally one might point out that ‘the man’ in verse 24 leaves his domicile to join his wife, implying a superiority of the female, since the normal practice in marriage customs around the world is that the less important person joins the more important one” (De Jong 1979:129). In reading this narrative one often seems to become involved in the superiority-inferiority debate and, like de Jong says: This reflects “more on the biases of the interpreters than the message of Scripture” (129). When one looks at Christ leaving heaven to capture the heart of His Church it certainly elevates the regard He has for us as His bride, more than just as creatures but as a people worthy of Him leaving heaven for us. I concur with De Jong’s view, that God, from the beginning, wants us to have the same regard for our wives as He has for those whom He loves.

The idea of “leaving and cleaving” is dealt with extensively by Keil and Delitzsch (2009).<sup>12</sup> The word “leaving” has the idea of utterly severing ties with and being separate from. In the Annotated

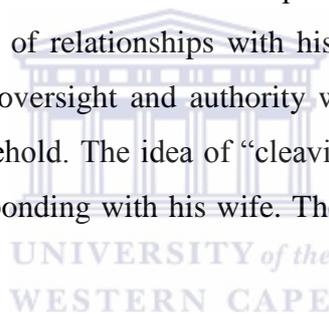
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<sup>12</sup> “The words which follow, ‘therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall become one flesh’, are not to be regarded as Adam’s, first on account of the עֲלִיָּכָן, which is always used in Genesis, with the exception of Gen 20:6; Gen 42:21, to introduce remarks of the writer, either of an archaeological or of a historical character, and secondly, because, even if Adam on seeing the woman had given prophetic utterance to his perception of the mystery of marriage, he could not with propriety have spoken of father and mother. They are the words of Moses, written to bring out the truth embodied in the fact recorded as a divinely appointed result, to exhibit marriage as the deepest corporeal and spiritual unity of man and woman, and to hold up monogamy before the eyes of the people of Israel as the form of marriage ordained by God. But as the words of Moses, they are the utterance of divine revelation; and Christ could quote them, therefore, as the word of God (Mat 19:5). By the leaving of father and mother, which applies to the woman as well as to the man, the conjugal union is shown to be a spiritual oneness, a vital communion of heart as well as of body, in which it finds its consummation. This union is of a totally different nature from that of parents and children; hence marriage between parents and children is entirely opposed to the ordinance of God. Marriage itself, notwithstanding the fact that it demands the leaving of father and mother, is a holy appointment of God; hence celibacy is not a higher or holier state, and the relation of the sexes for a pure and holy man is a pure and holy relation. This is shown in Gen 2:25: ‘They were both naked עֲרוּמִים, with *dagesh* in the מ, is an abbreviated form of עֲרוּמִים Gen 3:7, from עור to strip), the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.’ Their bodies were sanctified by the spirit, which animated them. Shame entered first with sin, which destroyed the normal relation of the spirit to the body,

Strong's Dictionaries we find a treatment of the word which makes mention that the verb עזב has two separate Hebrew roots: the more common one means “to leave, to abandon, to forsake, to loose” and the second meaning could have a more positive meaning: “to restore or repair. It occurs only in Nehemiah 3:8 in reference to the walls of Jerusalem” (Strong 2009:341).

The idea of “cleaving” denotes the idea of union which is more of a permanent nature than a temporary arrangement. The idea of permanent bonding is to be seen in this aspect of the relationship. It is important for the pastor to note the comments made by Keil and Delitzsch, as these insertions may have been made by Moses at the time of writing the first five books as at a time when Adam did not have a mother or a father – hence this model as envisioned by Moses would act as the model for all future relationships.

The usage of the word “leaving” is one which at its roots denotes total abandonment.<sup>13</sup> From this one can extrapolate that when the male would leave his parents' home and cleave to his wife, it implies some form of abandonment of relationships with his parents. In the case of the younger man, he then also cuts any ties of oversight and authority which his father has over his life; in essence he then starts his own household. The idea of “cleaving” has at its roots the “adhering” to his wife. The essence is complete bonding with his wife. The Hebrew has at its intent the idea of catching and enveloping.



The implications are immense for couples to understand that in this conscious separation from their initial nurturing environment with their parents there lay implied the idea of permanence and total commitment to the new one. The understanding of this separation is crucial and is important as it brings important adjustment dynamics for both of them.

### **3.5.3 THE GENDER ROLES WITHIN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP**

This area has been the most hotly debated topic in the entire area of marriage. It has been the cause of strife and is probably one of the most misunderstood areas of theology.

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exciting tendencies and lusts which warred against the soul, and turning the sacred ordinance of God into sensual impulses and the lust of the flesh”.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, Driver and Briggs 1907: עזב, 'âzab *aw-zab'* - A primitive root; to *loosen*, that is, *relinquish, permit*; commit self, fail, forsake, fortify, help, leave (destitute, off), refuse.

De Jong describes the traditional roles of women and men in American society prior to the Industrial revolution. “The traditional role of the woman is that of a mother and a housewife” (1979:11). He mentions that these roles consisted of two obligations: caring for the household and being a wife. She takes care of all their physical needs like buying food and preparing meals and chauffeuring kids. “As the traditional wife, the woman is expected to be affectionate toward her husband and sexually accessible to him.” She also needs to “loyally subordinate her own interests to his occupational interests” (1979:12). She should also know that “economic power resides with him”, she accepts an economic and social dependant role, and also her social status dependant on her husband’s status in society (De Jong 1979:12).

In contrast, the male role is one of being provider, being sexually accessible to his wife, head of the family and being the final authority in all the decisions in the home (1979:13). These roles however changed when women entered the workplace, especially as paid worker (De Jong 1979:18). The greatest increase came from 1940 to 1945, when the workforce percentage of women jumped from 29% to 38% (1979:18). As the economic and political landscape changed, so too did the roles of women and men. These roles have become to be understood more in terms of sharing and reciprocity. De Jong adds that these changes that came about regarding the roles “is not a fundamental change but a partial blurring of sex roles” (1979:22).

This raises a question for Christians as to how they should respond to this issue of roles and responsibility of man and woman within the marriage relationship. De Jong answers the question carefully: “Basing one’s position on carefully selected examples and culturally tinged interpretations of isolated texts is simplistic and can only distort God’s revelation to men and women” (1979:30). The example he uses is to interpret the headship of the male in Ephesians 5:22-23, implying ‘the man’ as the major decision maker, but also reconciling this with a passage from Ephesians 5:21, “in which Paul instructs all Christians to be in subjection to one another.” (1979:30)

The way of interpreting Scripture, the hermeneutics, needs to be clarified before tackling the meaning of the texts the researcher will draw from. De Jong states that one needs to be aware of the fact that, firstly, “the Bible was written in specific cultural and historic contexts, it must be interpreted within these contexts.” He further warns: “The message of Scripture is incomplete and distorted unless it is interpreted in the context on which it was written” (1979:122). Secondly, scripture is given to mankind via the vehicle of language and hence needs to be interpreted within

the very medium it is conveyed. He speaks of “a word representing an area of meaning, not an exact point of meaning” (122). “The issues of word order, morphology (the pattern of word formation in a particular language), syntax (the patterns of word order in sentences), and idiom must also be thoroughly be considered in the interpretation of Scripture. It is possible to know the meaning of all the words in a particular sentence and still have difficulty understanding the meaning of the sentence” (123). He further states the third principle, that “since Scripture contains a single, internally consistent body of truth, any passage of Scripture must be understood in terms of the context of all Scripture” (122).

### 3.5.4 THE ROLE OF THE “HUSBAND”

The role of the male and the female as depicted in Scripture must be carefully considered. From the outset it is important for the reader to note that the researcher wants to delineate a specific period in the sequence of the biblical story. The focus here is on the role of husband and wife *after* what has been termed “the fall”, thus in a state where the presence of sin is a constant reality. Specifically we should take note of the big change in the power dynamics of the husband and wife’s relationship. This is fundamental to the overall understanding of the role of man and woman today. An understanding of the roles would also change when God addresses Adam and Eve. Kline (1979) does a thorough treatment of this dynamic and the depth of commitment required of especially the husband.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Kline (1979:26-27) “...Ephesians 5:21-33, which is like several other such passages in Paul’s letters about the relationships of husbands and wives to each other, but which is unique in the way it treats those relations. This passage is made more difficult for us today in the light of the changed role of women in our society *vis-a-vis* New Testament society and in the light of the self-consciousness of women about that changed role. But a careful look at the passage shows that it is as difficult for men/husbands as it is for women/wives.” It begins: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.” And that is difficult to offer to people today, or to some people. “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its saviour.” That starts off like male power, but it ends as terrifying for the husband, when he is to model the way Christ heads and *saves* the church. The passage comes back to the wife again: “As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.” Then follows the word to husbands: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that the church might be presented before him in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” Clearly here the relation of Christ to the church is the paradigm for the relation of husbands and wives, not the other way around. But at once the paradigm shifts direction again and also becomes a different paradigm: “Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.” The relationship is as intimate as one is to his own body. And that leads Paul to recall Genesis 2, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.” Paul comments, “This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects the husband.”

It is noted in Ephesians that the husband is head of the wife. This aspect causes many of us to be guarded. Metaphorically speaking, “the husband and the wife has become one flesh.” It is then natural to accept without inferring anything that the body would have a head. “...it needs to be restated that the headship of the husband does not connote any sense of qualitative superiority to the wife. In social psychology the husband’s rule over the wife is called ‘positional power,’ a power by virtue of one’s position. In God’s administration the role of the husband’s headship is positional power” (Litfin 1976: 335-336). In this debate it is interesting to see how much is written on this subject (Meyer 2000; Ridderbos P). The husband and wife, “two becoming one flesh” is also dealt with extensively with much depth of scholarship in this area (Hoehner 2002:770). His responsibilities to his wife would include, love his wife as his own body, the similarity should be as he cares for his own flesh, and the extent would be “as Christ loves the church”. This for me is the high view of marriage and the responsibility of the husband is great. The mystery of the Church equated to marriage is great.

### 3.5.5 THE ROLE OF THE “WIFE” AS “HELPER”

The role of the wife in the Old Testament is interesting and according to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) the woman is seen as the physical counterpart of the man, “deserving of his unswerving loyalty”. It is in this context (see Gen 1:24-25) that the word is first used in the sense of “mate” or “wife” (McComiskey 1980:59).

In the creation account God creates woman from man. Keil and Delitzsch (2009) point out that the divine decree is followed up by God with a divine declaration, “It is not good that the man should be alone”; “I will make him עֵזֶר: כְּנֶגְדוֹ, a help of his like: i.e. a helping being, in which, as soon as he sees it, he may recognise himself.” It is of value to note the reference Keil and Delitzsch make to recognition of the partner. They also mention that Adam recognises the design of God that at his eyes falling on Eve he utters, “*bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*”. The words “this is now (הַפַּעַם lit. *this time*) *bone of my bones,*” are expressive of joyous astonishment at the suitable helpmate, whose relation to himself he describes in the words: “*she shall be called woman, for she is taken out of man*” (2009:70).

We need to look closer at the relationship between man and woman. It is interesting to note that the concept of the role the woman is allocated by God is that she is a “helper”. Giving this word a cursory glance it conjures in us the sense of being an assistant or a subservient minion helping a

superior. However, De Jong does a thorough treatment of this word used in the Hebrew and makes the following observations regarding Genesis 2:18. This word is translated “helper” (NIV), and “partner” (NEB). One can easily be mistaken into believing that the words thus translated into English could denote a person of lesser significance. It is easy to read into this relationship between man and woman a male exercising domination over the woman. We function in a word/language orientated world that this overt understanding can easily be accepted as fact when seen devoid of the word’s origins. De Jong points out that usage of this word in the Bible would help us develop a picture of how it is to be viewed. “*’Ezer* occurs only 21 times in the Old Testament (Gen. 2:18-20; Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7,26,29; Ps. 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 89:19; 115:9, 10, 11; 121:1,2; 124:8 146:5; Isa. 30:5; Ezek. 12:14; Hos. 13:9; Dan. 11:34). The one to whom the word most often refers is God Himself. In its occurrences in the Pentateuch, other than in Genesis 2, and in the majority of its occurrences elsewhere in the Old Testament, *’ezer* refers to God. Since this word is used so frequently of God, contrasting the “help” of God to the “helplessness” of man, one can hardly suppose that it refers to an inferior or less able being in Genesis 2” (De Jong 1979:128).

That woman has been created to be the “helper” to the man and that the overwhelming use of the term for “helper” refers to God, calls for an adjustment of the way a woman is to be viewed by man. This term and its significance to the understanding of how this relationship is to be viewed, is important as it also infers a relationship that she is to which she is to be an important contributor to. We need to almost extricate ourselves from our cultural prejudice and see this relationship in a new way rather than in a “master – servant” relationship. The woman comes alongside her “husband” like God comes alongside humankind. If by analogy and usage we use the word “helper” to endorse our prejudicial position to justify that women are subservient to man, by implication we can then look at God as being subordinate to mankind. The woman then also is seen much higher than she is seen in man’s contemporary view of her as a helper in the worldly understanding. If viewed from such a new biblical understanding, from the perspective of God’s relationship with humanity, then ‘man’ must give a similar designation to his wife.

### **3.5.6 THE ROLE OF GOD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS RELATIONSHIP**

This role is often misunderstood and especially in context of relationships we often do not recognise the role of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit needs to be given its full right in this dialogue. Christians who willingly yield to the Holy Spirit that lives in them, walk in the Spirit day to day, deliberately yielding their will to God in everything they do. Their decisions have a spiritual

context and so their actions are always in submission to the Lordship and inner working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is part of the godhead and his role is crucial as he works in the life of the believer. The role of the Spirit is crucial in our treatment and this aspect will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6.

His treatment of Ephesians 5:21 deserve to be documented in this research study. “This verse is not the beginning of a new section but a fitting conclusion to the broader context of wisdom beginning in 5:17 and more particularly to the section which deals with the filling by the Spirit beginning with 5:18.<sup>15</sup> ... In this text as result of believers filled by the Spirit is submission to one another in the body of believers ... As previously stated this can only be done consciously under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit” (Hoehner 2002:716-717).

Van Ruler describes the inner relationship of God with His people. Even though we would love to think that it would be smooth and without any tension, “One could describe this conflict as a wrestling match (*worsteling*), a wrestling match that is a joust (*toernooi*), a friendly game (*liefdespel*) that is more like a conversation (*gesprek*). All of these facets belong to it and many more. And all of these – conflict, game, conversation – go on endlessly. They stretch out over the entire life-history of a person. The only time a decision takes place is when the Spirit momentarily breaks through and touches us with the wand of his sovereign power” (Van Ruler 1989:41). This is similar to a couple who at times in conflict can go through many nuances in their relationship. The orientation as we have seen should always be to the will of God and in submission to the Holy Spirit.

### **3.5.7 UNDERSTANDING OF THESE ROLES LEAD TO A HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP**

Is it possible to get a clue how to live harmoniously when we understand the roles God assigned to each gender in the relationship? In light of the developments in our society, should we not surrender our position in what we believe to be biblical? Should we not like a world not under the Kingdom reign of Christ, give a sigh of relief and say, “We tried”, and endorse unfettered accountable relationships without any godly authority attached to it? Indeed, should we not drop this seemingly

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Else Kahler, *Die Frau in den paulinischen Briefen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des begriffs der unterordnung* (Zurich:Gotthelf-Verlag, 1960), 99-100), 251 n. 453; J. Paul Sampley, ‘*And the two shall become One Flesh. A study of traditions in Ephesians*, SNTSMS, ed. Matthew Black, vol. 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 116; contra E. Howe, *Women and Church leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 54.

nice story, “in the beginning” as something unattainable, saying that life has become far more complex in the technological age. Can we not then with the world assert that the biblical concept of marriage does not provide the answers we need and is hopelessly outdated and outmoded. The temptation would then be to defer to secular humanism which should try and make sense of it all? I believe this sense of emotional ambivalence is the fertile ground for the Practical theologian to engage the culture and introduce a dialogue between culture and the word of God. As stated before the task of practical theology is not to *relativize* truth but to contextualise God’s truth.

We should spend more time on the ‘original account’ of creation. A deeper understanding of how these gender roles were supposed to interrelate is fundamental to our study. It may help us see that gender and gender roles are actually not designed to oppose one another, neither dominate one another, but were intended as part of a creation order to complement each other as ‘man’ and ‘woman’ seek the agenda of God in their lives. Our study of this subject, including ideas of male domination, is based on selected literature from the field. Upon closer scrutiny of the relevant biblical passages, one sees another picture of the relationship developing – is it possible that it will portray the ideal relationship?

The male role is clearly defined at the beginning in Genesis, and reiterated in Ephesians again: that the wife is served through love by her husband. We have also seen in 3.5.2 that in the original story it is the male who leaves his home and cleaves to his wife. This mechanism definitely does not illustrate or endorse that man is superior, but the exact opposite: that the wife, the woman, seems to be superior in significance to him, hence he is leaving his home for her (Kline 1979:24-37). We have also seen, both in Hosea and Ephesians, that the expectation from God to men is one of sacrifice.

It is in Ephesians that one starts to develop an understanding that this mixing of metaphorical language actually refers to Christ leaving heaven for his intended spouse, the church. It is about the agenda of God to be reconciled with his bride, this redeemed by the blood of His son Jesus Christ.

Addressing this very emotionally complex issue by engaging theological dialogue on the subject, it becomes apparent that culture influenced the power dynamic hugely. Hoehner includes a quote from Verner<sup>16</sup> in his discussion: “In early Greek and Roman households the patriarchal structure, the male head had extensive authority over the wife, children, and slaves (*pater familias*). However,

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<sup>16</sup> Verner 1983: 27-81.

by NT times most marriages took place *sine manus* (without power transferred to from the wife's father to the husband) so that women exercised a greater degree of independence from their husband. To some degree even the Jewish household (especially in Hellenistic Judaism) followed suit" (Hoehner 2002:728-729). It would seem that the responses are indicative of the social adjustment to what God would have intended for his economy. It is interesting that when we view relationships we tend to default like our society to a thought pattern which innately resists control or domination. "The call for mutual submission in Ephesians 5:21 is the last echo to be heard of the laboured reciprocity of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7. While the author of Ephesians does go on to address wives and husbands in turn, the directions he gives to each are different in kind. Wives are urged to submit 'to your husbands as to the Lord' (5:22). (The verb υποτασσομαι is supplied from the preceding phrase.) ωσ may bear a number of connotations here: taken in a comparative sense, wives are to defer to their husbands in the same manner as they defer to Christ: in the temporal sense. They should submit to husbands as long as they submit to Christ, that is to say, submission to her husband is the particular form a woman's service to Christ ought to take" (Beattie 2005:77).

As the entire thesis is geared to developing a Pneumatological Counselling model for pastors, it is important to note that in studying the passages and literature it becomes abundantly evident that we are caught up in trying to find a way of regulating relationships and not to be seen to in any way engender patriarchy. The problem is not patriarchy - it is deeper than that. For me the exegesis offers a perspective that hits at the heart of relationships between husband and wife. It must be noted that unbelievers tend to take great pride in individualism and independence, which leads to selfishness. Believers are to act differently and the ultimate authority they submit to is that of Christ and deferring to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Submission is not to be taken lightly but as Hoehner points out that "in the fear of Christ....It carries the idea of afraid or fearful of something or someone. It carries the idea of reverence and respect for God" (Hoehner 2002:717-718).<sup>17</sup>

### **3.6 THE IMPACT OF SIN ON "ADAM" AND "EVE"**

This aspect is crucial for sheer magnitude of the consequence of sin at a seemingly innocuous level and how this infraction impacts the primary relationship between husband and wife. We also observe in the narrative of creation and this aspect of sin, how it impacts the offspring.

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<sup>17</sup> Extensive discussion is done as to the usage of "φοβος" in all Greek literature. In all its usages it carries a deep reverence and respect for God.

Scripture of necessity needs to answer the all-encompassing question: “Where did this all go wrong then?” Scripture would answer with the very concept of unraveling of our society, as found in the book of Genesis, in the story of Adam and Eve. One can here immediately ask the question whether they were actual people with the name of Adam and Eve, or do these “names” rather indicate their nature, Adam being the first “man”, taken from “*adama*”, the red soil, and Eve being the “mother of nations”.

In the ‘mythistorical’ (Van Ruler) story of Adam and Eve one sees the creation of a man and a woman and to them God’s will is communicated. They are told they are to do certain things: they are to replenish the earth, they are to subdue the earth and they are to have dominion over the earth. It is interesting to see that God would have appointed them to take control over nature and take care of it.

The entry of sin into the creation account is fundamental for the pastoral carer, who should take into account the impact of sin as it occurs in “the beginning” and that can be expected to be repeated ever since, even in the relationship of a contemporary couple. When observed closely, with the Scriptures placed as template over the relationship, stark similarities can be witnessed according to the biblical pattern, of how relationships deteriorate when sin is present. When one reads the biblical account of the creation and especially when God introduces Eve to Adam, it is striking that there was no shame in the encounter where God introduces Adam’s wife to him; they are not ashamed of their nakedness, yet we find after sin entered they hid their nakedness from God. Keil and Delitzsch here mention that when sin entered, shame entered as well: “Shame entered first with sin, which destroyed the normal relation of the spirit to the body, exciting tendencies and lusts which warred against the soul, and turning the sacred ordinance of God into sensual impulses and the lust of the flesh” (2009:70).

The “fall of man’ in the Bible is an important aspect that needs exploration in pastoral care theory. The account in the Scriptures gives us some insight into what an ideal marriage relationship could be. Westermann speaks and cautions us not to see “the fall” as a once-off event of ‘the past’. He says that the relationship between God and humankind is characterised by the command given to the command receiver. God commands Adam to eat from the trees in the garden and prohibits him from eating from a particular tree. He also cautions Adam about the peril of losing his life if he disobeys that command. In this command is true freedom found. “He can abide by what has been

commanded or he can reject this...freedom belongs to the very nature of man, that in the possibility of freedom there is a broadening of man's human capabilities" (1974:90). It is important to note that, as a consequence of one party in the relationship starting to sin against God, this sin, which takes place in seeming isolation, affects all the human relationships drastically; all human sin is a repetition of this pattern of disobedience, revolt.

It can safely be assumed that God's primary command was for man and woman, according to Genesis 1:28 (NIV), "to be fruitful and multiply": "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground'." The two overriding concerns were reproduction, replenishment and to rule or have stewardship over the rest of creation. From this one can deduce that the woman would be primarily concerned with the bearing of children and then also caring for them. She would of necessity be focussed on the area closest to home. The man however would be more concerned with matters of areas further away from home. These would then not only demand greater physical strength but also being more robust. All other contact, as they developed, would be shared. The important area to be accentuated is that they would have responded and focussed their energy on their joint purpose and their respective contributions thereto. Many tasks concerning the children and the household would have been taken care of by the wife and she would have oversight over these matters. De Jong comments that "this division of tasks and associated areas of decision making that might – we speculate – have developed had there not been a fall would not have been due to different 'qualities' inherent in males and females. Genesis 1 and 2 does not indicate such differences" (1979:130).

The fall is a dramatic 'occurrence' in the history of humankind according to the Bible. The concept of the fall has been a very extensively discussed topic and the range of consideration is whether it is a one-time event that occurred in history or whether it is an occurrence that repeats itself within the history of humankind. There is no doubt that in the creation narrative there is an indication that two distinct possibilities, choices, exist: the one when humankind relates to God in a very close relationship, and the other where sin enters and suddenly, due to this introduction of behaviour specifically prohibited by God, the relationship is altered irreversibly. Westermann however would speak of this as being far deeper and that the only way to speak of sin would be as a defection.

"The story itself says far more than any subsequent explanation can. The scene is quite self-contained. The transgression of the command could be told without it. We see then what was the

intention of the narrator: he wants to present defection as a human phenomenon. There always has been, there always will be defection. One can follow up the changing significance of defection from one area of human existence to another. The defection to other gods plays an important role in ancient Israel as the time of entrance into the land. At times defection enters into the realm of private life ... The narrator also wants to say that it is not possible to come to terms with the origin of evil. There is no etiology of the origin of evil.” In his discussion then what the issue of evil is, he says. “It is a true defection. The serpent has something to offer: ‘you will be like God, knowing good and evil’.” He further wants us to understand that the temptation is that the two strongest drives of humankind, are to live and to know. What humankind forgets is that they were created with limited time on this earth and that God has innately created him with what he needs. Humankind oversteps his limits and this is damaging to his relationship with God. “In transgressing God: when man oversteps his limits he loses his standards” (Westermann 1974:92-93). God’s commandment man also oversteps the limit which is his very protection in his relationship to

This for the Christian marks the core of separation between man and God and the effect it had upon the relationship with God. That is not the only relationship that has changed; it also altered the dynamic and also the order of things between the man and his wife and even the children.

It will be helpful to delineate the areas where the marriage was altered. When ‘the first couple’ sinned against God the response from God was immediate. Their sin ruptured their relationship with God. By focusing on the consequences, the ‘curses’ of God, we see an irreversible sequence of events unfolding in the family. In our account here, for our purposes, we shall not deal extensively with the curses of God *vis-à-vis* the devious serpent.

### **3.6.1 THE CURSE OF THE “WOMAN” AND “MAN”**

Genesis 3:16 (NIV) reads as follows: *To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”* She will experience a great increase of pain in childbirth. According to Keil and Delitzsch, the sentence is not rendered more lucid by the assumption of a *hendiadys*: “That the woman should bear children was the original will of God; but it was a punishment that henceforth she was to bear them in sorrow, i.e. with pains which threatened her own life as well as that of the child” (Keil and Delitzsch 2009:51).

The indication we get here that the original command of God was to replenish the earth was not to be accompanied with much discomfort but ease. This new situation was more complex and also, like Keil and Delitzsch remark, endangers the lives of both the mother and the child. The event also marked the marring of the Image of God. Humankind here loses their right to choose and the consequence of them breaking their relationship with God kicks in. It is interesting to note that in Grenz' treatment of this concept he refers to Martin Luther where he says: "So disastrous is that loss that in Luther's estimation we cannot truly grasp what the *imago dei* actually entailed. On the contrary when we speak about that Image, we are speaking about something unknown ... we hear nothing except bear words" (Grenz 2001:164). He also makes an argument found in Luther: "But if you sin, you will lose my image, and you will die" (164).

De Jong has an interesting take on the curse against the woman in that, although he acknowledges that there are many interpretations of this passage in Gen 4:7, he alludes to a possible sexual interpretation that the woman's desire will be for her husband (sexually), even though having a child will come forth in pain (De Jong 1979:132).

Other possibilities regarding the woman's curse, according to De Jong, are:

1. Referring to Vos, he states that the woman, "...because she has less physical strength, will desire the man for protection after she is banned from the garden and placed in a hostile world in which brutality and force is at the order of the day." This desire will be there, he adds, as a result of the fact that the man will rule over her (De Jong 1979:133).
2. Another interpretation is that the woman's desire would be to please her husband and no matter how much she tries to please him, "she always finds herself in a shrinking area of decision making" (De Jong 1979: 133). He makes a further fundamental statement: "If man had this kind of authority from the beginning, then these words would be superfluous. They must be understood to indicate some significant change in the relationship as a result of sin. In other words, an egalitarian husband-wife relationship will be replaced by a hierarchical one in which the husband is dominant and takes a prominent role" (133).

In this treatment of the subject matter the purpose is not to catalogue all the effects of sin. The purpose is rather to illustrate the intension of the narrator, I believe, that when sin enters into any wholesome relationship, where God is the one to whom humankind listens, and His authority should be cardinal, disorder and a fracturing of relationships is a consequence. Of necessity the dynamic is irreversibly altered between the couple and God and also between each other. They now

will not approach the task God gave to them in harmony but see one another in an adversarial disposition and their assigned tasks complicated. Westermann makes an argument primarily that the physiology of the woman has been affected and does not feel the equality component is applicable (1974:100).

In the following part of the chapter I will explore the nature of the relationship between man and woman and address the specific problem of ‘power’ in the relationship.

### **3.6.2 IS THE “POWER STRUGGLE” A NEW PROBLEM?**

This aspect of our analysis has everything to do with the marriage relationship as seen in the ‘genesis’ of marriage relationships, in the beginning. It is one of the most traumatic realities for couples as invariably they reach a point where their marriage has been transformed into the hotbed of interpersonal personality conflict.

The traditional theological distinction that there was a pre-fall state and a post-fall state, and these ‘states’ dramatically influence the way couples would commune with one another, should be reinterpreted hermeneutically. The pre-fall state hints at the eschatological possibilities of an egalitarian relationship of mutual reciprocity and caring, which will always be bedeviled by defection and complications, by ‘falling’ in the trap of self-interest, power-games and control of the other.

The resultant consequences are pronounced by God, “To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you’” Genesis 3:16 (NIV).

We concentrate specifically on the relational aspects. God mentions to the wife that her “desire” will be for her husband. At first glance one may see this in a positive light: that she may have an inclination to be with him. A closer reading of this text however would indicate a far more sinister and negative inclination. The word occurs in two other places in the Old Testament, i.e. Song of Solomon 7:11, where it seems to have a sexual connotation, and in Genesis 4:7, where it does not (Cain is warned by God that sin “desires” to have him). Hence interpretations vary. Some theologians believe that the expression has a sexual connotation (such as De Jong 1979:132) and for some the concept of “desire” is far more sinister, like Keil and Delitzch (2009) who even interpret

this “desire’ as a disease.<sup>18</sup> Both the uses of the word are very negative and both of them imply negative control of the other. In the first place it is sexually charged language used in Song of Solomon 7:11 and it is important to mention that Keil and Delitzsch here have a very negative mention of this occurrence.<sup>19</sup>

The second occurrence is in the usage in connection with Cain where God warns him in Genesis 4:7 (NIV): “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, *sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.*”<sup>20</sup> The usage of the word here is again indicative of the negative “desire” Eve will have for her husband. It indicates that the relationship should have been marked with volunteered love and reciprocity but now becomes one of ‘seeking to dominate’ and ‘self-seeking’. This ‘new situation’, which came about by sin entering, forever changed and altered the fabric of their relationship. The origin then of all relational power-struggles can be found in Scripture and they are traceable to the defection from God’s fundamental commands. The seeking for dominance replaces the godly implanted desire to mutually serve one another as God wanted them to do from the beginning.

The sadness is that in regulating the relationship between husband and wife the man’s “newly implanted” response toward his wife would now be one of domination. We see in the early story of humankind the complexity and tension which marks a life without the Spirit of God. The human response is rather one of domination and even oppression to get the job done or in this relational context to “get their way” rather than one of equal regard under the authority of God.<sup>21</sup> If you will: a superiority-inferiority relationship is instituted by God directly in response to their disobedience in the garden. There is a hint that it may be as consequence of the wife’s overstepping her bounds and allowing sin to enter into their household. What also become abundantly clear is that due to Adam’s lack of proximity, it gave sin an entrance into their lives.

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<sup>18</sup> Keil and Delitzsch 2009: 53: For that she was punished with a *desire* bordering upon disease (תְּשׁוּקָה from שׁוּק to run, to have a violent craving for a thing).

<sup>19</sup> After the words “I am my beloved’s”, we miss the “and my beloved is mine” of Son 6:3, cf. Son\_2:16, which perhaps had dropped out. The second line here refers back to Gen 3:16, for here, as there, תְּשׁוּקָה, from שׁוּק, to impel, move, is the impulse of love as a natural power. When a wife is the object of such passion, it is possible that, on the one side, she feels herself very fortunate therein; and, on the other side, if the love, in its high commendations, becomes excessive, oppressed, and when she perceives that in her love-relation she is the observed of many eyes, troubled.

<sup>20</sup> “But if thou art not good, sin lieth before the door, and its desire is to thee (directed towards thee); but thou shouldst rule over it.” The fem. תְּשׁוּקָה is construed as a masculine, because, with evident allusion to the serpent, sin is personified as a wild beast, lurking at the door of the human heart, and eagerly desiring to devour his soul (1Pe 5:8). הַיָּטִיב, to make good, signifies here not good action, the performance of good in work and deed, but making the disposition good, i.e., directing the heart to what is good. Cain is to rule over the sin which is greedily desiring him, by giving up his wrath, not indeed that sin may cease to lurk for him, but that the lurking evil foe may obtain no entrance into his heart.

<sup>21</sup> ‘And he shall rule over thee.’ Created for the man, the woman was made subordinate to him from the very first; but the supremacy of the man was not intended to become a despotic rule, crushing the woman into a slave.

### **3.6.3 THE ROLE OF POWER IN CAUSING MARITAL DISCORD AND TENSION IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP**

Our approach rests on the fact that humankind is defined as being created in the Image of God. With this original definition we also understand that this 'image' has somehow to do with the qualities inherent in humankind. We also acknowledge that both man and woman are created in the image of God and hence they both have the same qualities inherent in themselves. We then further acknowledge that sin enters. From the narrative which has huge theological significance the emphasis is on the relationship between humankind and God being altered irreversibly as He then abandons them from His presence and places flaming swords to prevent their re-entrance into that which is blessed.

What this narrative is illustrating for us is that the primary relationship with humankind and God is affected. When we trace the source of the power-struggle we short-sightedly locate it as being between man and woman. We should really see the first power struggle theologically as being between humankind and God, where prior to 'the fall' this relationship could be based on love and affection between God and humankind and sharing in that love and reciprocity. Without the interference of this 'event' of disobedience and obstinacy, there is the possibility of unity of spirit, a sweet communion, a relationship where the humans could "hear Him in the garden". The real power struggle is the battle of whose will is to be followed – that is the original power struggle. The real source of altering of their relationship was when they "both disobeyed God".

It is interesting to note that at the onset of the confrontation of God with humankind He calls Adam, the man, in Genesis 3:9 (NIV): But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" We need to remember that in God's eyes, although the one sinned (or started sin), God does not see them as separate; it is significant that God calls the man. It would seem that in God's eyes he recognised that man had to take the lead here. It would imply He holds Adam responsible for his wife and the direction they had gone.

Genesis 3:11 (NIV): And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

This part of the narrative is very interesting in that God holds them accountable for abandoning His will and for their own desires to be satisfied. At a very rudimentary level the power struggle is

between God and humankind. God's addressing of the man is important. It would seem that God holds him responsible for the situation that has occurred in his home. Now here is where I suppose in our defensive mind-set we would infer that spiritual accountability is a matter of inferiority and superiority. Paul makes a case in I Timothy 2:8, where the primary import of the passage is the prayers of the male in "every place", not on the basis of superiority of male over female but by tracing it back to the sequence of creation. I believe we must be careful that we do not interpret Scripture from our own prejudices but allow God's word to guide and unfold what He wants from us. I can only extrapolate from Paul's thinking that as a rabbi he would have been acquainted with the book of Genesis and placed huge emphasis on the creation narrative as normative to our religious interaction with God. The argument Paul then proffers is not about gender in its primary intent but in the one created earlier, taking cognisance of God having created the male first; hence the man is held spiritually accountable for defection from the relationship with God.

As a consequence of this dethroning of God and His will in their relationship (as "one" in the sight of God) a whole host of consequences are unleashed. When we talk about power we talk about it specifically in relation of one person to the other and the one trying by direct pressure or through coercion to exert his or her will on the other. "Lutfin lists the four social powers that one human being has over another: information power, referent power (recipient desires to like the one who leads), coercive – reward power, and expert power" (Hoehner 2002:740). In our treatment of humankind being born in the image of God it is important to notice that in the beginning when God created man He created "them" in His image. In the relationship with God, initially one can safely assume that power was egalitarian and the roles clearly defined.

In the next section I will deal with the concept of power and how this has been manifested and how this relational dynamic in a 'fallen' context is going to play itself out.

### **3.7 THE PATRIARCHAL CULTURAL SYSTEM IN THE BIBLE AND FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF IT**

From the beginning of the Genesis account we see this continual abuse of women and it seems that men do not give too much thought on the way women are treated. It is ironic that even in today's society attempts are made to portray that Christianity, by virtue of its subscribing to the Bible as its authority, would by default approve the oppression of women. It is well-known that even in Paul's

theology passages are quoted to illustrate how the early church used Scripture to endorse the wife's submissive role to her own husband.

These detailed accounts of gender inequity, on the contrary, is to be lauded in that the Bible proves its unbiased narrating account about human history without embellishing or denying its occurrence. This detail is to chronicle what occurs to humankind and into which aspects they have degenerated since their conscious departure from God and his command. The tragic loss of humankind's godly perspective on life added to their unwillingness to submit to God's commands not to participate in that which He considers evil. The candid and detailed narratives on the lives of men like David, clearly shows the consequence of departure. God inadvertently sends warning to humankind to revisit the wisdom that independence from God's command is true freedom. God would clearly illustrate by this that although redemption is available the consequence of departure still remains.

Having a somewhat clear view of how God intended it to be, one feels a sense of liberation when Jesus, in His discussion with the Pharisees, re-emphasises God's original intent. In their discussion with Jesus they would imply that Moses legitimised leaving their wives for each and every reason. Jesus states it clearly that God intended for marriage to be permanent and the only reason for divorce would be in the event of marital unfaithfulness.

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### **3.7.1 EQUALITY AMONG THE SEXES BUT FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENCES**

The issue of equality of the sexes needs to be traced back to the Garden of Eden, to the 'origins', where God intended to have man and woman in an equal relationship. Paul's arguments on gender issues are also based on what the picture would look like when partners are 'in Christ'.

De Jong has an interesting interpretation on the relationship between man and woman post Christ's sacrifice on the cross. He makes a very strong case for a new vision on this relationship. Christ's role was not just to offer himself as a sin-offering but also has to heal the effect of sin on their relationship, "Since one of the consequences of Adam's sin was the development of a dominant – submissive relationship that was foreign to the character of male – female relationship in Creation, the redemptive work of Christ will affect the nature of those relationships. Christ's work will have a restorative or corrective influence in this area. This obviously does not mean that male and female roles will disappear or that the reproductive differences between the sexes will come to have less effect on those roles. What it means is that the spheres of activities and responsibilities and the

harmonious relationship that woman and man originally had in Creation will be more fully realized” (De Jong 1979:137). He also quotes a passage of Scripture which endorses the equality of man and woman before God in Christ. Galatians 3:26-28 endorses the equality of man and woman before God. “In other words, believers’ oneness in Christ supersedes their human differences” (137). He warns that in no way must the equality be seen as an eradication of the role differences.

A careful reading of Ephesians 5:21 ff. indicates an ideal relationship that should be typical in any household. Paul speaks of the relationships that humankind is constantly busy with and they are: Husband to wife, parent to child and master-slave relationships. De Jong cautions us that, “these relationships are to be seen within a larger context, which is the matter of achieving unity in the body of Christ” (145).

Using the word ‘submission’ in the marriage context, of the wife submitting to the husband, can easily derail the husband and his wife’s relationship, but a careful look at the word used, brings another aspect to mind that governs the relationship. The word for submission in Ephesians 5:21, Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, is worth exploring in more detail. Paul uses a word which is made up of two words. They mean “to line oneself up under, to submit” – used in a military sense of soldiers submitting to their – superior or slaves submitting to their masters. The word has primarily the idea of giving up one’s own right or will, i.e. “to subordinate oneself” (Cleon Rogers 1998:445; O’Brien 1999:408-410). With this insight one gets the feeling as if Christ Himself as the commanding officer is appealing to them to submit to one another and this is for the purpose of mutual service rather than determining who is superior. De Jong endorses the same idea: “In other words, these men are to use the role of husband, not as a position of power in which they extend their boundaries of existing authority, but rather as a position of service” (De Jong 1979:143). The very example Paul uses is Christ Himself, who has taught His disciples that he came to serve, not to be served. Paul further would endorse this as he then refers to the Church as the subject of his discussion on relationships.

### **3.7.2 FEMINIST CRITIQUE**

Clinebell made a good case for us to recognize the positive impact that the inclusion of female theologians can bring to the dialogue required in pastoral care: “Integrating the best from our biblical tradition, with the empowering contributions of feminist spirituality, can give us a more whole theology for ministry and for pastoral care and counseling in particular” (Clinebell 1966:63).

The usage of imagery from a purely male perspective could stunt the growth of the healing possibility of pastoral interaction. Clinebell suggested that pastors follow the example of Jesus: “Jesus was a remarkably liberated, whole person who was countercultural in his inclusive, egalitarian treatment of women and others regarded as inferior (e.g. Samaritans and tax collectors) in his society. It behoves us who do pastoral counselling to emulate Him” (1966:64).

The contributions of the feminist theologians, especially since the eighties of the previous century, cannot be undervalued and are necessary for us to arrive at balanced perspectives on the way we counsel (see e.g. Ruether 1983; 2007; Keller and Ruether 2000; Jones 2000; Fiorenza 2011). However this same power that could be positive could easily turn against the male counterpart. If this were to happen, any good that was achieved and any positive impact to affect reconciliation of the sexes to achieve God’s purpose could be undone. In my understanding the purpose is *to restore both male and female as equals*, albeit functionally different, in God’s work as incarnated by Jesus Christ.

The reciprocity even in a difficult debate must assume and assert that both parties in the dialogue maintain what Christ has died for and that is to have in Ephesians that, “...a Christian understanding of marriage, as a ‘one flesh’ relationship which mirrors Christ’s marriage to His bride, the church (2:14-18; 4:1-14) and ultimately points to the bringing of all things together in unity (1:9-10)” (O Brien 1999:408). Any theologian no matter the gender who does not strive for this honest reclaiming of God’s intent, threatens, like Adam, consciously step out of the boundaries placed by God.

### **3.8 THE ROLE OF THE PASTORAL COUNSELLOR FACILITATING A RENEWED BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF POWER IN MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS**

The abuse of power as displayed between males and females, is seen in the pages of Scripture, and is to be lamented. This blatant abuse of women is further evidence that humankind is ‘fallen’ and the embodiment of the Image of God in their behaviour has been severely skewed. It is equally sad that when humankind breaks fellowship with God through a conscious flagrant disrespect and disregard of God’s will there is an inherent collateral effect on relationships. Not only does the man find his wife and his primary relationship with God affected but also “humankind” finds nature in opposition to him.

It is important for the pastor to note that ‘the fall’ as described in the pages of Genesis can be seen as analogous to an ongoing unravelling of humankind as they veer off from God’s demand. The value of this perspective is the realisation that when a couple chooses a position that defects from God’s commands, disturbance enters and relational abuse enters as a resultant by-product. The Bible does not hide the fact of these occurrences and one need to reflect as to how this is to be interpreted. If one views it along the lines that God would have legitimised this abuse of women or even children, then that view needs some more scrutiny and careful consideration in view of the fallen ‘state’ of humankind. I propose we view these abusive events and acknowledge them as tragic and lamentable. The acknowledgement is not enough but as a pastor who believes in God and His desire to restore His economy, this should be all the more urgent. It also endorses the view that the solution to humankind’s condition is not in humankind but lies outside of humankind and can only come from the God who created them.

The Bible can be commended for its candidness in exposing this behaviour for us who with hindsight can reflect on them with no allegiance or defensiveness to any gender allegiances. We can peg the deviation from the original intent found when God wanted to create humankind in His image. The Bible does not condone ‘man’ dominating ‘woman’ and as we scan the pages of Scripture, we cannot but develop a great sadness when we see women treated so badly. When one reads of this reality in Scripture, one realises that what is depicted in the earliest stories of the Bible remains a sad reality: Women are still not honoured as equal before God.

Evaluating the aberrant behaviour against this backdrop of God’s image being absent then presents us with an independent standard that is normative for both genders. This evaluation is liberating for both genders as they probe the Bible for answers together and presents a serious appeal for both genders to embark on this journey to unselfishly discover the answers found in the Scriptures. This road of discovery and adventure to achieve mutual enrichment for both genders points towards a rediscovery of the originally intended reciprocity rather than further endorsement of an adversarial position. An adversarial position between the sexes is immature and does no more than enhance toxicity between the sexes and works against respect and unity which God intended. Any evaluation of power which attempts to elicit culpability, enhancing male dominance, does nothing more than further deepening of guilt and further shaming and is counterproductive. The man and the woman must realise that they are both in a state of being out of relationship with God and hence their relationship needs to be restored firstly with God and then, with that primary relationship restored, both partners can again be fully male and female in the truest sense. True to the dance between humankind and God through the Spirit the one aspect that is so true to His nature is dialogue. This

is not only suggested but imperative. The pastor then needs to realise that his role is as close to the role of the Holy Spirit to facilitate dialogue.

We can together with those hurt in the process, past and present, confirm that this kind of treatment of women and children is not from God but as a result of sin which entered into the world through the choices of humankind. We have no allegiance to even defend any ungodly behaviour of male on female and so defend gender alliance but recognise that this ongoing occurrence of abuse of power affirms that the whole world is fallen and in need of God's intervention through Christ. A possible reaction of men who are not perpetrators of abuse against women is that they stand aloof as though this occurrence is not their problem. The communal nature of the Church and oneness of humankind does not allow for us to stand aloof but drive us to acknowledge and oppose what we see to be opposed to the covenant of God. It is not firstly about culpability but rather owning the 'coming of God's kingdom' in our lifetime, and thus with the help of the Spirit alters and restores the original intent of God in His creation. The spirit works toward this realisation not only in the Christian and in the Christian community but also in Christianising the world under rule of Christ to paraphrase Van Ruler.

The role of the pastor then becomes crucial in guiding humankind toward the Image of God found in Christ Jesus rather than foment acrimony among the genders. At the end it is not a gender issue that needs to be confronted but a relationship issue that must be addressed.

The role of the pastor is of one which comes into the relationship with the assumption that he offers a perspective which is framed by the Word of God and offering counsel which will help the couple out of the dilemma they find themselves in. The role is one of facilitation, of discussion, rather than the role of prescriber of advice. It is one of discovering, with the couple, where they need to be with God and each other. The role becomes one of gently walking through Scripture with the couples and illustrating to them that they need to reach beyond each other to a redeemer who provides the solution to a correct viewing of themselves.

The idea of a Christian having a Biblical view of God's intent, of God's image as reflected in human relationship, shines through in the whole of the Old Testament, but comes through even clearer in the New Testament, re-interpreted and re-focussed, through the life and message of with Jesus Christ. This vantage point of 'The image of God' makes the role of the pastor crucial to

enable the couple to see that God had never intended a relationship of domination or subservience to be present in humankind.

The cross is crucial in the mind of the pastor as he then not only becomes a facilitator of God's grace but also helps the partners viewing themselves through the cross of Christ, radically challenging the way they view one another. Jesus taught his Father's way in society when He challenged the thinking of religious men who tried to justify treating women like commodities, to be discarded if their role is unsatisfactory for the male. He strongly challenged the way women were treated in His time, in John 4 and 8.

It is crucial that, prior to engaging in any kind of counselling, the pastor's own beliefs and values need to be interrogated. If it becomes clear in any way that the pastor holds a view which undermines the egalitarian relationship between man and woman, he must realise that this would potentially undermine his effectiveness. His role must always be seen as one who facilitates restoration to the original intent of the Creator. In the event of inequity within the session he may be seen as one who supports the victim, but not opposing the perpetrator; rather as one who alters behaviour through showing compassion to the one wounded.

### **3.9 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I attempt to trace the constituent parts of what a biblical marriage would be. The role of husband and wife is defined, and some ideas are shared on how this relationship can be managed. The description of the relationship is not utopian but attempts to reflect the relational tension which characterises every relationship. I extract key aspects from Scripture to define what a marriage is and how this dynamic is to be understood as reflecting the 'image of God'.

The discussion within this chapter, reflecting seemingly divergent views, shows the urgency for a clearer perspective on this aspect of our human lives. The adversarial views and positions held for instance by feminist theologians underline the challenge to find a pastoral 'arbiter'. The intent of this chapter is to place before the reader a specific, composite aspect on which to reflect on.

Adversarial theological positions may be fruitful for academic dialogue and to stimulate discussion and allows us as ministers to enjoy the richness of debate and intellectual stimulation, but there is one aspect we must never lose out of our focus: the wellbeing of the ones we serve. Academic study should find its place in providing clarity of the current discourse and to shed light on societal trends.

This carefully considered information enable pastors to be more effective in their work. It will bring clarity on the question what God expects from his people and what is required from them in order to enable them to righteously respond in obedience out of faith.

Through the discussions in this chapter it becomes abundantly clear that much more reflection needs to be done on this subject, but giving a definitive definition of marriage transcends the intent, ambit and frame of reference of this thesis.

In the next chapter it is my intention to examine the theoretical underpinnings of the theory of Imago Relationship Therapy. It presents a secular model as it examines marriage by and large from a purely clinical perspective.

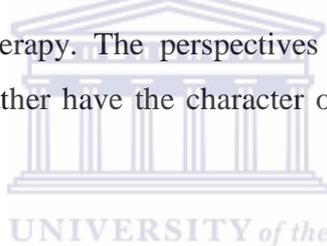


## CHAPTER FOUR

### IMAGO RELATIONSHIP THERAPY (IRT)

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the researcher discussed the biblical model for marriage, in which the roles of the male and the female within this relationship were specified. The idea of patriarchy and the potential abuse of power within marriage has been touched on and acknowledged. In this chapter the researcher will do a theoretical analysis of Imago Relationship Therapy Theory. The theoretical underpinnings of Imago Relationship Theory will be highlighted to deepen understanding for the pastor regarding this therapy, its origins and also how it developed over time. Although this theory offers a rich variety of perspectives on relationships, the researcher will select areas deemed relevant to the pastor and which should enhance his work and leave a trail for him to follow if he wants to know more about this therapy. The perspectives selected here to present the Imago Relationship Therapy would then rather have the character of a documentary overview than of a comprehensive account.



#### 4.1 THE CHARACTER AND PHILOSOPHY OF IMAGO RELATIONSHIP THEORY

In Mason's treatment, in which he traces the origins of IRT, he makes it clear that it is not a completely new theory but one that "drew from and combined into a new system some of the best elements of classical psychotherapy" (Mason 2005: xi). He summarises the process that resulted in IRT as follows:

"Hendrix received his psychoanalytic training at the University of Chicago during the time when Rogerian theory was prevalent. In the late 1960's, Hendrix conducted empathy training as developed by Truax and Carkhuff. His immersion in Transactional Analysis and Gestalt Therapy, along with his experiences undergoing Jungian analysis and Bioenergetics was aspects of his study that would enhance his understanding. Hendrix wove various elements of these theories into a new paradigm that transformed the dynamics of couple work" (Mason 2005: xi).

Firstly, Hendrix saw the transforming power of transference<sup>22</sup>. He saw the underestimated power of the relationship between client and therapist as “an intense force for change” (Mason 2005: xi). In such cases, where the client “transfers onto his therapist his thoughts and feelings related to his experience, the power is often underestimated” (Mason 2005: xi). He equates the marriage relationship as a “parallel relationship” to the therapist-client relationship. In this relationship, comparing the therapeutic relationship which the patient has with the therapist, it is the same as the relationship the husband/wife has with their spouse. This relationship, where feelings and emotions are transferred, becomes a most powerful crucible for change. Hendrix recognises and harnesses an existing dynamic which clearly has the means for change and transplants it into the marriage relationship.

Secondly, the change in paradigm is that the extant transference characteristic of romantic love experience now is harnessed between the couple and not between the therapist and the couple (Mason 2005: xii). It is important to note that the previous relationship between couple and analyst, transferring positive affect, now needs to be transferred to the couple. This impact of transference has been identified as being pivotal to an effective therapy session. In the previous paradigm every therapist needs to develop a good transference relationship with the client in order to have an effective client-therapist relationship. By capitalising on a positive relationship that already exists, the couples become the therapist and the therapist contains the transference dynamic that already exists. The healing of the relationship takes place and they become each other’s healer (Mason 2005: xiii).

The third characteristic of the new paradigm is that it changes the role of both the therapist and client. Mason is cautious here not to imply that the couple now has the capacity to do its own diagnostic work, but “rather that each partner works to understand the other, which eventually leads them to experience empathy at its very best” (Mason 2005: xii).

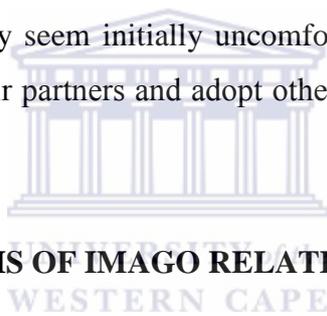
Luquet endorses this view and simply puts it that “Imago Relationship Therapy is a relational paradigm approach that is designed to increase couple communication, correct developmental

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<sup>22</sup> The issue of transference and counter-transference has been extensively written on and is a dynamic of human interaction which could potentially be of great value and also be of great hindrance to the relationship between client and pastor. Robert O. Blood, in his article *Transference and the marriage counsellor*, writes extensively about this occurrence. “In the field of counselling generally, the term ‘transference’ is used in two ways. Strictly speaking, transference is defined as the client’s transfer of emotional reactions to the counsellor from other persons who have figured importantly in his life. Thus defined, transference may be seen as an inappropriate reaction. However, the term is also used more broadly to refer to all emotions which the client feels toward the counsellor.” (Blood 1958:373) In his paper he delineates the complexities when this human dynamic is not managed and this mismanagement can have serious negative ramifications for success of the counselling session and client counsellor relationship.

arrests, heal wounds from childhood, and promotes differentiation of the partners while restoring connection between them. Many couples who engage in Imago Therapy report finding a new purpose to their relationship, as well as a renewed spiritual life” (Luquet 1998:13).

IRT provides a response to those hard questions and desires of the pastor to have a theoretical framework to assess *how* effective he is. What constitutes good therapy, or healing? What needs to be addressed in therapy, what needs to change, and in what format can discussion be handled? Luquet mentions five aspects crucial to IRT, which can be assessed independently in case studies: “In Imago therapy, the clinician assists the couple in committing to the relationship through the use of imagery and dialogue techniques. First, couples learn to identify the developmental wounds or images created by their early experiences with their caretakers. Second, they evoke mental images of safety and practice retreating mentally to a safe place in times of distress. This helps the couple avoid defensive reactions that hinder thoughtful conversation. Third, couples learn to listen to and understand each other’s dialogue. Fourth, Imago Therapy teaches couples ‘stretching’– adopting partner-pleasing behaviours that may seem initially uncomfortable but ultimately lead to growth. Fifth, couples learn to ‘reimage’ their partners and adopt other structured ways to deal with anger” (Nower 2001:81).



#### **4.2 THE COUNSELLING AIMS OF IMAGO RELATIONSHIP THEORY (IRT)**

Imago at its base recognises the assumption that all people who enter into a committed relationship do so as wounded people. The realities with these wounded couples are that they enter into this committed relationship with the other hoping to be healed by the partner. Imago relationship therapy recognises that with these couples the emotional expectations are unreasonable at times when their needs are unmet. If this conflict is not placed within a proper framework of conflict resolution, the toxicity of the relationship will fester and potentially sabotage the relationship and also the marriage. Imago offers an approach which essentially is more than a process but work with the existing relationship. Luquet expresses it in this way, “Rather, Imago therapy guides couples in using the partnership as a resource for healing, problem solving, and growth, enabling greater personal fulfilment as the partners deepen their commitment” (Luquet 1998:16).

The relationship which has been deformed into a place of conflict and pain can be changed, using the actual conflict as a catalyst for the couple to understand each other better. It helps them rather than see the pain of the conflict as debilitating as an entry point for growth in their relationship.

Imago recognises the realities we live in: that couples come into relationship with different worldviews which potentially provides fertile ground for conflict. Within Imago the therapy leans on the thoughts of Martin Buber who through his dealing with this specific aspect of difference in couples speaks of the “otherness of the other” (Luquet 1998:16). The aim hence of Imago is to provide, within this relationship, the forum and platform for the couple to articulate their various worldviews. Within this dynamic, it also provides the couple with the enriching alternative rather than to see the partner’s views as different and debilitating now as expressing the “otherness of the other”, as Buber puts it, and to elevate those differences as enriching to the relationship. This deepening of understanding and getting to know each other’s worldviews does not mean the surrendering of their own worldviews or convictions. The deepened knowledge of the other provides a unique appreciation for the other person and a perspective that gives room for acceptance. “We might not agree with our partner, but we become capable of transcending our own point of view, even in just a moment, to understand that our partner sees the world differently. And when we are able to understand and accept our differences, we both become more clearly defined as individuals” (Luquet 1998:16).

The aim of Imago is to allow the couple the opportunity to create a dialogical dynamic wherein the couple grows and allows each other to be different. Helen Weiser and Cora Thompson ask and answer the question whether Imago is culturally relevant and presents a case study on the African American people. The history of enslavement of blacks and the incumbent baggage that comes with that era brings with it, no doubt, pain which impacts the marriage relationships of black couples. Their view of history would largely shape their sense of identity and connectedness to their community, and the intense feelings of prolonged disempowerment could influence their sense of ‘self. Now, over 100 years later, African American males are attempting to take control and show presence in their homes. Without spiritual connectedness and a sense of unity within the family, violence often becomes the only means by which they can assert power” (Weiser & Thompson 1998:100). The means of dispossession and the insidious instrument to facilitate their being enslaved by means of religion would also cause an additional suspicion around Christianity as a means toward reconciliation.

The historical journey is one of the aspects that Imago uses to give couples the platform of even visiting that which is potentially traumatic and helps them to come to terms and creatively look at the empowerment without the sense of helplessness. The relevance and application for our country and its historical context seem appropriate as it could help many couples who come with this

baggage of oppression and being the oppressed. This process can help the couple to see one another and to be helped, and even though they may be contributing to the toxicity of the relationship, to understand one another as re-enacting their helplessness. With this new insight and understanding they can now rather than see themselves either as perpetrator or victim, see one another as wounded individuals with historical wounds. They can then see this relationship they are in as being placed there by God as His answer to helping them heal from their past wounds. The new insight gained through this exploration must in no means be seen as a means to excuse the abusive behaviour of women and men towards one another, but they must rather learn to see each other as part of the solution for a vibrant relationship.

### **4.3 FALLING IN LOVE AND IRT**

Imago Relationship Therapy holds the view found in Pharmacology: that lovers are literally high on drugs – natural hormones and chemicals that flood the bodies with a sense of well-being. As part of the intensive treatment given to the notion of falling in love, we can refer to the work by Malach Pines regarding the chemical changes that take place in the human brain and the heightened secretion of certain hormones in the human brain. She says: “When we are in love, it is enough for us to see, think, or even dream about the beloved for the process to be triggered. It starts in a tiny molecule with a long name, phenylethylamine (PEA), and it includes pheromones and sex hormones and the sex hormone (dehydroepiandrosterone). DHEA is a versatile sex hormone from which most other sex hormones are derived. It increases sexual desire, serving in a sense as a natural aphrodisiac” (Malach Pines 2005:154-155).

On the question as to why we fall in love, Hendrix refers to Bowen’s notion that people choose as intimate partners others who are at the same level of differentiation. Even when one of the partners, usually the husband, seemed significantly more differentiated, Bowen assumed that both partners actually functioned at the similar level of differentiation” (Malach Pines 2005:56; Bowen 1978).

The idea of differentiation, in Imago terms, is that each couple can see one another as separate people yet interconnected in their relationship. They grow in their relationship and the aims and objectives that surround it and also make this relationship come alive. Simultaneously, however, in their relationship they flourish separately and apart from each other as individuals. The individuation in the relationship is an important aspect of a growing relationship. This could be contrasted to a relationship that is symbiotic and stifling.

Hendrix speaks of the opposite of symbiosis as being the area to get the couple to in order to grow independently yet being in connection. This process and human dynamic in couples are hard to understand, and often seem ironic. One often finds this in the relationship of couples, that when one desires to keep some distance from the other, that they both, as it were, find themselves. The reaction from the other person is invariably fuelled by their fear of abandonment and on the surface the couple appears to be quite dysfunctional. "...at the unconscious level, functional; it serves the survival directive, which is to remain connected to context" (Hendrix 2005:30).

#### **4.4 THE 'POWER STRUGGLE' IN IRT**

The 'Power Struggle', as Hendrix identifies it, happens when couples are trying to coerce the other to either reconsider their actions or act differently. The power struggle defines the stage wherein couples attempt to resolve problems within their relationship. He identifies this stage of the relationship as the one which follows the 'Romantic Phase'. He identifies three factors that fuel the power struggle (see Baca 2005:201):

1. Our partners make us feel anxious by stirring up forbidden parts of ourselves.
2. Our partners appear to have the same negative traits as our parents, which adds further injury to childhood wounds and thereby awakens our unconscious fear of death.
3. Partners project their own negative traits on to one another.

This negative development in the relationship often spells death to the relationship as every encounter seemingly to solve the problem, however small or great, represents toxicity to the couples. Hendrix (1998) suggests that couples project into their partners three aspects of themselves: the denied part, the lost part, and the disowned part. In object relations terms, this would be called 'splitting' (Baca 2005:202).

It is quite normal for the couple rather to avoid this encounter than deal with this problem. John Cuber and Peggy Harroff (1965) have done research on this topic, especially on levels of acceptance couples reach when their relationship issues are left unresolved (see chapter 1.1.2). It is important to see this stage of the relationship as not only a stage that is following the Romantic phase, which is characterised by a flooding of dopamine and other 'positive feeling hormones' which give the couple the heightened sense of physical awareness and aliveness. It is important to know that, soon after this initial 'high' of the first connection of a couple, their hormones soon start

to return to normality and the insulation that the hormones would have given to ignore the challenges falls away, so that they have to face up to a very real problem in their relationship. This new 'phase' has to be seen as a normalising of the relationship and as the maturation of the relationship. This impasse and lack of positive engagement which exist within most relationships, when entering into this phase, could often signal the death of the relationship if not resolved. It is at this stage of the relationship that couples exhibit destructive behaviour and this apparent impasse, if not placed in proper context, could spell the end of the relationship.

#### **4.5 THE BUILDING OF AN IMAGO**

Imago Relationship Therapy is based on Hendrix's own theory regarding the formation of the 'Imago'. This word is taken from the Latin word for 'image'. Hendrix comes to the conclusion that many partners choose partners whose character traits in multiple ways resemble the character traits of their primary carers. He developed a test where couples matched the character traits of their spouses to those of their parents and he found the correlation to be very high. What astonished him even more was the fact the "traits that matched up the most closely was the negative traits" (Hendrix 1988:35). He then asked the question why then the negative traits show such an 'attraction'? He came to the conclusion that the brain that made the decision was not the logical orderly brain but the old myopic brain which desired to with time "recreate the conditions of your upbringing, in order to correct them" (1988:35).

"The unconscious drive then would be to recover the lost self, those thoughts and feelings and behaviours that you had to repress to adapt to your family and to society. The old brain recorded everything about our carers, the sound of their voices, the amount of time they took to answer your cries, the colour of their skin, when they got angry, the way they smiled when they were happy, the set of their shoulders, the way they moved their bodies, the characteristic moods, their talents and interests. ... Your brain didn't interpret these data; it simply etched them onto a template" (1988:37). This template, Hendrix would assert, forms the rationale by which we select our mates. "Gradually, over time, these hundreds of thousands of bits of information about our caretakers merged together to form a single image" (1988:38). He sums it up that all this character trait information is stored under the heading: "the people responsible for our survival" (1988:38). "The Imago is the unconscious template for partner selection" (Hendrix 2005:202). The building of the Imago is done by taking the sum total of emotional experiences the partner has had. Those 'favourable' character

traits will be selected and will play a major role in the decision to have a partner that they are 'familiar' with.

The way Hendrix reconstructs the Imago is done very carefully in order to help the couple see how their parents and their primary carers had unconsciously shaped the Imago. This practice then accentuates for the couple that the decisions they have made in partner selection have been of a subconscious nature and because of this much of their problems would stem from the impact those persons had on their actions within the relationship.

#### **4.6 THE THEORY BEHIND IMAGO RELATIONSHIP THEORY**

It is important to be able to construct an understanding of how the couple came into being and specifically how their 'psyche' was formed. Imago traces various aspects and impacts that shaped individuals and couples. These theories were an assimilation of many other psychologists' works and was synthesised by Hendrix. "Theory developments included a meta-theoretical proposition of human essence as essentially pulsating energy, influenced by quantum theory and the psychological work of Core Energetics, developed by John Pierriakos (1987). I also developed a systematic, detailed description of the stages of human development by synthesizing the theories of Margaret Mahler (1975), Daniel Stern (1985), Harry Stack Sullivan (1953), and Erik Erikson (1963)" (see Hendrix 2005:24).

##### **4.6.1 THE COSMIC JOURNEY AND THE BRAIN**

Imago Relationship theory includes the idea of humanity being part of a cosmic journey. The cosmic journey is a way to describe people on an evolutionary journey toward connection. This journey accentuates the view that humankind is in connection with nature and even though they function separately they are part of a greater universe. Hendrix refers to quantum physics that asserts all parts of the cosmos to be in living connection. The separateness that sometimes prevail within humankind on a primal level is balanced by the fact that all people desire that wholeness with each other and that each person is in connection with the universe.

"The first cosmological assumption is that human beings come from the same source and are made of the same stuff of which the universe is made ... We are animated stardust ... We can retrospectively infer something about nature, something about its nature. First, couples in therapy

are unconsciously trying to restore connection in order to achieve healing, recover their wholeness, and complete their developmental evolution. Second, when couples become conscious (self-reflective) and intentionally cooperate with their unconscious strivings, they achieve the above goals” (Hendrix 1999:171).

It is in this understanding that the development of the brain is seen in its evolutionary perspective. The view proposed is that humankind has a reptilian brain which is the most ancient part of the brain protecting the person from potential danger. “The oldest section of our tripartite brain, the reptilian brain, takes care of automatic life-sustaining activities, including heartbeat, digestion, and breathing. It is concerned with physical safety and automatically defends itself against danger, responding with fighting, fleeing, freezing, hiding, or submitting. In Imago therapy, it is assumed that the reptilian brain automatically is activated when partners feel emotionally unsafe with each other” (see Luquet 1998:275).

#### 4.6.2 THE PSYCHOSOCIAL JOURNEY

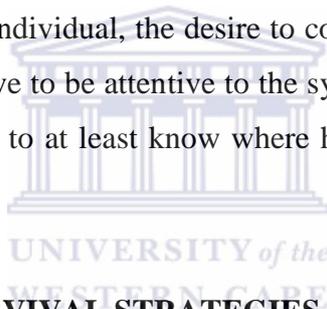
The psychosocial journey is the process by which in the development of a person there are certain phases of development that needs to take place, through which the person can become fully functional and differentiated. The two chief proponents from whom Hendrix draws his psychosocial insights are Mahler and Erikson. In Erikson’s proposition of the psychological journey he “considers each stage ‘a crisis’, because a change is taking place at each stage. Imago borrows from both of these theories and sees development as a 7- to 10-year process that repeats itself several times over the life span. A basic – and important – difference, however, is that Mahler and Erikson see their stages as necessitating separation and difference, whereas Imago sees development stages as occurring in connection with the caretaker. In other words, the child needs to be mirrored and validated by the primary caregiver to accomplish each stage without experiencing wounding or developing negative experience that requires behavioural adaptation” (Luquet 2007:22).

Luquet summarises the five distinguishable stages (2007:22):

1. *Attachment*: (Birth - 2 years). Children need to attach to a caretaker and the caretaker or parents need to be available and warm.
2. *Exploration* (2-3 years). Children need to be able to explore (usually just to the room next door or four steps ahead at the mall.) During this time the child needs to be able to come back to the parent and share with them the contents of their exploration.

3. *Identity* (3-4 years). Children start to pretend different parts of their personality. They will, for example pretend to be a puppy dog and in this stage the caretaker needs to validate the child; that they see him or her as the ‘personality’ they are trying to portray.
4. *Power and competence* (4-6 years). Children at this stage are beginning to do things outside the home, such as preschool. They have an intense need (and usually a frustrating lack of skill) to be helpful around the house. They are developing a sense of competence. Parents/caretakers need to offer praise, affirmation, and mirroring.
5. *Concern* (6-9 years). Children are now outside of the house and with friends. Their developmental needs are to make friends, find a best friend, and learn the intricacies of having and maintaining friendships. Parents/caretakers need to promote friendships and serve as good role models in terms of their own friendships.

What is significant to the pastor here is that although one accepts that life does not play itself off in a clearly demarcated way, the important issue to understand is that if those stages are not rounded off and completed in the life of the individual, the desire to complete the growth will play out later in their marriage. The pastor will have to be attentive to the symptoms that will display itself in the behaviour of the couple and be able to at least know where he needs to help the couple complete these growth areas.



#### 4.6.3 ADAPTATIONS AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

In the event that the completion of the development is left unfulfilled, we need to realise that in everyone’s psyche they adapt to the situation to survive. Following are the adaptations evident in couples and how these play out in their behaviour (see Luquet 2007:20-24):

If the needs are not met, the adaptations will be:

**Attachment phase:** If the child was not held properly, it will develop a personality ‘type’ as an adaptation to what was not received from the caretakers. In this stage, that type would be either a *Clinger* (“I didn’t get held, so, when I find someone, I’m going to hold on and never let go!”) or an *Avoider* (“I didn’t get held, so now I don’t trust anyone to hold me!”)

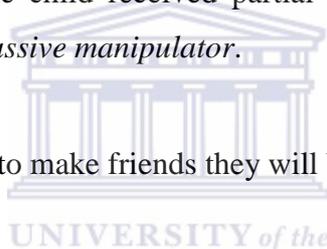
**Exploration phase:** If the child cannot explore, then the child again develops another adaptation when their developmental needs are not met by the caretakers. The child’s growth and development

is stifled in the parent saying “You must not leave this room and must always stay with me”, or is shamed upon his or her return, or there is no one to return to (for example when the parents leave the room or are not enthusiastic about what the child finds). Then the child again develops another personality type and he becomes either a *Fuser* (“No one gets so excited about me or about what I liked, so I’m going to find someone and make them respond!”) or an *Isolator* (“I couldn’t do anything when I was a kid, so now I’ll do anything I want and I’m going to be the best at it – and no one is going to stop me!”). Diagnostically these people might be defined as having borderline or narcissistic personality disorders, respectively.

**Identity stage:** If at this stage there has been no mirroring (through being ignored), the personality will be either *Diffuse* or *Rigid*. Diagnostically clinicians might be able to see neurotic disorder such as anxiety or mild depression.

**Power or competence stage:** If the child received partial mirroring, he or she will develop a personality that is *competitive* or a *passive manipulator*.

**Concern Stage:** If a child is unable to make friends they will become either a *loner* or a *caretaker*.



According to Imago theory opposites always fall in love with each other as they are wounded in the same place of development, yet these are the most unlikely to fulfil the needs of the other (Luquet 2007:23-24). The adaptations (as depicted above) couples make in order to survive due to lack of mirroring during those stages of development often are the very cause of their relationship being subverted. When the counsellor introduces these realities or the notion of woundedness to both partners, they will be less tempted to continue the relationship with unreasonable needs expectations.

#### 4.6.4 EXIT THEORY

The no exit dialogue is designed to create a platform which identifies and deliberately places the aberrant behaviour as the action that is driving the couple apart. It places the behaviour as the issue that is to be resolved. Within this dialogue the assertion is that if this behaviour is not changed it would irreparably spell the end of the relationship.

In IRT there is emphasis on the opposite side of blame, which is taking individual responsibility for one's own actions within the relationship. Here IRT deals with this fine balance in a very interesting way. In Gerson's treatment of this aspect within IRT this dialogue finds itself nestled in family systems theory. This amounts to each person in the relationship accepting his or her contribution to the relationship as well as to the situation as it stands. This has been criticised as family systems theorists providing excuses for the abusers. Hendrix (2005:78) is aware of this critique: "Feminist theorists have accused family systems theorists of ignoring the true power differential often present in abusive relationships." It is interesting that this reservation and criticism would imply a power and hierarchy dynamic which is the all-encompassing problem that needs to be altered, and that this intervention would dramatically alter the relationship.

Hendrix refers to the ground-breaking work on integrating psychodynamic and systems approaches by Gerson (1993). Gerson recognises that in their effort to avoid blame and in the rush to see the other person's contribution to the problem, family systems therapists may too often forget that sometimes particular individuals need to be held accountable for their behaviour. In IRT this dynamic becomes part of its objective which although the reason for the behaviour is explored, established and understood, "partners are encouraged to see one another as wounded children and to agree to provide a safe environment for healing. When IRT really works, each partner becomes a sort of therapist for the other. Each partner 'stretches' to give or provide what the other really wants." However, what about individual responsibility? Paradoxically, IRT has been careful to include personal responsibility in its general framework for mutual caretaking. In the No exit process, each partner is encouraged to make a personal commitment to the relationship (Hendrix 2005:78-79).

#### **4.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF REGRESSIVE WORK IN ENHANCING EMPATHY**

This aspect of IRT is very difficult and sometimes causes the relationship to reach an impasse. The difficulty arises when the couple finds themselves having difficulty in listening to one another, following through on commitment to change behaviours, or remaining dialogical with one another, in which cases the Imago therapist would engage them in some regressive work. This would enable the couple to understand the deeper emotional roots in their relationship problems (Hendrix & Hunt 1999:191).

In this specific area of therapy here needs to be great care for the therapist to help the couple make the connection between their resistances to connect with the pain experienced in their childhood. The importance cannot be overemphasised as ignoring this could possibly sabotage the relationship. However, if the pain and current experience can be placed in its proper perspective, this ‘regression’ could spell an opportunity of growth rather than end to the relationship.

The role of neuropsychology in the understanding of how relationships are made up and the role of the brain (see Sieggel 1999) forms an important part of Hendrix’s Imago theoretical framework and will be explored extensively. Sieggel’s research answers the question of how relationships and the brain, i.e. the cognitive, affective and / or psychomotor domains shape the person they become. This is an important aspect for understanding the background to IRT.

#### **4.8 THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST IN IRT**

The role of the therapist changes in this dynamic, as already explained in 1.1.2. His role is to channel and contain the transferences that take place and with his analytic knowledge guide the couple to effectively deal with the issues they are struggling with. Hendrix feels “the role of the therapist is analogous to a coach, a facilitator of the dialogue process. The task of the therapist should be to manage the interaction between partners so that no non-dialogical transactions could occur in the session (2005:31). He would then primarily be there to ensure the “creation of safety, achievement of differentiation, and the restoration of contact and connection appear to restart the psychological development for both partners that was interrupted in childhood” (2005:31).

The role of the Imago Therapist in facilitating the therapeutic session is one where the therapist provides a containing or holding environment while avoiding any intrusion on the primary transference experiences of the couple. Many have described the therapeutic role of the Imago therapist as one of the coach, although such coaching must be devoid of any shaming (Mason 2005: xiii). Shaming of a client is one of the greatest barriers to effective therapy. One wonders if this is not one of the main reasons why many people avoid going for therapy and rather exit or remain in this rather congenial indifferent state of their marriage. The role of the therapist is crucial to facilitating and enhancing the connection between the couple without interrupting the dialogue. The role of the therapist is very closely aligned to the goal of the therapy, and this needs to be kept in the mind of the therapist at all times. “The goal of the therapy is to become self-reflectively conscious, consciously intentional, differentiated, and accepting of one’s dependency. At the same time, one

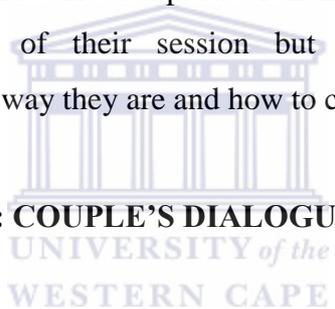
strives to become aware of oneself as both a co-creator and a creature of context” (Hendrix 2005:26).

#### **4.9 THE PROCESSES OF IMAGO RELATIONSHIP THEORY**

The main method for helping couples move towards a conscious relationship is to provide the couple with a cognitive and experiential understanding of the purpose of romantic love and the power struggle, to create a safe environment to establish a process for breaking the symbiotic fusion, and to assist in recovering the core, energetic self and its functions. The primary educational and therapeutic tool is the couple’s dialogue and its modifications (Hendrix & Hunt 1999:176).

The tool of dialogue is an important and core feature of the IRT processes and although this is cardinal and as a platform creates a vehicle for change, it is coupled with an aspect of psychological education for the couple to understand various aspects of their relationship. It couples not only the cognitive and experiential aspect of their session but also intellectually enhances their understanding as to why they are the way they are and how to change this often toxic state.

##### **4.9.1 THE MAIN TOOL IN IRT: COUPLE’S DIALOGUE**



The main tool in Imago is the Couple’s Dialogue. In dialogue, couples are trained to hear each other by using a three part process.

First, the receiving (listening) partner is asked to “mirror” back as accurately as possible what the other partner says. When the sender (speaking) partner feels that the receiving partner has understood the message, or “send”, the receiver then asks “is there more?” (Luquet 1998:13). This process is not easy but with careful guidance from the therapist, it deepens understanding and empathy. The partner who listens needs to contain his or her reactivity, and in mirroring accurately he or she hears more clearly. Luquet remarks that this process, once completed, and the roles change, the new hearer is more inclined to hear more clearly what the new sender is saying (1998:14), “...mirroring, is essentially the Rogerian reflective listening technique” (Hendrix 2005:17).

Hendrix thus develops his theory of symbiosis through this practice of dialogue. In his theory, *mirroring* focuses on primarily five exercises: Re-imagining the partner, restructuring frustrations,

resolving rage, re-romanticizing, and re-visioning the relationship (2005:27). Ironically, he then discovered that mirroring, which clarified the message to the partner, almost inevitably led to further polarization. To deal with this, he then introduced the idea of *stretching* and this seemed to work, but since it primarily entailed a cognitive decision, it lacked an emotional component. He then introduced Martin Buber's dialogical insights from *I and Thou* which emphasised to the partner the "otherness" of the sender and required a willingness to "look at the world through his or her eyes" (2005:27).

Secondly, the next component of the dialogue process is the *validation*. After the sender has completed what needed to have been said, the hearer then summarises the complete sender's message and the latter then confirms that he or she has been heard correctly. Luquet makes it clear that "validation is not agreement; it is the essence, stating that the partner's message has logic, based on that partner's point of view" (1998:14). This part of the dialogue is introduced by the phrase "It makes sense that you think what you do. I can understand how you could see it that way", exemplifies validation (1998:14). Mirroring and validation made the world of the other accessible as information and demonstrated the logic of each partner's perspective, thus creating equality (Hendrix et al 2005:28).

Thirdly, the receiving partner expresses *empathy* toward the sender. Feeling empathy involves momentarily feeling the other person's feelings, and then going back into your own skin, knowing that the other's feelings are not your own, and guessing how the other might feel. "I imagine you might feel lonely, sad, and inadequate", would for instance be an empathetic statement (Luquet 1998:14).

According to Mason empathy is the major condition of and means toward a connected relationship and empathic breaks are the primary source of disconnection in relationships. Defining empathy as "standing in the place of the other," the Imago process facilitates the empathy by couples in a committed relationship. Through empathy the partners move from disconnection to connection. As this movement occurs, the relationship becomes a source of healing for the individuals in it (see Hendrix's discussion of this in 2005:139-140). Kohut (1991) provides a broader definition of empathy with this notion of *vicarious introspection*, which requires us to step into the shoes of the other and see the reality from the other's perspective.

In an article on “Imago Relationship Therapy, Perspectives on theory”, Mona R. Barbera draws from Analytic Relational Theories and says that “this theory provides language and theoretical context that can elucidate the depth and richness of Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT) (Hendrix 2005:127). There are three ways in which we suffer in the relationship nightmare. (1) Through *Enactment*, we provoke our partners to hurt us in familiar ways that we were hurt in the past; (2) Through *Imago Match* someone resembles our parents, in both positive and negative ways. The negative characteristics enable them to wound us as when we were in childhood, giving us an experience of familiar pain. Hendrix offers a neurological explanation for this: where he explains that the brain stores vast amounts of information which cannot be accessed through ready memory but that neurosurgeons have been able to stimulate portions of the patient’s brain with weak electrical currents, and the patients were suddenly able to recall hundreds of forgotten episodes from childhood in astonishing detail (Hendrix 1988:37). This makes it clear that our brains are vast storehouses of information. (3) Through *Projection* we are perceiving that our partners are hurting us in the old bad ways when actually they are not doing this (Hendrix 2005:129).

#### 4.9.2 THE BASIC ‘COUPLE’S DIALOGUE’, AS USED IN IRT

The process of dialogue as just described can also be called the Intentional Dialogue. This dialogue distinguishes itself from what is commonly called a diatribe that commonly occurs between couples when one speaks and the other defends or explains their position. This approach will essentially nullify a dialogue (Luquet 2007:38). The couple’s dialogue allows the couple to be fully heard and understood. When a person feels understood, he or she can redirect the energy used to hold onto his or her position to move toward the more useful purpose of developing the self (2007:39). The couple then listens to one another without feeling he or she has to fully agree or become symbiotic with the other. It allows for *two* distinct realities (2007:39). The importance of this is that the couple experiences each other’s worlds and can relate and understand what and how the other is experiencing his or her realities.

A typical dialogue would be:

The Sender: I am angry when you do...

The Receiver would answer: So what I hear you say is...

The effectiveness of the therapy is for the therapist to help the couple keep the space between one another safe. The significant part of the dialogue is when the sender is able through dialogue to

identify the source of their own reactivity and recognise that the source of the annoyance with their partner often lies with experiences with significant carers in their respective lives.

### **4.9.3 APPLICATIONS OF THE BASIC ‘COUPLE’S DIALOGUE’**

The application of the Couple’s Dialogue is vast as can be evidenced in Luquet’s book, *Healing in the Relational Paradigm*. It becomes abundantly clear that this process can be applied to couples in various relationships, ranging from couples wounded in the Attachment Phase, the Exploratory wounded couple, to dealing with the therapist to express his or her unique needs. What helps is also for the therapist to know that he/she can use Couple’s Dialogue even in very complex situations like dealing with couples living with AIDS, ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), addictions, sexual dysfunction, and couples surviving the ramifications of adultery (Luquet 1998).

### **4.9.4 COUPLE’S INTENTIONAL DIALOGUE**

The main focus of the Couple’s Dialogue is to help the couple create a healing connection, which is possible only when there is enough emotional safety between the partners (Luquet 1998:14). Safety in the relationship becomes the ideal ground where healing takes place for the couple. In the area of validation (4.9.1), Luquet says that it has typically been reported that partners feel calmer and more deeply understood. “Partners often comment, ‘I don’t feel crazy anymore.’ Each partner’s world at last makes sense to the other, even if they still don’t agree” (Luquet 1998:14).

In discussing the healing aspect of IRT Hendrix and Hunt (1999:178) simply state: “Mirroring is the way of making contact, validation a way of creating equality, and empathy a way of arousing the affective capacity. Through these three procedures, both sender and receiver achieve a heightened sense of self and connection” (1999:178).

### **4.9.5 NO EXIT DIALOGUE**

This specific dialogue is to help the couple articulate the actual reason they would leave the relationship. This allows the couple or partner to articulate what behaviour would make him or her leave the relationship. This dialogue creates a framework within which the couple can articulate how they feel and what exact behaviour would be the cause of the break-up. In the no exit process

the couple not only articulate their deep hurts and fears but they also take ownership of the relationship and make a commitment that they will not leave the relationship.

In the No Exit process, each partner is encouraged to make a personal commitment to the relationship (2005:79). As we can see here the Therapy has at its core the restoration of the relationship and enhancing safety. This process is core to helping couples not only commit to but with the Couple's Dialogue helps them to change their behaviours in a structured way using the Behaviour Change request Dialogue (see 4.9.7).

#### **4.9.6 PARENT-CHILD DIALOGUE**

This specific dialogue is a powerful tool that revisions the couple to each other as wounded and both being part of the solution to assist each other achieve wholeness. "In the parent child dialogue, the receiver assumes the role of the 'as if' parent, and the sender assumes the role of himself or herself as a child. In the holding exercise, the sender talks to the partner "as partner" about his or her childhood wounds. The holding partner, while containing and guiding the process, asks, "What can I do now that would heal the wounds of your parents?" and responds by mirroring. These two processes help the partners understand each other's childhood vulnerabilities, deepen the partners' contact while increasing differentiation, and enhance empathy and compassion (Hendrix 1999: 179).

#### **4.9.7 BEHAVIOUR CHANGE REQUEST DIALOGUE**

This specific dialogue has the potential to generate more negative feelings in the couple's dialogue as it invariably has, at its root, the intent to point out areas where there are inadequacies. The sender invariably needs to point out areas of behaviour that is potentially rupturing their relationship and causing it to be under pressure. "Because a Behaviour Change Request is a specific request for altered behaviour, by definition it directly touches on the inadequacies, imperfections, and lack of wholeness of the partner. They hearken the receiving partner to grow in a manner that is virtually always within a behavioural deficit area that is difficult to change" (Luquet 1998:101).

An important observation here is that while the couple need to address and raise issues which are hurting their relationship, it is advised to do this dialogue *after* the Parent Child Dialogue. Further, Luquet says, that "...the use of the Parent Child Dialogue enables both partners to revision the other

as wounded, which potentially creates mutual empathy and a general lessening of the shame-based defences” (1998:101).

The success of these techniques depends on containing shame affect without rupturing the interpersonal bridge (see Kaufman 1985). This behavioural change process was learned from Richard Stuart, a social theorist who wrote an excellent book, *Helping Couples Change* (1980), and the holding exercise which was suggested in *Holding Time* (1989) by Martha Welch (Hendrix 2005:16). The Behavioural Change Request process introduces the completion of the dialogue which uncovers the reason for the Frustration Dialogue with specific requests for behavioural change request to the spouse.

The Behaviour Change request is thus a specific articulation of specifically what is needed from the receiver to adjust behaviour in order to prevent the repeat of the frustration for the sender. The requests need to be positive, measurable and specific and they are written down for the receiver to process. At the completion of the dialogue the receiver then picks from the proposed three Behavioural Change Requests which are positive, measurable and specific. He/she then chooses to give as a present the behaviour that he has control over to reduce or even remove the feeling of frustration. At the end the sender then accepts the present for the behavioural change and the dialogue is then reciprocally done by the receiver by articulating his or her frustration in turn.

Hendrix gives this brief account of how he incorporated Behaviour Change Request into IRT: “I began helping couples negotiate around those needs. From Stuart’s *Helping Couples Change* (1980), I understood that change occurs rapidly when partners ask for specific, measurable behaviours from each other and respond with positive reinforcement. When I began experimenting with these procedures, I encountered the problem of helping couples understand the importance of changing their own behaviours and creating positive experiences for each other that addressed one another’s childhood issues” (Hendrix 2005:20-21).

#### **4.9.8 FORGIVENESS / MAKING AMENDS DIALOGUE**

This dialogue is used extensively when there has been marital unfaithfulness. For a pastor this is probably the toughest problem for any couple to overcome. IRT identifies the impact of unfaithfulness in a marriage as follows: “Adultery is a product of *mutual emptiness* in a relationship, and a lack of intimacy is a core problem that the affair is masking” (Luquet 1998:241).

Wein and Tuttle, in an article *Validation as a facilitator of forgiveness for adultery*, cite two case studies of couples who used validation to overcome and reduce reactivity within their traumatised relationships. It is an effective method which helps the couple and presents them with a platform to engage one another. These authors present an interesting approach to dealing with the reality of adultery. They comment on the affair as follows: "...the affair is not the central issue – not the predominant problem in the relationship – but rather a symptom of mutual disconnection and pain" (Luquet 1998:241).

In such a serious event, as a pastor, one should be able to divorce oneself from taking sides and not allow one's feelings to cloud the grimness of the affair, but carefully help the couple revision the affair as a problem they hold the solution to. "The goal of therapy should be to assist both partners in accepting and taking responsibility for their equal contributions to the mutual emptiness that serves as a catalyst for an affair. Sharing responsibility for the lack of intimacy puts it squarely on the shoulders of both the 'betrayed' and the 'betrayed'. When partners can envision an equal sign between them, they acknowledge their own contribution and begin to see that the affair was a dysfunctional attempt to stabilise the relationship" (1998:242).

The power of the validation process lies in the following notion: "In order for the betrayed person to forgive and for the connection to be regained in the relationship, the adulterous partner must validate the betrayer's pain and rage. Validation is the key both to uncovering the reason for the affair and the recovery of intimacy and forgiveness" (1998:243).

In IRT the process of the Couple's Dialogue is central to being able to unmask and also help the couple emotionally connect with the real reason for the affair. The injured party "feels heard."

In the case studies they reveal that the urge often occurs in such instances where couples have stepped into therapy that the adulterer just wants the injured party to move on. In this instance of numerous sessions the couple normally conjoins their dialogues with Behaviour Change Requests and it has been found that "... there is an Imago principle that states that the behaviour changes one wants most of one's partner are the very ones that are the most difficult for the partner to give" (Luquet 1998:254).

It is interesting to note that the therapist is specifically encouraged to do an assessment in the area of the family. This can be achieved by doing a detailed family diagram or genogram (see

McGoldrick and Gerson, 1985) as a tool to explore the multigenerational context of a family, which can reveal the incidence of infidelity in the past generations (Luquet 1998:242).

The entire process of validation is arduous and is used conjointly with container and holding exercises which help to create a safe space for both the adulterer and the innocent party in the relationship. This process is very valuable not only in extreme cases like adultery but also useful in dealing with issues that require validation and the asking of forgiveness.

#### **4.9.9 THE FLOODING EXERCISE**

The flooding exercise is a process where a couple would seat their partner on a chair and intentionally walk around them and flood them with what they see as positive attributes. This exercise helps with re-imagining their partners and allowing themselves to mutually have a ‘re-look’ at one another.

This exercise is critical to help the couple to reconnect by flooding the mind of each other with the information that they are appreciated and especially focus on the positive aspects of their lives and not the negative ones. This exercise is crucial in building the relationship between the couple and helps the person being flooded to see themselves differently. So many times couples see themselves as useless and unable to overcome the challenges of relationship and the flooding exercise helps the significant other in the relationship with the notion that they are valued. It is here where validation has great power to help couples overcome the past rather than be stunted by the past or current challenges. It also gives them hope of overcoming this as well as emotionally energises them for the future challenges they have to face together.

Often the couple in crisis realise very soon they have been caught up in similar relationship traumas and maybe have been repeating them and hence for them the sense of failure becomes overwhelming and the possibility of being successful in this relationship becomes an impossible dream.

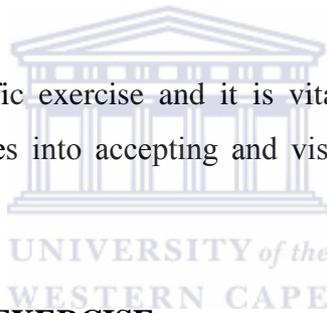
#### **4.9.10 THE NON-VERBAL DIALOGUE**

This dialogue is used right at the beginning of every session in order for the couple to establish eye contact. This helps the couple to establish a sense of safety and the familiarity of being in each

other's space. This practice helps the couple look into each other's eyes and express love to each other, using their eyes and non-verbal methods to send messages of love to one another without uttering a word.

This aspect of IRT is interesting and much research has been done on it. The goal of IRT is to have a healing connection between the couple. Flemke & Protinsky, in their journal article *Imago Dialogues: Treatment Enhancement with EMDR*, state the following:<sup>23</sup> "When using eye movements within IRT, painful disowned experiences that have alienated couples from themselves and each other can be experienced as partners travel beneath their surface emotions. As more primary intense emotions are activated, it is therapeutically important that the client not become overwhelmed since excessive physiological arousal can lead to emotional flooding and defensive reactions ... Thus, EMDR plays a vital role in producing the critical first step in the Imago Dialogues - self-disclosing significant, deeply experienced, previously disowned, painful emotion" (Flemke & Protinsky 2001:7).

Each session starts with this specific exercise and it is vital to breaking down communication barriers. It is helpful to ease couples into accepting and visualising one another in each other's space.



#### **4.9.11 HOLDING/CRADLING EXERCISE**

The Holding Exercise is very effective when one needs to deal with anger between the couple, as a method that contains the affect. This method was introduced by Helen Hunt, Hendrix's partner. They derived and developed this from exposure to their "mutual therapist, John Whitaker, a psychiatrist who used transactional Analysis and Gestalt methods in his practice. In one of his workshops he had demonstrated a process he called the 'Four R's; Rage, Rest, Rub, and Relaxation" (see Hendrix 2005:17). "Helen had written a paper on Jung's theory of projection in which he developed the practice of 'holding', rather than reacting to, the projections of other as a means of de-energizing these projections. We found that regular use of the Container Exercise helped us (and the couples with which we experimented) eventually withdraw and own our projections and distinguish partners from parents. The container exercise became our 'flagship' procedure for dealing with couples' anger and the centrepiece of the couple workshop" (Hendrix 2005:17-18).

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<sup>23</sup> EMDR stands for "Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing".

This practice and process is taught in the workshops with couples and helps to deescalate affect in conflict.

#### **4.10 OTHER TOOLS USED BY IRT**

The primary tool, as we have seen, is the Dialogue which has many variants to enhance certain aspects of the couple's relationship. There are other tools used by Imago Relationship Therapy which deal with other aspects and are designed to augment the primary intent of the therapy and that is to enhance and deepen safety. They are: Container Exercises, Core Scene Revisions, Re-romanticizing of the relationship and the Flooding Exercise.

##### **4.10.1 THE CONTAINER EXERCISE**

The Holding Exercise is dealt with in 5.9.11 but it can be used in conjunction with the 'Container Exercise', even though we deal here with the latter separately.

The Container Exercise takes place where the partner is allowed to uninterruptedly express anger. This happens where the partner is allowed to express anger toward the receiver without being countered, invalidated, or denied. The receiving partner is not allowed to defend or justify his or her actions. The exercise is designed purely "to affirm the reality of your emotions" (Hendrix 1988:186). The mirroring in this exercise affirms the emotional state of the partner. This exercise is not to be attempted until the couple has mastered the other dialogues and preferably with the presence of an experienced therapist. This exercise necessitates three ground rules (Hendrix 1988:186):

- (1) Neither partner is allowed to leave the room until the exercise is completed.
- (2) Neither partner can damage or touch the other partner in a hostile manner.
- (3) The angry person must limit all remarks to a description of behaviour and not a description of character.

Joseph Zielinski in his article *An Exploration of Imago Relationship Therapy and Affect Theory* gives the following analysis, using contrasting emotions in pairs: "For the sender obvious anger- rage, and probably underlying fear, distress, and shame, powers the distress-anguish, fear-terror, and the shame-humiliation. Nonetheless, appropriate modulation of anger over times in the sender,

and fear reduction via graded exposure and rehearsal in the receiver, decreases the intensity of both negative effects. This allows for the lowering of inhibition in the appropriate expression of negative affect (anger) in the sender and a healthful minimization of negative affect (fear, disgust) in the receiver. At the end of the container exercise, the sender deliberately initiates interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy” (Zielinski in Hendrix 2005:101). This exercise is helpful where there is hurt and especially when there is huge effect. It creates and allows a space where deep feelings can be expressed by the sender. It also prevents the interruptions and interpolations from the sender which could trigger defences by the receiver, and this containing avoids escalation of the incident. It is however recommended that the container be done under the supervision of a therapist.

#### **4.10.2 THE CORE SCENE REVISIONS**

Baca remarks in his article *Envy's Manifestation in Individuals and Couples Implications for Imago Therapy*, that usually a couple arrives at the therapist in the midst of “power struggles”, as Hendrix calls it. The power struggle is normal when a couple is involved in conflict and they are trying to coerce the other to act or perceive each other in a certain way. Hendrix says that in an attempt of one to protect his own reality he or she diminishes the other partner’s reality. This conflict takes place and he calls it the Core Scene, where certain behaviours are repeated in a certain way throughout the relationship (Baca, in Hendrix 2005:201). The core scene revisions are when the couple through a process actually realises that they can rewrite the core scene of conflict and they do have control over actually changing their attempt to resolve conflict into moments of mutual personal growth.

#### **4.10.3 RE-ROMANTICISING THE MARRIAGE**

Re-romanticizing the marriage is a process used where the couple does an exercise to actually visit their past and record what their partner did for them that made their relationship work and made them happy. This revisiting of what worked to enhance the vitality in their relationship serves to remind that at one time they had gotten it right. This particular exercise goes back to the romantic phase of the relationship.

Inside this exercise the couple is encouraged to come up with a romantic plan of their own design to restore the vitality that was there after they have dealt with the Power Struggle. “In re-romanticising couples reinstate romantic behaviours that they exhibited during their early relationship” (Hendrix

1998:15). They are encouraged to flood each other with positive behaviours. All the behaviours they exhibited that enhanced and deepened their relationship then are revisited and repeat behaviour is encouraged that was pleasurable in the romantic phase. "...for example, morning walks, back rubs, love notes, flowers, a hot cup of tea, frequent hugs. Surprises and belly laughs are also taught as ways of bringing romance back into the relationship" (1998:15). This process helps the couple identify the behaviours which worked in the relationship and then practically identifying and encouraging behavioural change that makes the relationship work again.

This aspect of the therapy comes usually towards the end of the Couple's Workshop, after all the issues that have and can potentially derail their relationship have been dealt with. After all the dialogues they need to come up with a dream for their relationship. Couples should again "...design a dream relationship, a process which helps them construct a mutual vision of their future relationship and internalize it as their goal" (Hendrix & Hunt 1999:183).

#### **4.10.4 COUPLE'S WORKSHOPS**

Hendrix tells about the inception of these workshops, many years ago, when he invited all the couples in his practice to spend a weekend with him. He then spent two days with about twelve couples at a Methodist camp: "For two days I lectured them about how their childhood needs were influencing their relationship, exhorted them that they must learn to meet their needs in specific ways, and experimented with ways for them to create positive experiences for each other" (Hendrix 2005:21).

The interesting thing is that he only used Mirroring the whole weekend. The outcome of this was that of the twelve who attended, 10 couples, when they returned to their private session, were motivated to work on their relationship and two had decided to divorce (2005:21). In these workshops couples are taught how to engage each other and they are helped to see that with engaging each other within another paradigm of dialogue they can have a better outcome than they may have had thus far.

#### **4.11 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF IRT**

How effective have the initiators of IRT found their own method? Hendrix admits that the testing of the efficacy of IRT is still in its infancy: "Anecdotal evidence feedback includes thank you letters

and referrals from people who have worked with a certified Imago therapist, attended a Getting the Love You Want Couples Workshop, read on Imago therapy, or viewed the home video” (Hendrix and Hunt, 1993). One study conducted by Luquet and Hannah (1996) analysed nine married couples before and after a six-session short-term Imago Relationship format (Luquet 1996). They report that “... these findings were limited, given the absence of a control group and the small number of subjects.” Hendrix refers to other studies that were conducted by Hogan, Hunt, Emerson, Hayes and Ketterer (1996). The results indicate very favourably that marked improvements were experienced by couples who had attended these workshops.

This may all sound very positive, but Berger, in his 1997 article, *What Can Clinicians Learn from Research?*, addressed Imago’s lack of sound longitudinal research studies. He challenged Imago clinicians and theorists to conduct more extensive efficacy studies, using long-term follow-up, control groups, randomization of couples, and objective measures.

Although personally I have experienced mostly positive outcomes in my own practise with IRT, the times IRT was not successful was when couples did not fully commit to the therapy, or one of the parties reverted to old behaviour and thus sabotaged the therapy and relationship.

As demonstrated, the process of IRT is an extensive one and concentrates more on processes and the internal dynamic of the couple’s relationship, and is valued especially for spanning across all aspects of the relationship. It helps the couple understand how they have constructed their Imago and, against that background, the reasons why they have changed in their relationship. IRT gives the couple the vehicle to engage each other and a platform where both approach each other as equals and as partners rather than in a hierarchical structure.

The core or essence of IRT is that it creates safety for the couple to relate to one another within the most difficult situations they face together. As a pastor and counsellor I have no doubt found IRT presents a well thought through process which augments the effectiveness of the pastor in his counselling. What makes IRT an interesting tool is that it is an objectively verifiable process which uses existing relationship dynamics and assists the couple to overcome their problems and issues. It also further empowers the couple to have experienced assisted engagement and gives them courage to overcome the future challenges they may face.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### COMPARISON BETWEEN THE IRT MODEL OF COUNSELLING AND THE BIBLICAL APPROACH TO THE COUNSELLING OF COUPLES

#### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to establish whether the biblical approach to marriage counselling (as a praxis within the broader field of Pastoral Counselling as dealt with in Chapter 2, and a theoretical framework for a biblical view of marriage as detailed in Chapter 3), and the IRT model (as dealt with in Chapter 4) – when compared to each other – have significant similarities and/or differences.

In Chapter 2 I have attempted to define the praxis of Pastoral Counselling and then place Marriage Counselling within this framework.

In Chapter 3 I looked at what the Bible indicates about marriage and the relationship dynamics that God expects from each partner within this covenantal relationship. The reason for this was to explore what the biblical notions of and the prescriptions for marriage are. I assumed that re-examining these biblical backgrounds of marriage closely could be helpful in our time and age towards rediscovering new bases for a renewed flourishing of an age-old institution currently under siege of the demands of modern life.

In chapter 4 I described the IRT model for therapy, which is a secular humanistic model that has proven to be effective in helping couples overcome their stressful marital problems. I identified its composite psychological components, and evaluated the meta-theories from which IRT is composed. It was interesting to note that as I worked with these processes in counselling sessions with couples there were times I sensed a similarity to biblical counselling. It was in using the processes of IRT within what I assumed were my own ‘biblical approach’ that the real value of its unique contribution was visible in helping couples. It is important to note that the founder of the therapy was a university theology professor who after a failed marriage looked for answers in secular Psychology. After many years of struggle he and his wife, Helen la Kelly Hunt, developed a model which made dealing with the problems they encountered in personal life and in counselling possible.

The purpose of chapter 5 is to identify what these similarities and differences are. It will also be an interesting exercise to establish where and how these two theoretical frameworks converge and where they diverge.

In comparing these two distinctive approaches we may see advantages of each and the underlying pitfalls and shortcomings of both approaches. I would like to point out that within biblical counselling there are many approaches but not one definitive model. The various approaches that have been described are similar in using the Bible as their foundation and primary frame of reference. However, in the case of IRT there is a distinguishable model which has emerged and which is practically discernible from other counselling models through its careful assimilation of various psychological theories, taking selected aspects of them and placing them within a practical process as counselling ‘tools’.

To facilitate the process of comparing I will refer to the two approaches as two ‘models’, even though the one has been identified as primarily a psychological model and the other is distinctively a broadly-based biblical *approach*. What I want us to recognise is the discernible nature of both approaches, one being secular and one being distinctively biblical in nature. We may also be able to extract from this study perspectives that may have some value for, and that can be appropriated by, the pastoral counsellor in order to enhance his or her competencies.

The intent of this chapter is to present the areas where these two approaches are similar and where they are different. Via this study I intend to propose a new model for Pastoral Counselling based on what will be identified as lacking in these models.

## **5.1 HOW ARE THESE TWO MODELS TO BE COMPARED?**

The question that needs to be answered by the researcher is *how* these two models are to be evaluated? As a minister my bias toward a *theological* evaluation of IRT is important to state up front as this is my orientation and vantage point and frame of reference. I will highlight the specific aspects of interest of both models and under selected headings deal with the similarities between these aspects of the two models. In this process of analysis the pastor or pastoral caregiver should see why this model has specifically been selected as a method to engage the real dilemma of marital problems in married couples. This choice has not been made to promote this therapy to be accepted

as the only option but to see similarities and differences clearer, and consider how this therapy could deepen and enhance the pastor's effectiveness.

## **5.2 SALIENT ASPECTS OF IRT AND THE BIBLICAL APPROACH TO MARRIAGE**

The two models have vastly different backgrounds, theoretical underpinnings and approaches. By placing these two models alongside each other and accentuating the main aspects of both models the comparison can be clearly seen. Considering the divergent and convergent views we may be clearer as to how the one model could assist the other to become more effective. In their own unique approaches, each model could enrich one another's understanding to develop a pastoral counselling model in Chapter 6, and enrich or open the continued dialogue between theology and psychology. Both of these disciplines have at their core the desire to help humankind, to enhance a common humanity.

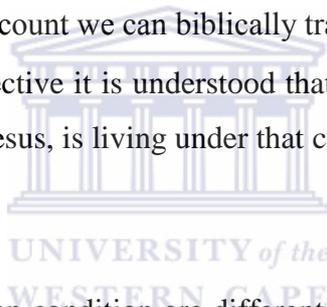
### **5.2.1 THE CONCEPT OF "IMAGO" IN IRT AND "IMAGO DEI" IN THE BIBLICAL APPROACH TO COUNSELLING**

The concept of "Imago" or "Image" is central in both IRT, as described in chapter 4 and the "Imago Dei in the generic model of a Christian approach to Counselling, as presented in Chapter 2.

In IRT the concept "Imago" refers to the unconscious mental image that persons develop over time, especially during their developmental phases of childhood. This image starts to unconsciously compile a mental picture of what the ideal partner would look like. This partner is selected and the desire is that they would enter into a committed relationship with each other in order to fulfil their inner desire for wholeness. In its approach to counselling, IRT deconstructs this mental picture and answers for the couple the question why they were attracted to each other to begin with. In the deconstruction process, the couple soon realises that their Imago has been subconsciously shaped experientially through their express interaction with the significant carers who would exhibit caring behaviours and who thus made them feel good.

In the Christian approach we see the occurrence of "Imago" as a mental picture of humankind found in the creation story. This concept is called the "Imago Dei." In this approach the concept affirms that humankind has been created by God. It also affirms that it was the desire of God at the

beginning of creation to create humankind to be like Him. God also has a relationship with Adam, who being similar to God, also dwells in relationship, and recognises that he needs a mate. In the creation account of Genesis, humankind is imbued with some innate capabilities. They not only were created by God but were also created with the innate ability to ‘liken’ God in terms of His ability to govern. The concept is discussed more fully in 3.1. However this “Image” which God originally intended for humankind to possess is tarnished by the introduction and the participation of Adam and Eve in sin. By the sheer nature of God, God’s Holiness and purity, humankind is banished out of the Garden of Eden and an angel is placed to ensure that they would not come into God’s presence. As a consequence of their disobedience, in choosing to disobey God, the full extent of what it means to be out of fellowship and relationship with God is felt. As a consequence of sin, God curses both the *humans*, as well as *nature*, which they were given to oversee and which should have sustained them. ‘Nature’ will now have added problems in bearing forth its food. The added complexity in their own relationship is immediately felt. Here in the curses God introduces as a consequence of their disobedience, the male would dominate his wife and she would desire to control him. Hence in the creation account we can biblically trace the concept of “power struggle”. From a Christian Counselling perspective it is understood that anyone outside of the grace of God, which is only to be found in Christ Jesus, is living under that curse and also outside of a relationship with God.



Although these analyses of the human condition are different in their approach, they are similar in that they both speak of the concept of “Image”. From the Christian counselling perspective the “Imago” in IRT (the mental image of the ideal partner) is one which is shaped in the human experience. The concept of image in the Genesis account portrays Adam, after naming the animals, realising that there was no suitable companion for him. What is similar is that both perspectives validate humankind’s innate desire to be drawn to that which completes them on a subconscious level. In other words, subconsciously we are desirous of someone resembling our mental picture, and who is required to fulfil our needs for love and affection. In the biblical account this image is qualified by a connection to the “image of God”; God provides a suitable “helper”; the human relationship is reflecting the “image of God”.

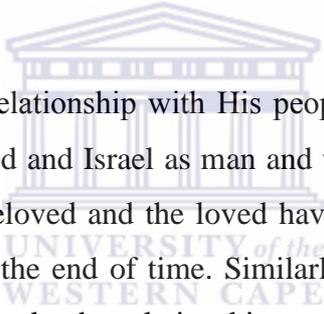
I will now enter into a comparison between the two models as to how they view aspects of the marriage relationship. Why this is crucial as a comparative aspect for us is to understand what the nature of the terms of the relationship are and how they are understood under IRT and in the biblical counselling model. What are the relationship terms based on; are they legal or emotional or even

just mutually agreed upon contractual terms? It gives us a clearer idea as to how the relationship is to be understood and hence to be regulated.

## **5.2.2 THE VIEW OF COVENANT IN THE BIBLICAL AND IRT APPROACH TO MARRIAGE**

The biblical model of marriage and IRT leans heavily on the idea of a ‘covenant’ that is the basis on which every marriage is based. A brief treatment of this is found in Chapter 3.5.1 where ‘covenant’ undergirds the essence and nature of the relationship. This kind of relationship has a non-negotiable set of terms which regulates the behaviour of the two parties within this relationship.

In IRT, Helen La Kelly Hunt, in her treatment of “*Conscious Marriage as Covenant*”, speaks about the marriage covenant between man and woman as comparative of God’s relationship with humankind:



The depiction of YHWH’S relationship with His people is not like one of a suzerain to a vassal. Rather, the idea of God and Israel as man and wife is a metaphor with personal and intimate connotations. The beloved and the loved have pledged themselves to one another for better or for worse, until the end of time. Similarly, when couples engage in the daily practice of Imago dialogical tools, the relationship serves as a matrix that brings the couple into a divine union, into a commitment far surpassing the modern civil contract. It is this relational matrix that enables the couple to remain connected throughout the very real difficulties of forging a relationship (Hunt 2005:53).

Here the depiction of the marriage contract in Hunt’s mind is heightened to a level of covenant between the couple. Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT) thus holds a similar high view of marriage, as in the Bible, and elevates it to the level of a covenant where the terms are predetermined. She cites in her research of this concept Paul F. Palmer of the St. John’s Provincial seminary: “certain theological villains” of the scholastic period such as Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, began to refer to marriage not as covenant but as contract. According to Palmer, this eventually led to a sense that marriages which some church doctrines had graced as sacramental, could be severed by humans and could in fact be treated like other legal contracts. Palmer suggests that whereas contracts can be broken by mutual agreement, by failure to live up to the terms of the

contract, or by civil intervention, “covenants are not broken; they are violated...” (Hendrix 2005:48; see Palmer 1972:617ff.).

In the biblical model of marriage, Mendenhall summarises this concept of ‘covenant’ in the marriage relationship as follows: “Although it has a legal form, the basis of it is what the Hebrews called *hesed*. *Hesed* connotes the idea of mutual respect, kindness, love, loyalty, and fidelity” (Mendenhall 1954: 56-74). The idea of covenant in the sphere of biblical counselling brings a whole new vision of how this relationship is to be governed. The biblical counsellor operates with this ‘covenant view’ of marriage as the underlying dynamic governing the relationship. He recognises that this relationship is identical to the one that regulates the relationship between God and His people, Israel. For the biblical counsellor it is clear that these terms are not negotiable as they are affected between a “greater power” and a lesser “vassal” within the relationship. A more detailed treatment of this concept is given in 4.5. The terms are set and have important legal ramifications for the participants in the relationship under the covenant. The idea of protection of the weaker by the stronger partner (vassal) is enshrined within the terms of the covenant, but there are certain enforceable requirements to be adhered to by the lesser partner also. This makes this covenant relationship workable and the expectations clear for each partner within the relationship.

The biblical model is similar to Imago Relationship Theory (IRT) which also endorses the view that, because of the indissolubility of the marriage covenant, the couple is obligated to stay together and “suggests a permanence that endures through struggle” (Hunt 2005:48).

IRT validates the sentiments of Jesus and His view on marriage in Mathew 19:9 where He refers to the original design for marriage. Jesus held the view that marriage was a relationship instituted by God and was designed for permanence. Jesus responds to a question by Pharisees whether it was lawful to divorce your wife for any and every reason, as follows:

<sup>8</sup> Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. <sup>9</sup> I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:8-9, NIV).

The concept “leaving and cleaving” in the biblical view of marriage must be viewed as more than just a simple act to sanction couples to produce offspring; this seemingly simple act also changes their status from being “one” in singularity and individually to becoming “one in unity.” The

concept of “two become one” aptly summarises the way a married couple is seen by God. In covenant terms it would seem that the couple then would together be “one” as the “vassal” in a covenant relationship submitting to the “higher power” in the covenant, i.e. God. This oneness is endorsed by Paul in I Corinthians 7 when he advises the Church regarding the situation when one partner of the marriage wants to leave, saying that the believer must not seek to divorce. In I Corinthians 7:10-16, it becomes abundantly clear that in the mind of God, every believer in His Kingdom, although married to an unbeliever, has the potential to see themselves as a crucial part of the salvation work of Christ. The marriage relationship is central and extremely strong. 1 Corinthians 7:14 (NIV) provides food for thought: “For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.”

It becomes abundantly clear that God has an extremely high regard for the marriage covenant and the oneness of the married couple and not even the presence of the unbeliever will persuade Him to sanction divorce. It also becomes a strong vehicle within which the Lord could reach the world of unbelievers. He also wants to keep the children born into that relationship inside that saved influence of the believer. The reluctance of severing ties in marriage endorses the notion that God wants to save the world. The only time God sanctions the separation, according to Paul, is if the unbeliever seeks divorce as in the previous passage when there has been adultery.

WESTERN CAPE

### **5.2.3 THE ROLE OF POWER WITHIN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP**

IRT is based on both the man and the woman being equals in the relationship. The couple enters the committed marriage relationship with the understanding that they have needs and expectations from the other partner which will complete them on a subconscious level. However, when they enter into the conscious phase of their marriage relationship it becomes apparent that in order for them to really have a meaningful relationship they will have to see one another as equals in order for the relationship to function optimally.

In the biblical approach to marriage the role of power is viewed slightly different and needs some explanation. The roles of husband and wife are clearly defined and the expectations are defined within the counsel of God. As emphasised in 3.5, when one looks at “power” purely as “hierarchy” one almost robs the intent of the relationship context. The husband and wife, who are “one flesh”,

are in a submissive disposition in their relationship with God. This relationship in the biblical approach to marriage is for a specific purpose and also functions under stipulations from God.

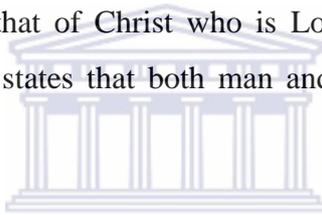
What we must not lose sight of is the fact that the conflict between the roles are clearly “defined” at the beginning of humankind’s creation. There is a distinct difference in the way the relationship is seen after “the fall”. The fall is seen as humankind sinning in the Garden of Eden which alienated them from God. This “fall”, which has traditionally been seen as a onetime event should rather be seen mythically, that is as an ever recurring event in the lives of humankind. At the genesis of humankind’s existence after “the fall”, power becomes oppressive toward the wife from the husband and “desire for control”; by usurping authority to gain control, power struggles become part of their relationship after “the fall”.

One can detect that in the biblical view there is a distinctively harmonious relationship between the husband and the wife with clearly defined lines of responsibility that are assigned by God to both. However “the fall” is a perennial reality in which all relationships are altered. We see that God banishes them out of the garden and curses them. In this primal myth of humankind, each one receives his or her own set of curses which complicates and hardens the work God has given them.

With this curse came the idea that man is placed as head to “rule” over the “woman”. It is right here where some more explanation is needed. In 3.6.2 it was explained that when we speak of the nature of the relationship, it is governed by a covenant of which God is the one who determines what those terms are. It is clearly a hierarchical structure based on “greater power” determining the terms and prescribing them to a “lesser power.” Our immediate response may be to ask whether in a gender based view the husband would be assumed to be the “greater” power; to be more important than the woman. However, a closer look at this concept in the life of Christ will correct that perception. He leaves heaven, his position of power, to establish a new humanity through his Church, for the sake of a suffering humanity and world. In order of importance, we (the “weaker partner”) then become the more important, and Christ’s role according to Philippians 2:5-8 confirms that He came to serve “her”, his Church. In terms of the analogy of these metaphors and images, the woman is then the important one and the one to be served by her husband!

Staying with this analogy of covenant and revisiting the concept within the marriage metaphor, we see another side: “the two becoming one”. When Paul speaks to the husband and the wife and seemingly sanctions hierarchy, he endorses that this is for a purpose. The concept of “two becoming

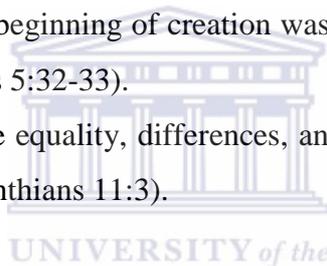
one” is important and must not be minimised. Here I wish to stress that we should be clear that in relation to Christ the husband and the wife, together, have “become one” and they become the “lesser vassal” and Christ becomes to them “the greater power”. In biblical counselling, hierarchy between the husband and wife relationship has nothing to do with power but the internal regulatory dynamic of responsibility and accountability within God’s purpose. The only power that both submits to is the purpose of Christ and His Church. The husband is held accountable and is commanded to love His wife as Christ loves the Church. Abuse of power and influence is directly in contravention to the one who is the holder of ALL power, i.e. Jesus Christ. This new relationship found in Christ demands that both submit their will to Christ and the will of Him who is the “greater power” always reigns. Christian counsellors are the first to acknowledge the abuse of power or influence of man over woman, but nowhere in Scripture is this endorsed and sanctioned. The power the man may have is to be subservient to the purposes for which God had called him and that is to lead conjointly with his wife the family entrusted to him. Although he may have physical strength to dominate to achieve compliance he chooses to regulate the relationship through love for his wife. The power they both submit to is that of Christ who is Lord of both their lives. It is then not surprising that Paul in Gal 3:26-27 states that both man and woman is equal before God but in chapter 4, functionally differentiated.



It is interesting to note that within Creation Theology, the egalitarian vs. hierarchy debate is alive and vibrant. In *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism – Biblical responses to the Key Questions* by Wayne Grudem, he raises all the issues and investigates arguments against hierarchy in creation. He criticises Feminist theologians who holds this view which they extract from the creation story, claiming that the state of hierarchy within marriages only came into existence after the “Fall”.

Grudem reflects on discourse among egalitarian theologians; he specifically names scholars who hold this view, such as Rebecca Groothuis and Gilbert Bilezikian. In his own argument he offers ten reasons why hierarchy exists within God’s structure and that such “structure” is not as a result of the state of sin. This hierarchical structure was in His mind with humankind’s creation from the “beginning”. In other words, the notion of an egalitarian relationship being there before creation and then altered via sin to become hierarchical is challenged. The 10 arguments he offers to question this view is worth noting. They are to substantiate his view that hierarchical relationships existed before the “fall of humankind”.

1. *The order*: Adam was created first, then Eve (note the sequence in Genesis 2:7 and 2:18-23; 1 Timothy 2:13).
2. *The representation*: Adam, not Eve, had a special role in representing the human race (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45-49; Romans 5:12-21).
3. *The naming of the woman*: Adam named Eve; Eve did not name Adam (Genesis 2:23).
4. *The naming of the human race*: God named the human race “Man,” not “Woman” (Genesis 5:2).
5. *The primary accountability*: God called Adam to account first after the “Fall” (Genesis 3:9).
6. *The purpose*: Eve was created as a helper for Adam, not Adam as a helper for Eve (Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 11:9).
7. *The conflict*: The curse brought a distortion of previous roles, not the introduction of new roles (Genesis 3:16).
8. *The restoration*: Salvation in Christ in the New Testament reaffirms the creation order (Colossians 3:18-19).
9. *The mystery*: Marriage from the beginning of creation was a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32-33).
10. *The parallel with the trinity*: The equality, differences, and unity in the Trinity are linked with the marriage relationship (1 Corinthians 11:3).



He further affirms that the “oppressive rule” of the man over his wife is as a result of the “Fall”, but refers us to the “new creation in Christ” where the wife is encouraged to submit to her husband as both submits unto Christ and His purposes in the Kingdom (Grudem 2006:71-73).

Rogers interprets the usage of υποτασσομαι, “submission”, in Ephesians 5:21 as follows: “to line oneself up under, to submit. Used in a military sense of soldiers submitting to their superior or slaves submitting to their masters. The word has primarily the idea of giving up one’s own right or will; i.e. to subordinate oneself” (Rogers & Rogers 1998:444-445). The instruction is given to both partners individually to denote that the primary submission is to Christ.

To then consider how power is to be handled in Christian counselling the overwhelming sentiment would be of a couple who in the first place have “become one”, hence their mutual submission is to the cause of Christ. The purpose of Christ and His mission is the reason the woman is required to submit to her own husband and not to view him as the “superior power” within the marriage

relationship. It is also a relationship with a clear calling and built-in accountability structure towards the one who had called them.

The clear line of accountability is again reiterated in Ephesians 5. Here again one can see the correlation between the husband being clear on why he is the head in the marriage relationship and fully accountable to His Lord: the husband emulates His Lord in lovingly guiding his entire family under the clear agenda of him being under Christ and Christ in submission under God.

It is important to note and point out that in Ephesians 5:25-32 the imagery is used of being “one flesh” which can be traced to Genesis and indicates that when God looks at the man and his wife, He views them as one. We may often be tempted to view humankind in terms of a power structure, but the operative word for Paul is oneness, unity. The concept of oneness permeates the whole book of Ephesians, especially in Chapter 3:5. As will be discussed later in more detail, this unity or oneness reflects the purpose of God in human relations.

The definitive difference in this area between IRT and biblical counselling is that in the latter much more is at stake than just the meeting of each other’s emotional and physical needs. Marriage is seen as an integral part of God’s plan under Christ’s auspices, and the needs of the couple are to be aligned to the clear-cut purposes for God’s Church under the headship of Christ. The transcendent purpose for marriage within creation needs to be illuminated by biblical counselling.

#### **5.2.4 THE PRIMARY THEORETICAL SOURCES OF THE IRT MODEL AND BIBLICAL COUNSELLING**

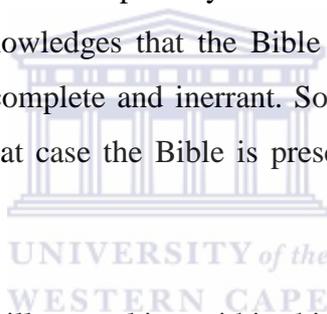
The basic difference between these two models, one being the biblical counselling model and the other the IRT model, is that biblical counselling uses the Scriptures as its basis while IRT, which is a careful assimilation of many theories, uses Psychology and Psychotherapy. IRT uses psychological thinking and psychotherapeutic processes and views humankind to some extent as mechanical, and to be understood from a phenomenological perspective. These processes are continually under development and see humankind as a species that is continually in flux and placed under the “reliable” scrutiny of the sciences to make sense of them.

These approaches see humankind within relationships in society and study how they interact and handle the dynamics of relationship. IRT also looks at processes to improve dialogue to the point

where it is not just there for understanding but also to change behaviour to improve relationships. There does not seem to be an ultimate purpose, but there seems to be a definite intent to find ways to meet humankind's need for happiness. All these states of happiness are subjective and totally unique to each couple. The IRT model of counselling is client-centred and its purpose is to identify the needs at stake and assist the couple in finding the means to make each other happy.

In biblical counselling the source document, used to define and regulate behaviour, is the Bible. The pastor's purpose is to facilitate change within the relationship for the couple to live and grow toward the purpose of God and God's glory. This purpose is defined and clear, and, if not clear, the pastor's role is to help them see their role within life and within the purpose defined through Scripture, to align their priorities.

The most fundamental difference in these two approaches is that in the biblical approach to pastoral counselling, the pastor uses the Bible as his primary framework and in some cases it is the only source of authority. In this he acknowledges that the Bible is inspired by God, written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit, and is complete and inerrant. Some pastors however do not view the scriptures as inerrant but even in that case the Bible is prescriptive to Christianity and Christian living.



The assumption of the biblical councillor, working within this biblical view of humanity, sexuality and marriages, is that he sees himself as acting as a mediator for God to continue the work started by the saviour Jesus Christ to effect the continued reconciliation of humankind to God and humankind to each other. This task is contained in and described in the guidelines found in God's Word.

It has to be noted that IRT is a model specifically designed to work well within marriage and that it certainly has a great platform to address all marriage issues. Biblical counselling however deals with a whole host of challenges and is not only limited to marriage counselling. IRT is different and distinctive in nature to biblical counselling as it can be effectively used to deal with homosexual and heterosexual relationships problems. It also shows the same versatility to a range of very difficult challenges for which various specific processes are implemented to deal with difficult counselling conditions like couples who have conditions as complex as erectile dysfunction, ADD, alcoholism and drug abuse.

### **5.2.5 THE USE OF MEDITATION, INTERNAL FOCUS, RELAXATION AND CENTERING TECHNIQUES IN IRT, AND PRAYER IN CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING**

It would be naive not to acknowledge that when couples enter the counsellor's office they would have heightened levels of anxiety. Both models are recognising this reality and employ methods to help couples relax in order to reduce resistance and maximise the willingness to engage. Both models use relaxation techniques to assist couples in relaxing and, in doing this, to achieve maximum cooperation from both parties in the event of couples, but also in the event of one individual.

In IRT relaxation techniques are used to help couples become more relaxed and amenable to dialogue. The intent of this practice is to reduce the heart rate and help the couple relax. Couples who are stressed do not respond well to therapy and tend to become reactive when highly stressed. In the event when couples become reactive during a therapy session it may be wise for them to take a walk to reduce stress. Most IRT sessions start with a series of breathing exercises which reduces the couple's heart rate and which improves the quality of the session.

In biblical counselling, the session could start with the couple being made aware of the presence of God in their midst and acknowledging His presence with them as being part of their healing mechanism. The counsellor could use prayer to remind both partners that there is divine interest in them resolving their conflict and that God through His Holy Spirit is an integral part of the session.

Van Deusen Hunsinger writes: "Empirical studies have been published that show a positive correlation between the use of prayer and physical and emotional healing. Some people consider such studies to be a good apologetic for prayer, and some have been convinced enough by the studies to engage in daily prayer for the sake of its practical benefits. But the real focus and purpose of prayer as the means of intimate communion with God has been lost. Everything has been turned upside down. Instead of God being the center of our lives, our emotional and mental health occupies the center" (Van Deusen Hunsinger 2001:230).

In the event of IRT it is clear that physical means are used to relax the heart and mind of the clients. It could also be wise to bear in mind that in the event of a person entering into the IRT therapist's office the use of prayer may not be well received when the client is an atheist, and praying with the

best intentions in such a case could be a hindrance. Neutral techniques would obviously work better in cases where the client does not place too high a premium on faith in God. In the case of the biblical counsellor the practice of prayer would not be out of place and in many instances expected as part of the session.

For the IRT therapist it would come down to a mastering of techniques and processes to achieve a dialogical environment. However, the good counsellor will always be mindful of the fact that therapy sessions can so easily degenerate to merely a series of techniques that will get the job done and achieve the dialogical outcomes (and not necessarily the proper therapeutic ones).

### **5.2.6 THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR AND THE THERAPIST IN IRT AND CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING**

The perspectives of these two approaches are seemingly divergent and so an obvious question would be to ask: “What would the role of the counsellor be in the various models of assisting couples?”

The role of the counsellor in IRT is one of a coach and facilitator using primarily the couple’s dialogue as a process tool to deepen and enhance communication. The first part of the session normally consists of a psychological education about the value and importance of following the dialogue process and what is happening to them as couple experientially. The counsellor’s role would then be to help the dialogue by introducing sentence stems that lead them to deepen areas and assist their communication. Their role in helping the couple is one of facilitation and assisting to deepen the connection between the couple, rather than being the object of the emotional transference. In IRT the therapist is seen as the coach and the facilitator within these sessions. The therapist is not prescriptive in telling the couple what their wounds are or even what the issues are but he takes the couple on a journey of discovery. The couple then with this trained help unravels these issues from the IRT model to establish why they fell in love and within this model establish the reasons for their choices of mates, facing up to the wounding from childhood, and identifying the needs they want to have satisfied. The IRT therapist acts as the coach and facilitator to help and assist the couple toward relational wholeness.

In the biblical counselling session the role of the pastor is seen as the one who provides sanction and advice from the word of God. He is guided by his personal internal belief system and assurance

that he is himself in relationship with Christ. The relationship he has with God is that He is His instrument and his agenda is predetermined through his allegiance to God through Christ. He has the added agenda of furthering within these sessions the agenda of His Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. His agenda is to forge unity and relational reciprocity within the marriage relationship.

As a pastor he has the added responsibility to also keep the perspective of the whole community of believers he serves in mind. The body of Christ concept is vividly etched into his mind so that whatever the outcome of the session is, the transformation of the couple will have a compounding effect on the body of Christ. He will no doubt be aware of the fact that the internal pressures of accountability within the faith community enhances his ability to encourage and maintain the couple receiving counsel to achieve conformity to the will of God.

### **5.2.7 THE VIEW OF WOUNDING AND THE OCCURRENCE OF SIN AS IT IMPACTS THE LIFE OF THE PERSON**

In IRT sin, as one could call it from a Christian perspective, or wounding as IRT would call it, would be understood as undesirable behaviour perpetrated against another human during the client's development phases. These behaviours that may have occurred many years ago would alter the client's view of himself and also his partner when in relationship. For IRT even the occurrence of adultery is seen as symptomatic of a deeper problem that needs to be addressed.

From a Christian counsellor's point of view this would almost be seen as an affront by not acknowledging that sin has occurred. Everything that is called sin is a conscious affront and the commission of the sin is considered as wrong and the pathological motivators for sinning are not considered as extenuating. It is within this ambivalence that the dialogue between biblical counselling and Psychology can help in understanding the behaviour without being seen as complicit endorsement of behaviour.

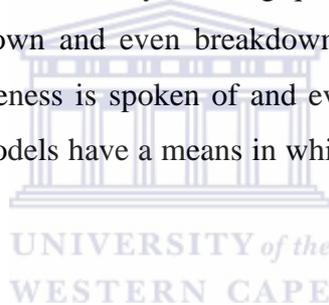
It is here that one needs to be clear that Psychology does not have a clear morality and its aims are not to state an absolute behavioural pattern which has eternal consequences. For the Christian counsellor ignoring this aspect of his belief system would count as a betrayal to his Lord who has been affronted by the choices of the counselee.

The aim of IRT is to identify the behaviour and through a system of ‘phenomenology’ propose a solution to resolving the underlying mental issues that constrict the person’s functioning, or even resolving the matter.

The view of sin within Christian counselling is that every sin is an affront to the Holy God who created humankind in His image and hence every reconciliation and forgiveness attempt cannot be achieved without God’s expressed involvement and approval. This aspect is to be dealt with in the next part of the chapter.

### **5.2.8 FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION**

The reality of any relationship is that sooner or later while people expose and make themselves vulnerable someone will be hurt. Huge pressure and relationship stress results especially when one party within the relationship has been hurt badly. The big question then is how they overcome this huge chasm of relationship breakdown and even breakdown in trust. The way a relationship is restored is challenging when forgiveness is spoken of and even more difficult when adultery has occurred in the relationship. Both models have a means in which this occurrence is dealt with and a framework that could deal with it.

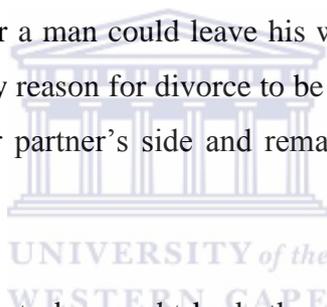


The way IRT deals with the reality of adultery is that the occurrence of adultery indicates that within the relationship there are some needs that are not being met. The inappropriate response then is to meet that need outside of the primary relationship, and results in the adulterous affair. The way that IRT deals with the emotional breakdown and pain when adultery has occurred is to get the couple into a therapy session. The intent and purpose of the therapist is to increase safety for the couple and create a platform for them to talk about this event and also about the betrayal. The “Container Exercise”, through the process of “validation”, is used until the need to speak about the betrayal reduces sufficiently for the relationship to be re-romanticised. It is interesting to note that in IRT, the approach does not make any moral judgements or utter condemnation during the sessions.

In biblical counselling the act of adultery is directly tied to the biblical notion of sin. It is not even minimised as a mistake in the context of marriage but taken seriously as an infraction of something holy and the only remedy lies with reconciliation with God and the wife or husband. For the biblical counsellor, especially when it comes to the sin of adultery, reconciliation of the couple

cannot be seen apart from reconciliation with God. The sin of adultery within the context of Christian counselling and “covenant” is seen as a direct affront to the “Image of God”, even though it can be seen as symptomatic of a problem in the marriage. It may even be true that because of problems in the intimacy dynamic of the couple, it would be the catalyst for the choice to have an adulterous affair. No reason would be considered viable as reason enough for any partner to commit adultery to make up for what is lacking in the relationship. Although that may be the cause, the Christian counsellor has to ensure that his lens is that of God and that personal accountability be accepted by the “sinner” (cf. I John 1:7-8). Taking personal responsibility for one’s own actions is an important key to relationship recovery.

The couple should be willing to reconcile and revitalise the marriage itself and deal with that which was lacking in their relationship. In Christian counselling the relationship between husband and wife is directly related to the relationship that Christ has for His Church in that there exists a covenant between God and His people, and the terms are unalterable. The only option for the couple is for the guilty party to seek forgiveness from the innocent partner and reconcile. It is ironic that at a request from the Pharisees whether a man could leave his wife for each and every reason Christ affirms in Matthew 19:9 that the only reason for divorce to be sanctioned for the innocent partner is for adultery committed on the other partner’s side and remarriage is sanctioned for the innocent party.



Forgiveness and reconciliation needs to be sought by both parties in the relationship as they both accept responsibility for the wellbeing of their relationship. The processes IRT builds into the relationship is to gain insight and change behaviour that will help and reduce physical stress and enhance relationship wellbeing.

In biblical counselling this simple action of forgiveness is far deeper, in that the forgiveness cannot be wrought just through dialogical processes as if this process in and of itself would resolve the matter. It can at most serve as platform on which the problem can be dealt with and even speed up resolving the issue. “Forgiveness” from the pastor’s perspective is the exclusive prerogative of God, who through Christ made reconciliation possible for humankind. Everything else short of that serious addition within the marriage relationship is a poor substitute. It was David who in Psalm 51 would cry out to God, “Against you and you alone have I sinned.” Sin is serious and the spiritual implications are often under-emphasised.

On a more practical level there may be times when the husband beats his wife and where asking for forgiveness and saying 'I am sorry' just does not have any serious impact until he realises that what he has done is an affront to a Holy God. The greatest validation a wronged party needs at a time like this is validation from the ultimate authority and that is the one who created them. In an event as serious as this, no matter what the reason for the physical abuse or the scale on which it took place, the entire Christian community will be informed and repentance required from everyone (Matthew 18:15-17). The implication is for the entire community to take responsibility for the protection of the innocent.

A revisioning of the value and cost of forgiveness would just deepen our concept of the "Image of God" within humankind. It is true that we never realise the value of the gift until we consider the cost to the giver of the gift. A biblical scholar who himself wrestled with this concept in his book *The cost of discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, says: "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and Incarnate... Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all it is costly because it cost God the life of His son: 'yes have been bought at a price', and what has cost God did not come cheap for us. Above all it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God" (Bonhoeffer 1959:58-59).

Although it may seem that in my comparison I would diminish the value of IRT, I recognise the value of this therapy in that it provides a well-defined and thought-through process within which these dialogues can be achieved and had. The spiritual aspect of pastoral counselling can be conjoined with a dialogical process, and they can work hand in glove to help the couple.

### **5.2.9 REASONS FOR PROBLEMS IN MARRIAGE**

In both models it is important to know that the reasons couples come into counselling are varied, but could also be similar in both cases. However, they are uniquely viewed by each of the two models in counselling.

In IRT the typical terminology for a couple in crisis is “power struggle”, an interesting term which actually is a term for a *stage* of the relationship and seen as a part of the passage toward resolution. However inside this subconscious selection process, the person inadvertently selects a partner based on this mental picture and the rationale for this selection is predominantly an unconscious process. In the falling in love process, the realities of the negative behaviours of the person selected are masked by the positive hormones flooding their bodies (Malach Pines 2005:155). It is in the committed phase that those behaviours are unmasked by the drastic reduction of positive hormones, and the couple enters into what IRT calls a “power struggle.” The “power struggle” is a general term for the phase after the euphoric romantic phase and generally is termed as the period where marital dissatisfaction is at its highest.

This stage is where needs are different and the one partner seemingly is working against the other by not wanting to meet him or her. Inside these processes the therapist will through dialogue help couples resist “naming and blaming” each other. IRT has a unique term for these actions; they are called “projections” on the part of the client for not acknowledging his or her own contribution to and owning up to the problem. Its intention is to also help the couple differentiate between unconscious communication and conscious communication which is vital for the couple to be “present” in the whole process. The reasons in IRT, for couples becoming distracted and drawn away from the relationship, are called “energy leaks”. Such terminology is really just a way to depersonalise the problem and allow the couple to see themselves as the solution to the problem and not to carry on blaming and shaming.

In biblical counselling, the reasons for the problems are often also perceptual blockages and prejudicial perceptions that undermine real communication. A total disparity in values and norms becomes a clashing of wills. The unwillingness to engage each other to resolve the matter bring some couples rather to choose to leave matters unresolved under the false perception that they are “keeping the peace”. Many problems are the result of the couple being unclear on what the basis of their norms and values are. External aspects from outside the relationship become more important than nurturing the inside aspects of the relationship. Another cause for frustration is the perception as to what love is, especially when this would be seen as self-serving and not as giving, as often happens. Immaturity is a big factor in relationships where couples have to learn to move from serving their own interests to serving the interest of the other, or the couple.

Louw describes various stages through which this process towards maturity moves. During the embryonic stage the areas of “my interests” and “your interests” are very large. However, when a person discovers that love should in fact be directed toward the partner’s interests, the “we-approach” can start developing during the discovery stage. Two people then learn to notice and openly show more and more appreciation for each other’s positive qualities. Then the complementary stage follows, when partners in a mature relationship start applying their marriage in service to the family, community and extended society (Louw 1995:14-15).

The power struggle which is evidenced when a couple is in trauma is not to be seen as evidence of incompatibility but is rather to be seen as a symptom as to where the couple need to grow. When one considers the concept as used in both models it would seem that both endorse and hold that although marriage at times would be tough, problems in covenant type relationships are opportunities to grow into a maturing of the relationship. In both approaches we can see them look at the same problems from a different angle: one from a more phenomenological and the other one from a more theological perspective.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY**

In this discussion it becomes clear that biblical counselling is grounded in the Bible as the Word of God and as the authoritative source for advice for the biblical counsellor. The idea of marriage inside of the covenant of God is equated to the relationship Christ has with His church and this high view needs to be maintained even as the counselling progresses. Inside this role of Christ in His Church the transcendent role of the Holy Spirit needs to be acknowledged. What is important in this role of the Holy Spirit is that it must and cannot be acknowledged just as mental assent but a deep dependence in His wisdom in all the counselling sessions.

The character of the counsellor is to be above reproach in the counselling session as well as outside of the counselling session. To be effective he needs to have a relationship with His Lord which is vibrant and alive. The counsellor would in the counselling sessions emphasise the role of Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and humankind and the one who has achieved his victory over death. The counsellor should be living proof that there is life in Christ.

Confession of sin within those sessions dealing with sin, are crucial, as it restores the relationship with God and also validates the one who has been sinned against. The husband’s view of his role seen biblically makes his relationship with his wife not just one which is good for his own benefit.

He needs to enhance living in harmony with his wife and the converse of this seriously impacts his relationship with His Lord.

IRT is a psychoanalytical technique birthed through the personal experience and quest for answers by its founder. It has at its root the expectation that in dealing with relationship problems it has a high level of success through emphasising quality communication between hurt partners. The model primarily is an excellent communication tool which deals with problems in a structured way. In its application it is important to note that through enhancing communication and deepening dialogue the process forces the couple to communicate with one another non-directively and in this structured dialogue process the problems are addressed. However, where there is deep pathology that cannot be addressed in dialogue, those complexities are addressed individually and, if necessary, referred.

The strength of IRT is its awareness of unconscious factors and unconscious reactions. IRT uncovers that most of these reactions are adaptations and are often a way to cope and prevent painful experiences.

The biblical model for counselling has a distinctive biblical language to it as opposed to the terms used in IRT which are unfamiliar to theology. IRT describes the problems from a uniquely human “needs” perspective. Both the models are distinctive and both have at their intent to help heal relationships in marriages. Although they come from different perspectives, they share the same interest in the client, i.e. the healing and restoration of humankind born in the Image of God.

Although IRT and biblical counselling comes from different perspectives, and do not share the same terms, they are differentiated in their character. This assessment of the comparison between IRT and Pastoral counselling is confirmed by Joubert (2009:38). IRT holds nothing that overtly sabotages the principles announced and applied in Scripture. In fact there is nothing that in any way can be seen as subverting the purposes of Scripture or the objectives of Biblical marriage counselling, which are to restore relationships in couples who are experiencing problems.

The one shortcoming in my opinion of IRT is its lack of religious spirituality. I do not see an open aversion to it - on the contrary it acknowledges the value of religious systems, which in fact makes it Christian friendly. One must remember that its intent is not to place a religious system in place but enhance relationality via communication processes. Viewed from a pneumatological perspective

one would, like Van Ruler, see that God is at work even in this *universitas scientiarum* (Van Ruler 1989:25). The idea that the world is God's allows for humankind to excel at serving one another. Pneumatology also provides a framework which comfortably embraces the human sciences as ancillary to God's aims to serve humankind as theology does.

I agree with Joubert where she states in her conclusion: "Deur die toevoeging van die Imago verhoudingsterapie tot die pastorale huweliksterapie, spreek dit Louw se pleidooi van groter samewerking tussen teologie en psigologie aan. Die hipotese is gestel dat die vermoede bestaan dat toevoegings tot die pastorale huweliksterapie nodig is om relevant te bly vir huwelike in post-moderne tye" (Joubert 2009:41).

The greatest difference between IRT and pastoral counselling is that IRT seemingly favours a humanistic view of humankind in that it lacks the spiritual component that Christianity brings. Herein lies the real tug of war between humankind and God. "Regnant anthropocentrism in our everyday attitudes, our lifestyles, and our economic and political decisions is an obstacle to growth in Christian life. Growth in solidarity always comes at a cost. It is costly both in the sense of requiring us to give up self-centred ways of thinking and living and in the sense arousing opposition and even perhaps persecution from those who see the movement towards solidarity as a deadly threat rather than a blessing. Classical theological descriptions of the Christian life, following Scripture, have rightly always emphasized the inescapability of cross-bearing in the life of the disciples of the crucified Lord" (Migliore 2004:244).

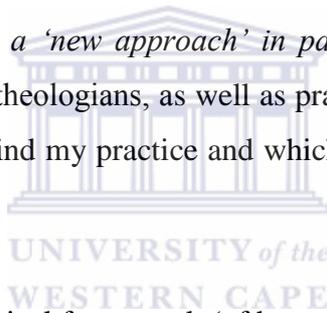
A pneumatological view of pastoral counselling needs to be attentive to this "power struggle" and turn this greatest weakness into its greatest strength if ordered under "the Spirit's activity in the ministry of Jesus and in the life of the church to the coming reign and eschatological glory of the triune God" (Migliore 2004:232; see also Moltmann 1984).

## CHAPTER SIX

### PROPOSING A NEW MODEL FOR PASTORAL COUNSELLING: THE FEASIBILITY OF THE IRT MODEL WITHIN A PNEUMATOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 6.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will propose a Biblical model for pastoral counselling. The first question when proposing a new model for pastoral counselling which needs to be answered is: “Why would there be a need for a new model for Pastoral counselling?” Having a new model for pastoral counselling would, by implication, alter the pastoral framework for the pastoral counsellor. We must not be afraid or feel a sense of anxiety when we ask ourselves the question Louw poses in his paper, *Philosophical counselling: Towards a ‘new approach’ in pastoral care and counselling?* (Louw 2011:3): “...it is urgent that pastoral theologians, as well as practical theologians, pose the question: What is the undergirding theory behind my practice and which idea is shaping my mind within the practice of counselling?”



This is a valid question as our theoretical framework (of how things work and function), determines our view of the situation as we find it. This framework determines how we approach these marital pastoral situations, and why they should be changed. What also begs for an answer is whether our framework is aligned or can be aligned to the biblical perspective of marriage. We may need to ask whether the framework we have is an authentic theological framework which would help us in identifying any dysfunctional area in the marriage. The reason this question is crucial is that it will affect the thinking and behaviour of the primary carer in the congregational setting, the pastor. If he is not clear on what framework he is working in, the counselling session could easily degenerate to a repetition of the question “tell me how you feel?” or a bombardment of a string of commands of what God demands.

The importance of addressing this issue within the context of pastoral care and counselling is to stimulate our thinking toward developing an authentic pastoral counselling framework that would ensure an authentic theological model. The danger is always that any practical theologian, in his attempt to develop an effective model, could be tempted to assume that the humanist disciplines

need to be added until eventually, the theological basis is hardly discernible. Such a framework should clearly state the composite parts and what the undergirding theories are on which it rests. The framework needs to delineate how each of the aspects integrates and how they are dependent on one another. The theologian however needs to be clear that his vantage point, which determines his framework, must remain theological in nature and not, as said before, degenerate toward a humanistic approach to counselling.

## 6.1 THE OUTLINE AND BASIC ASPECTS OF THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter I will be dealing primarily with three aspects of my proposed model, called **DEIMAGO**. It is a word newly coined and made up of two words: *DEI* and *IMAGO*. The concept of *IMAGO DEI* is a theological concept which was birthed to explain the nature of humankind being created in the Image of God. This concept is a profound one, for which I have deep respect, in that it elevates humankind's view of their creation to a level just short of deity. The purpose of their existence on earth is given context.

While considering a pneumatological counselling model for pastors, I decided to give it a name that would correspond to an elevated view, a Spiritual view, of humankind. It is a play on words and I purposefully placed the “*I*” in the middle of the word that has been contracted to make up the word **DEIMAGO**. I chose this format to accentuate, symbolically, humankind as desirous to be in the centre of God's will and that God's Image overwhelms and determines the identity of humankind. The added significance is also that humankind, in his development on this earth, becomes so immersed into God's divine will, that the “*I*” is hardly discernible, as the whole character of God has blended with the human actor so that he or she is “full” of God. The inspiration for this comes from the eschatological view of the Christian and the Church found in 1 Corinthians 15:25-28 (NIV):

<sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For he “has put everything under his feet”. Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. <sup>28</sup> When He has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, *so that God may be all in all* (emphasis mine).

The theoretical background of this proposed model will entail a review of three fundamental areas within pastoral counselling which are crucial in defining this model. The three areas are, firstly, a concise or basic Biblical Anthropology. The second part of the model will be a redefined working relationship between Theology and the Human Sciences, and the third and last aspect is the role of the Spirit within the Church in God's eternal purpose. This aspect is to define how humankind functions not only in his relationship with God, but also as he functions communally with others to advance the agenda of God.

The third aspect of this framework, after identifying the Church and her functioning as service towards God's Kingdom in God's eternal purpose, would not be complete unless we add a practical aspect to answer *how* this is to be accomplished. The objective will be to illustrate how this model is to be viewed and applied as praxis of the Kingdom. At the end of this chapter I will propose some "simple" dialogical tools which can give the pastor some idea how, in their simplicity, they contain sufficient complexity and value toward closing the gaps in our *kairos* of marriage crises.

The reason I chose this sequence and the subject matter is that biblical Anthropology looks at humankind's relationship with God. We can call this the "*intra-biblical view*." It is humankind's desire to understand how humankind came to be on this earth and who or what they are and what their nature and connection is to God. The second major aspect of this proposed model is how the Human Sciences can be seen to assist our understanding of humankind in a post-modern context. This aspect will give us a "*queen-of-the-sciences-view*" at what the human sciences have to offer to enhance and deepen our understanding of human behaviour for pastoral counselling. This aspect of the model is to enable a structured "awareness dialogue" with the sciences.

The third major aspect of the chapter is the "*eschatological view*" of humankind within God's eternal purpose. In this aspect I endeavour to glean from the Bible, what the specific role of the Holy Spirit is within the eternal, eschatological purpose of God.

The reason I would like to add and propose a practical aspect to this model is that no model is complete unless it can be applied practically. In the current realities we experience in South Africa, people on the Cape Flats and other impoverished areas, due to their financial constraints, often do not have easy access to specialised and skilled help. The vast array of therapies that are available and that may be helpful, are expensive and their practice is limited to a few skilled practitioners. The increased secularisation and commercialisation of skills has further marginalised those who are

poor, by placing the accessibility to these skills beyond their reach. It would seem that society has further entrenched and legitimised their devaluation as humans created in the Image of God.

The intention is to propose a pneumatological model which could serve as a sound theological basis to train and re-skill existing pastors in churches. This renewed look at counselling is to enhance their existing knowledge base with some skilled and current biblical perspectives as well as newer pastoral perspectives, some which integrate humanistic processes to help couples in marriage distress. This may hopefully allow access to trained help to the most economically challenged environments. The churches that exist in the townships are the most practical vehicle to choose as the infrastructure and necessary ethos is already in place.

### **6.1.1 A NEED FOR A PNEUMATOLOGICAL MODEL**

It is accepted that biblical counselling uses relationship principles from the Bible, since it is valuable as the primary source document for the pastoral counsellor. In Chapter 3 it was pointed out that Louw sees the *kerygmatic* model of counselling, which is by and large a reformed model, as having as its primary intent to proclaim reconciliation between humankind and God. In this approach to counselling the primary purpose and tone of the counselling session would be to represent a “preaching moment” about the grace of God and forgiveness. This aspect of preaching or *kerygma* would be to accentuate the value and purpose of Christ coming to this earth, as worked out in human beings by God’s Spirit (Pneuma). In the same chapter I note that Jay Adams is the forerunner and advocate of *Nouthetic* counselling and I concur with Daniel Louw that human fallibility is at the core of Adam’s viewpoint. All attempts in the process of counselling called “Nouthetic Counselling” are to reverse the state of the person in relation to God and, in the event of sin being committed by the counselee, assist him or her to overcome the results of guilt and shame within their repentance. Louw makes an appeal that humankind should not just view themselves as fallen people but also as part of the natural world within which they function. They need to see that God’s glory transcends even that which is physical. This specific view of humankind brings into question the effectiveness of a primarily *kerygmatic* approach to pastoral counselling, with a primary focus on proclaiming and maintaining a relationship with Christ.

From this *kerygmatic* view of pastoral counselling, one could easily infer that the primary purpose of God in creating people, is to save them through Christ. It would almost reduce the reason for our being on this earth to an inferred sick reality, the core of which is the fact that every person is born

into the quagmire of sin with all its complexities. Although this reasoning in no way minimises or reduces the appreciation of the sacrifice of Christ and appreciates all He has done, there needs to be more said regarding humankind's existence and their purpose on this earth.

A purely Christocentric approach is limiting as it sketches a very limited view of the salvation history of humankind on this earth. If a purely Christocentric view is accepted and placed as the beginning and end of the story of Scripture, this approach inadvertently reduces humankind to a process that resembles this pattern of sin, salvation and incarnation of the Holy Spirit into the life of the believer, coupled to the constant grappling with sin. This being the main event and only focus and aspect of Scripture that is to be communicated in the counselling session, would inevitably (toward the counselee) evoke a very morbid view of Christianity and humankind's existence on this earth. Unfortunately, on a certain level many couples live within this seemingly unfortunate cycle of "getting up and falling" and the cycle of counselling becomes part of their regime, similar to the cycle we experience in the book of Judges, where the Israelite's view of God was that He would be their rescuer in times of personal need. In other words, God becomes the one who sees to their needs and it becomes apparent that in a world where humankind and their needs are at the centre, the cycle becomes a beginning and end in itself. The person that is counselled within this paradigm sees himself or herself as being born into this world, susceptible to sinning, by default becoming the object of God's wrath and so seeks salvation through Christ and is then saved through grace. After this tragedy of life, grappling with sin, the couple or person is then relieved to eventually die and go on to glory.

I would hasten to state that I am not minimising the value and the yearning of any Christian who would love to be with the Lord and spend eternity in heaven. I am concerned about the quality of the time-frame between salvation and actually dying. By overemphasising one aspect of a person's being on earth and/or reducing one aspect of God's intent with humankind and making that the definitive, the vision that God has for humankind on earth could be distorted.

The pastoral counsellor's work, which is primarily centred on the needs and problems of people, would probably find counselling sessions reduced to reacting to issues rather than being proactive. What if we review such a negative anthropology, and introduce a new perspective on humankind which will influence the way counselling is approached and done? What if we introduce a platform for the pastoral counsellor that enhances his work and is proven to have measurable results within

which to deal with this very real problem of working with couples, offering a relationship and communal context?

Why would this aspect of the way we view the world and its composite parts be so important? This question has been asked many times before and is still the subject of much debate. This debate is crucial and finds itself in the discussion and realm of cosmogony. What makes it so difficult for the biblical position is that the answer to this question is essentially a faith position. This becomes apparent in the discussion with God as Job tries to make sense of his life within the context of the many trials he experiences (Waltke 1975:28).

“So likewise one’s world view lies behind every decision a person makes. It makes a difference whether we come from a mass of matter or from the hand of God. How we think the world started will greatly influence our understanding of our identity, our relationship to others, our values, and our behavior. Because the question of cosmogony is important for understanding some of the basic issues of life, intelligent men throughout recorded history have sought the answer to this question. Just as the knowledge of the future is crucial for making basic choices in life, so also the knowledge of beginnings is decisive in establishing a man's or a culture's Weltanschauung (“world view”). No wonder the Bible reveals both.”

The debate and difficulties with the creation account is adequately dealt with by Waltke (1975). For the pastor, this aspect is crucial as this introduces a perspective that the counselee is a creation of God who not only created him amidst the reality of sin, but that there is a higher purpose for which God created him. Although he was created, sinned and had to be redeemed by Christ, the ultimate intent was for God to have and, through Christ, restore what He had in mind at the start of creation: a relationship with humankind. He was created with the divine intent to be for His glory and restore through Christ that which was lost through sin.

The Holy Spirit is cardinal in the working within the entire history of the creation of the world yet so little is spoken of its role and even less in relation to the inner working of the Spirit within the Church and specifically the pastoral counselling aspect where its role is needed so much. There is more than just proclamation of the Gospel, but a deeper understanding of being saved needs to be explored and stated.

The approach to pastoral counselling suggested here will present a pneumatological approach which brings this aspect of Godhead to the forefront, especially in our contemporary world. It would probably require of the pastor to reconsider his current model.

There is another reality within Pastoral care and Louw points this out very well. He works through the views of Heitink (1977; 1993; 1995) and also Furet (1977; 1980) who both link up with a “Word of God” theology, emphasising the encounter through God’s revealed word to accomplish the conciliatory work of Christ. Louw points out the very real challenge we have “at a time like this” to really apply the living Word of God in our specific context. One cannot help being reminded that maybe we are also called “in a time like this” to function within our parameters and challenge the thinking of our day and thus bring the reality of the Gospel within the hearts of a post-modern society. Louw writes: “Because of the pressure of modernity and post-modernity, it becomes clear that the matter is more complex. A theology of pastoral care cannot be exercised without the current quest for scientific knowledge which includes both the psyche and the social context as important resources for knowledge. Psychology stresses the important dimension of listening and communication skills as well as the notion that the counselee has at his/her disposal, an inner knowledge and therapeutic potential (the notion of the living human document). Sociology puts the issue of the contextual and systematic dimension of problems on the agenda of pastoral care; hence the importance of epistemology in a theology of care. Two very important resources of knowledge compete with one another: The Gospel and the phenomenological world of contextual experience, creating the dynamics of bipolarity” (Louw 1998:25). It would seem that there is a divide between the social sciences and the assertions coming from Scripture which primarily has a faith dimension.

In Louw’s discussion of this bipolarity between the phenomenological world and the world of faith, he pleads for an integrative approach but also points out the danger of “immanentism”: “Bipolarity compels the theologian to ask the question: does a point of contact exist between nature and grace, or should they be interpreted dualistically and antithetically? If one settles for an integration model, this could lead to the emergence of an immanentism and the spectre of natural theology, with the eventual possibility of pantheism. Such a synthesis means that both revelation and experience are diminished, and each loses its uniqueness... The risk then exists that a theology of development of faith becomes reduced merely to a psychology of self development” (Louw 1998:32).

The challenge to any practical or pastoral theologian would be to carefully take another look at our theology and ask whether there is a way to practice effective pastoral care within a post-modern

world without eroding the unique character of the Scripture. In my own pastoral counselling practice, I have become acutely aware of this tension and through this study, it is my intention to propose a pneumatological pastoral counselling model which attempts to contextualise it within a secular society.

The question begs for an answer as to what a pastoral model would look like within a post-modern society that is seemingly enamoured by the humanistic sciences in the hope that they will offer the solution for their problems. The tensions between Psychology and Theology are real and sometimes seem irreconcilable. If we believe that pastoral counselling offers real solutions, the complexity of the problems in view of the superlative nature of God, should spur us on to re-evaluate our options and, if need be, come up with the answers that will engage our society on a level ordinary people will understand.

The traceable roots of pastoral counselling in context of the Church would seem that it unashamedly presents *biblical* counselling as the preferred tool of the Church in shepherding the flock. As one surveys our pastoral history and praxis, it soon becomes evident that pastoral counselling does not seem to have a definitive, effective counselling model. Each model seems to be missing a part and the many biblical perspectives seem to be far too easily reduced to a simplistic proclamation of the Gospel. The counselling sessions inevitably soon degenerate into a view that humankind is innately sinful and that they are in need of a saviour in overcoming sin. Is this really all that it is? A purely Christological pastoral theology in counselling then seems to tailspin and reduces the counselling session to a Kerygmatic event.

To proclaim Christ and His saving grace to the couple and the fact that they can overcome what is constricting them is wise and correct and an important part of establishing the covenant relationship with God through the redemption of the cross, but what if they are Christians? What one soon asks is whether this counselling session does not need to have another dynamic when dealing with folk who have a relationship with Christ? Is this all that would be the vision God has for humankind that needs to be proclaimed? Just to communicate the saving grace through Christ would imply that this aspect of God's intervention into a sinful world becomes the definitive "word" for the couple.

The Gospel of John and the book of Ephesians, which have both been written primarily to Gentiles, concentrate on the bigger scheme of things, briefly put: on God's eternal purposes. John places the Word of God -Jesus - before the beginning of time and Paul offers an extensive history lesson to fill

the gaps of knowledge for the Greek Christians. They need to know what the Jews knew for centuries: why they were there and what that meant within the eternal purpose of God.

An integral part of a pneumatological approach towards a pastoral counselling model will emphasise the role the Spirit plays in the life of the couple as they grow to their full potential as a couple.

### **6.1.2 THE DEFINITIVE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A CHRISTOLOGICAL COUNSELLING MODEL AND A PNEUMATOLOGICAL MODEL**

If one is to construct an authentic pneumatological counselling model in pastoral counselling, one must clarify why it would be unfeasible as an embarkation point in constructing this on a current Christological model. Van Ruler helps us see the structural difference between the two perspectives. He identifies nine structural differences which are crucial in being able to see why a purely Christological approach would be deemed incomplete or limited. We will, in this study, lean heavily on Van Ruler. He starts by saying: “I will be...only considering both dogmas as perspectives by which salvation and the relationship between God and humanity can be discussed. Furthermore, I am only considering the structural differences which are observable between these two perspectives” (Van Ruler 1989:29).

The first structural difference is the difference between the incarnation of Christ and the inhabitation of humankind by God through the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the personal union of Christ is that of *Unio personalis sive hypostatica*, which is of central and decisive significance. It expresses the conviction that in the person of the *Logos*, the divine and human nature, his being God and being man, are united. However in pneumatology, “... everything depends on me as a person, an individual person, retaining my full identity when the Spirit dwells in me! ... *I* am destined to be the dwelling place of God in the Spirit ... It is *I* who stands over against God. That is what characterizes my being a creature” (Van Ruler 1989:30). What is very important to note, is that Christ the mediator and his work are the “means by which all this is accomplished” (Van Ruler 1989:31).

The second difference is that in Christology the “...focus is on the human nature which is assumed by the *Logos* and taken up in unity of his person. In the incarnation, the *Logos*, or the son, did not take on a specific man, a person who already existed, but took on the human nature.” In

pneumatology the focus is not on the “...human nature but rather on the human persons, on me and on you, on the many human persons and on the fellowship, in which the Spirit dwells. *He* dwells within *me* and within *us*. He and I are in no way one and the same but two distinct realities” (Van Ruler 1989:32)<sup>24</sup>

The third structural difference is that the “The messiahship by definition is substitutionary.” In the work of the Spirit, this idea cannot even be feasible in that although we are here and inhabited by the Holy Spirit, we have to do the work ourselves. “In the work of the Holy Spirit, it is always God the Holy Spirit who is active in us, but also, and more precisely, with us in the sense of ‘together with us.’... What is called substitution in Christology, is called reciprocity in pneumatology. Theonomous reciprocity: it is the Spirit that does and gives everything... The chief characteristic of the Holy Spirit’s work is that it sets us to work” (Van Ruler 1989:35).

The fourth structural difference is the question of the “atonement (verzoening) and the sacrifice (offer) of Christ. ...The mediator offers himself as a sacrifice in our place...The Lord’s supper is the eschatological reality of itself...The structural difference between the Christological and the pneumatological perspectives with respect to sacrifice is, thus, not to be found in the distinction between atonement and gratitude, but in the distinction between *expiatio* and *placatio* on the one hand, and *reconciliatio*, *sanctificatio*, and *glorificatio* on the other. Gratitude is then seen merely as an element in sanctification” (36-37).

The fifth structural difference is the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice in the fact that it was and because of its being “once-for-all (*eph hapax*) character. Jesus is a unique fact of history” (38). He is once for all and is sufficient. However the Spirit is different in that, “The poured-out Spirit remains dwelling on earth after Pentecost, particularly in the church. There is a continuity in this once-for-allness which is also found in the church, in its tradition, and in the historical, apostolic, mission activity” (38).

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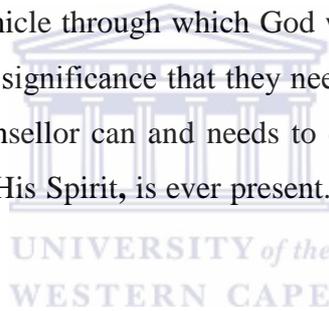
<sup>24</sup> I have extensive quotations from Van Ruler since the insights into the work of the Spirit are exactly what I believe is needed to provide a theological framework for the role of the pastor. The framework from the work of the Holy Spirit also provides the same framework when IRT is incorporated into this theological model.

The crucial difference between the perception of Christ and the Holy Spirit is that the concept of *eph hapax* is totally different in that as he puts it, “There is no corresponding ascent (*anabasis*) to this descent (*katabasis*) of the Spirit as there was in the case of Jesus Christ. The poured-out Spirit remains dwelling on earth after Pentecost, particularly in the church” (38). The significance of this dwelling and presence in the Church is significant as it indicates the once-for-allness found in the Church’s, “...tradition, and in the historical, apostolic, mission activity.” What is significant and cannot be underestimated is that this difference makes any attempt to fashion a pastoral framework, using a Christological perspective model, seriously flawed as it does not take this very important aspect into account. Van Ruler again says that, “The Kingdom is a present reality. The kingdom does not only possess the form (*gestalte*) of the Messiah but also the form of the *Pneuma*. And the form of the *Pneuma* is more like the goal of the kingdom than the form of the Messiah. The focus is on us and our world. The goal is that we ourselves become images of God and experience this world as his kingdom. That is what the Spirit does to us. The Spirit is poured out and dwells with and in us. This *eph hapax* also brings with it a certainty, the certainty in the form of enthusiasm for being. We have a zest for the world” (Van Ruler 1989:39). The Church then is the actual body and visible manifestation of the Spirit of Christ in the world. It attests to the aliveness of the Spirit in the human bodies of God’s people. The goal of the *pneuma* is that we become the visible manifestation of the indwelling of the Spirit and of God and hence become not only the transformed object but also the transforming instrument of God. Being acted upon and at the same time acting upon the world, a sort of kingdom in transformation and as it transforms, it become a transformer.

The sixth structural difference is the idea of indwelling. “In the debates about Nestorianism and related positions, it became apparent that to speak of a mere indwelling of the divinity of God in the man Jesus, was categorically inadequate, christologically. The *unio personalis* points to a deeper and more intimate union than can be expressed in this idea” (Van Ruler 1989:39). He further states that this union is “absolutely necessary if it is truly God the Son who is to carry out the work of atonement and redemption.” Van Ruler makes it clear that any attempt to transfer this same Christological understanding as to how God dwells through the Spirit in humankind would be disastrous. If this view from Christology is to be held to “...then one inevitably arrives at a divinization of the creature....The creature must remain a creature. Everything depends on that. If the creature should become God, then all the music of the relationship is lost. God must retain his identity, and we must retain ours. Both can be respected only when one maintains the formula: God indwells in and with human beings.”

This concept is vital for pastoral counselling as when referring to the relationship between husband and wife, they in the Spirit have become one but retain their individuality. The husband does not

become the wife and the wife does not now become the husband, both retain their own identity and functionality. The Spirit plays a vital role to infiltrate and facilitate God's will in every aspect of our society without altering but retaining their uniqueness as created beings. "The Spirit dwells in the church, in its institutional structures as well as in the mode of fellowship. But the Spirit also dwells in the Christian; in our body as well as in our hearts as well, and in our inter-personal relationships. But the Spirit also dwells in nations and their cultures as they are taken up into the covenant with Israel by means of the spread of the apostolic Word. The Spirit dwells in the *corpus Christi*, in the *corpus Christiani*, and in the *corpus Christianum*" (Van Ruler 1989:40). For pastoral counselling, this understanding is vital as the pastor needs to, even on an intellectual level, acknowledge to himself that the Spirit is present in the counselling moment and that he is not alone. He also needs to recognise that as the couple may be outside of Christ, he needs to bring them into that covenant relationship with Him and facilitate that imminent dwelling with them. The Spirit then becomes part of their lives and their being, including their relationship. He then, with their active submission to the Spirit's will, will inadvertently lead them toward one another and the agenda of God. It is vital that the Church sees itself as the vehicle through which God wants to reach the fallen world. They need to have a renewed view of the significance that they need to be yielding to God's Spirit. The important message the pastoral counsellor can and needs to convey, is that God their creator has never abandoned them and through His Spirit, is ever present. He is not against them but He wants to be part of their repair.



Van Ruler speaks of another aspect of the indwelling and that is its "temporality". He mentions that with indwelling, "...it is accompanied with conflict. The conflict here is that between flesh and Spirit. Eventually, that conflict must come to an end. If such conflict is the essence of the Spirit's indwelling, then this means that eventually the indwelling must also come to an end. This is exactly what happens. In the *eschaton*, it appears that we, for example, no longer need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit" (Van Ruler 1989:40).

Here this understanding would also be helpful for pastoral counselling in that the Holy Spirit has an exclusive agenda not only to indwell and transform the Christian as an individual. The agenda then stretches also to all the nations even though they may not be actively seeking to have this relationship with God. His presence is found working and active in every stratum of society and its purpose would be to bring them under and to the submission of God. The end would come when Christ hands the kingdom over to His father.

The seventh structural difference between Christology and a pneumatological pastoral counselling framework is that the indwelling of the Spirit in humanity causes conflict. “A conflict between the Spirit and the flesh....One could describe this conflict as a wrestling match (*worsteling*), a wrestling match that is a joust (*toernooi*), a friendly game (*liefdespel*) that is more like a conversation (*gesprek*).” This aspect of Van Ruler’s pneumatology is valuable for pastoral counselling as it exemplifies the relationship dynamic that exists within humankind in their relationships with one another and also with the Holy Spirit in their midst. The relationship tensions are on various levels at times but nevertheless the nature of the relationships is in continuous flux and ranges in their intensity and nature. He would further state that there are moments where the Spirit breaks through and those moments Van Ruler calls, “touching” or encounter (*aanraking*) that is the actual pneumatological mystery, paralleling the Christological mystery of the incarnation (*assumption carnis*), subsistence (*enhypostasis*), and personal union (*unio personalis*).” Within this concept of the “encounter” he would posit the view that the “touching” would affect the person on various levels. The encounter then would mean, “...to be enlightened, convicted, liberated. It touches a person’s understanding, will, heart, selfhood, and very being. Within this aspect, he would speak more about the transformation aspect and power and working of the Spirit.

The eighth structural difference within Van Ruler’s pneumatology is the defining what Van Ruler asks for, “What is now the relation between salvation and existence?” In Pneumatology the relationship is different. It is what this new relationship between the divine being of the Spirit and humankind entails. “A genuine *applicatio* takes place, an *applicatio* that is not only directed toward us (*in nos*) but also in us (*in nobis*). Christ takes form (*gestalte*) in us. That also always means that Christ takes form through us, a form that varies in every person, in every nation, in every culture, in every age ... All of this applies not only to individual Christians or to the church, but also to culture and the state in the process of christianizing.” This is very important for the pastor as he now can speak of a stage of God’s ability through the Christ, in his salvation work and then the Spirit to enable them to do what He intended and that is to not only transform them, but also through them transform the world into the Image of His son. The importance is on many levels, the fact that God has not deserted them but has provided what is needed to cement this relationship with Himself through Christ, but also that God has an innate belief in them as fallen, now redeemed people to be a part of a greater plan. This mixture of the divine with the flesh of humankind, provides a principled, “element of integration in the church’s catholicity.” This perception would allow one to see how God can use that which once was fallen and now redeemed to, through the Spirit, become useful. One cannot but call to memory the story of Onesimus in the book of Philemon.

The ninth structural difference is that in Christology, infallibility is seen in Christ. However in pneumatology one sees a whole other dimension and structural difference in the way the Spirit interacts with humankind. “Pneumatology, however, it is necessary to incorporate the imperfection or questionableness of man, a questionableness that is also a dignity. In pneumatological context, therefore, infallibility and fallibility do not mutually exclude each other.” For pastoral counselling and care, this is also an important vehicle with which we can easily assimilate the idea that the Spirit, although divine, mixes and influences the mortal without either altering their substance or physical attributes. This helps us in terms of a counselling session, acknowledging the presence of the Spirit in the session and influencing our minds through God’s counsel to be conformed to His eternal agenda.

What is insightful and good to realise about pneumatology is that in Christology there is a distinct line of sequence in relationship. Christ stood in our place and, “He takes form on us”. “In the work of the Holy Spirit, however, we must draw the reverse line. It is necessary not only to speak of “Christ in us and in our place,” but also of, “we with him” and even “we in him.” This is an illustration of how the Spirit acts upon us. He calls it a mystical union. “A grafting (*insitio*) and an incorporation (*insertio*) take place which results in a mystical union with Christ (*union mystica cum Christo*). This aspect is crucial as to how we view ourselves. We need to have a view that the Spirit enables us to as Van Ruler asks, “Does the Spirit not lead us through oration and meditation unto contemplation and speculation?” (44). He then answers that by saying that, “I am not able to understand myself, in my unity and totality as a creature able to stand before God, simply within the context of my life from birth to death. I can only do that from the vantage point of being justified, a justification of myself as a sinner. Nevertheless, I am able to understand myself within the context of eternity, eternity to eternity, from God’s eternal degree to his eternal kingdom.” He adds that, “Such an understanding is possible only from the perspective of predestination...” (45). God knew that I would turn to Him and hence he predestined it before time.

In this category we have another understanding and this is divinization (*theopoiesis*). The understanding is that with the new relationship the Christian has with God, he is able to “do all things with God. There comes to exist a *theonomous* and material identity between God’s judgments and mine.” In Christological terms we see God becoming man and in pneumatological terms, “we can use the formula: man is becoming, so to speak, “God”. This aspect is useful for pastoral care as it distinctly places the intent of God to have as His intent to shape humankind after His image. The functioning of the Spirit is to enable the reciprocity that exists with the Godhead to

transfer to humankind and the transition and aim is then to have humankind become more like their creator, God.

“This *theopoiesis* is not only a future reality, in the eschaton, but already a present reality. In no way must this idea be understood as an ontic elevation of the creature or of creatureliness” (45). The important aspect to remember, is that the essence of the one inhabited is not altered in any way.

The pastoral perspective that assists the pastor in his work is to always reference the counselee to what God wants and His intent. “The category of mixing opens a window that lets us look out over the territory of creation”. This aspect would be crucial for us to understand that in God’s ability to order everything and in His ability to conformity, we need to have a sense of what He wants to achieve. “In all of this there is a significant pull, an eschatological pull. The focus is on everything that happens in creation and redemption, according to God’s eternal purposes. In this way, led by the Spirit, we experience the world. The Spirit proclaims to us a future he hears from the Father (John 16:13). The Spirit is our orientation to the eternal future. For this reason, he is called guarantee, sign, anointing, paraclete, *bebaiosis*, the Spirit of inheritance and promise” (45).

“The spirit is much more oriented to the eternal kingdom and its glory. Christ himself, his work and his kingdom are directed toward it too, but only becomes apparent in the duality if the christological and the pneumatological perspectives and when the structural differences between them are noted. Pneumatology needs to be understood much more from the point of view of eschatology than it does from Christology” (46).

In accentuating the structural differences mentioned above between christology and pneumatology, it becomes apparent that a pneumatological perspective works better because of the functioning and role in relation to humankind. It becomes abundantly clear that, “Christ’s work is especially toward guilt” (Van Ruler 1989:46). The Spirit however through its work in us, determines “...that God comes to rest. Only then is God where he wants to be. In the work of the mediator, he is still on his way.” This accentuation of the role and functioning of the Spirit, we come to fully see how it could function as an authentic Pneumatological framework that works hand in hand and is at the full disposal of the Spirit who indwells us. It also provides a sense of functionality at the hand of an awesome God who wants us to be at his disposal to restore the damaged relationships between Him and his creatures.

In Adams' response to the need for a biblical anthropology, he divides his treatment in two: Adam before the fall and after the fall. He uses his perspective of the creation to point out that Adam is both a mortal and a social being. He sees human beings as intrinsically corrupt and that their sins and guilt reveal their true wretchedness (Adams 1979:96).

In his search for a more comprehensive framework, Louw refers to Rebel who studied Van Ruler and follows his view that Van Ruler's pneumatology could contribute towards addressing this neglect, by placing data from psychology within a theology framework. He further points out that this movement towards a biblical pastoral care model has often been criticized because of its deficient theological approach. Yet these critics have not succeeded in designing an anthropology for pastoral care within which pneumatology is justified (Rebel 1981; also 1984:107; see Louw 1998:101-103).

## **6.2 TOWARD A BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY VIEWED PNEUMATOLOGICALLY**

In the **DE/MAGO** model, I propose a renewed look at the creation and specifically, a revisioning of human anthropology from Scripture. It is no doubt a challenging task but one which is needed to engage the full story of God and his intention with humankind from the beginning to the end.

A fresh look at the process of creation of humankind and specifically the concept that humankind has been created in the "Image of God" is crucial. Here we need to be clear as to what this notion of "Image" would entail: the concept that humankind was created not only by God but also a specific built-in ability given to humanity to be able to carry this Image. We observe in the Genesis account that Adam is created first, then Eve. This is crucial for us as there is a built-in order placed into creation. The deepening of our understanding of why they were created is crucial and needs to be specified and spelt out from Genesis. This sequence would be crucial in constructing an understanding as to how the genders should function.

The purpose for which humankind has been created has to be extracted from the creation account. After they are created in the Image of God, husband and wife, a God who recognised that "man" cannot live alone and from him, created Eve. The power and accountability aspect of their relationship needs to be fully articulated. They are given the ability to reproduce and fill the earth and given stewardship over nature.

An aspect not spoken of much, is the makeup of humankind which is “body” and “spirit”. The spirit of God is blown into their nostrils and humankind becomes a “living spirit.” It is interesting to note that Paul speaks of this nature more than any other writer in the New Testament. He refers to the church in I Corinthians 3:1-3 as being “worldly” (NIV) and “fleshly” (KJV). He makes a differentiation between what drives the person: the flesh or the spirit. Paul later would speak of the warring of these two aspects of humankind.

In order to explore the biblical notions underpinning a biblical anthropology, to provide a bigger, fuller framework for Christian counselling, it may be worthwhile to look at these constituent parts.

### **6.2.1 GOD AND CREATION**

In this section I would propose a renewed look at the story of the creation. In this account the pastor should revisit all the elements of the entire story as displayed in Scripture and not just at the story of the man and woman as spoken of in Genesis. The entire creation is given attention by God when He, through the Holy Spirit, pens the account of creation for our learning. God provides us a view of our beginnings from His perspective.

The insights we gain from Genesis is invaluable to help us as humans see who God is for who we are and what He intended for us at creation. The realities of sin and its consequences are astounding and devastating to the relationship that was intended from the beginning of time. Genesis then provides us a framework within which we can chart the course of humankind’s history and understand that it was not so “from the beginning” as Jesus so eloquently said in Matthew. The value of this starting approach is that it provides for us a new vision for our lives contrary to what science would have us, post-modern people, believe: that we have solely been a product of a system called Evolution. We can appreciate the fact of sin and evolution, even their “purpose”, only against the backdrop of the fact that God had created humankind in His image and all that this concept entails. We can trace our Imago as it were to the Image of our creator and that helps us look past what we have become through the introduction of sin among humankind, or the process of evolution.

These lenses bring a distortion on humankind and the way they view one another, but this new lens for Pastoral counselling allows humankind to look through an alternative lens, which is God’s purpose. This new lens helps us to see ourselves through the eyes of our creator and this new

visioning helps us to see ourselves biblically, which means not only that the intent of God was to through Christ redeem His creation, but also restore that which has been distorted. But to do that is to offer a perspective that is frequently lacking from our pastoral counselling perspective.

Westermann would argue that, “It is here, I think that the biblical creation story makes a basic – even its most important – contribution to our present-day world. As the sciences divide and subdivide and become more and more specialized, it is of some significance when a Creation narrative speaks of man and his existence in such a way as to grasp it as a whole right from its origins and so to make it clear that subdivision and specialisation must necessarily end when they lose sight of the dimension of wholeness in understanding man” (Westermann 1974:79). He further asserts that, “...theological anthropology must also end in futility if it strives to understand human existence only in its relationship to God.” This view of the creator allows Him to give humankind the creativity to specialise and refine the world as they try to make sense of this physical world. This view does not necessarily place the sciences at odds with God but that He has created them for this purpose.



### **6.2.2 GOD IN RELATIONSHIP**

The story of creation starts with God being in relationship. He speaks in Genesis of “in the beginning” when the Earth was formless and void. At that time the spirit of God hovered over the waters. This is very important to note that the Spirit of God is ever present and indicates God’s desire to bring order to a chaotic world. I am reminded of Jesus’ word, telling his disciples, that He has to go and will send the Holy Spirit who will convince the world of sin, righteousness and the judgement to come. The role of the Holy Spirit is to be seen as that invisible force which tirelessly works to fast-track the agenda of God.

In this account of the creation story, God is portrayed as speaking creation into being. The picture is of a created natural order of things being brought into existence and showing perfect balance, approvingly evaluated by God as being “good.” In this carefully prepared “nature” God then places humankind and gives them a clearly defined area of responsibility which is to be stewards of what was created and to, as it were, take His place in populating it and managing the oversight of the world.

The story of creation is very limiting when viewed as just the creation of man and woman. The man and woman in the story may be the main purpose so to speak but are certainly not the only creatures figuring in the creation account. Our pastoral care model should reflect a holistic view of all of creation. In doing this we view all of creation as being one and being in close connection and every nuance of change affects and complements each other in their functioning. God created the sun, moon, stars and also the animals and plants in balance – one supporting the other in perfect harmony. The closed system is complete and is self-regulating and life-giving.

### **6.2.3 HUMANKIND CREATED IN THE “IMAGE OF GOD”**

The story of Adam and Eve and their inclusion in the pastoral framework is important. Here the aspects of a God who is a social God needs to be placed in proper context. In this account the story unfolds as follows (Genesis 1:26, NIV): “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

A few things must be raised from this short account, the first of which is that God Himself dwells in relationship with Himself, being the godhead. The desire of God to make humankind in “His image” is discussed extensively in chapter 3.1, together with the importance also of the purpose He created humankind for, to exercise stewardship over what He had created. God Himself wanted the best for His creation and would appoint that which He desires to oversee this process.

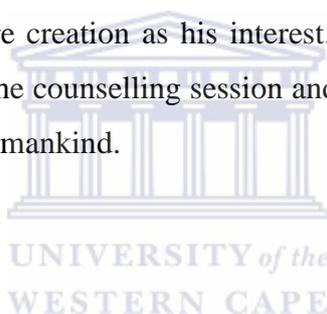
Then God, who created Adam, now creates Eve. This event takes place after a period of personal evaluation after Adam names the animals. He then considers the animals he named and notices that they are all paired and are together in relationship. He then considers that he as a man also needs a helper, but none was found suitable for him. The character of the social God here steps forward and the social nature of God is revealed. God responds to the greatest need of humankind and that is to be in relationship. On this basis woman is created. Within this husband and wife relationship we see the ideal space for relationship and the ideal Genesis of humankind.

Pastoral care needs to clearly revisit this aspect of the creation of humankind again. The intent of God needs to be extracted from Scripture and again revisited and contextualised for them to see a holistic pastoral care model. A purely Christological model which primarily deals with the redemption of humankind is too narrow and deals only with an aspect of their history. “The ingress

of sin and the resulting human bondage can be understood only in terms of humankind's rejection of God's companionship and way of life (Gen. 3:1-10). Once Adam and Eve exercised their freedom and made their fatal choice, they experienced shame and were estranged from God and from each other (Gen 3:11-12)" (Brister 1992:54). It is not all about relationships that guided God to sent Christ to the cross. The inclusion of the creation story also has humankind understand the resultant consequences that comes with living estranged from God and the life he desires for them. It is about the relationship God desires with humankind that is the entire history of the Bible and humankind.

The entire context and intent of creation must be seen: that God intended for the broader creation to be subservient and overseen by humankind. It is within this revisiting that clarity on the "original intent of God" can be understood and used as a benchmark for the Pastor. The question that probably would then need to be answered is: why would an understanding of this aspect of their existence be important and what relevance has this to a couple in crisis. The value of this question is that it helps the person see his life as not limited to feeding his or her family but to have God's agenda of the wellbeing of the entire creation as his interest. This view also gives the Pastor the perspective that God is also part of the counselling session and that there was an original intent and that sin had distorted this intent to humankind.

#### **6.2.4 SIN AND SALVATION**



The account of creation includes the "fall of humankind" into sin and its devastating impact on the entire creation. This sin that entered through humankind not only affected the husband and his wife but also affected nature and nature rebelled against them. Work in that original context of symbiosis with nature was not a curse, it was considered a joy to be part of God's plan but when sin entered, the effect sin had on nature would complicate their ability to eke out their survival from the ground.

We see the seed planted for the saviour when God slays a lamb and clothes them. The two important elements can be seen being the blood and the covering of their sin. The grace of God is evident right in the garden and the first act of kindness regardless of sin is this one. We see although humankind has sinned and has to be held accountable for their sin, God still cares for them.

What occurs is not only that sin enters and alters relationships with God, but also with each other as husband and wife. This critical sin on the part of humankind will resonate and impact for all eternity and necessitates the coming of Christ.

There are various Christological views on salvation. One of the most prominent of these, the Anselmian interpretation, is that humankind has sinned and as a consequence is filled with guilt and needs forgiveness from God through Christ. The role of Christ will then need to be seen within that framework. Williams states that in “Anselm’s theory of the satisfaction of the divine honor, which has suffered from being woodenly and inadequately described in many textbook accounts, (he) really acknowledges the personal burden of our guilt before God. Anselm never loses sight of the truth which is so important psychologically as well as metaphysically that guilt requires a penalty and a satisfaction if it is to be lifted. Yet Anselm’s statement of what is accomplished by the death of Christ does tend to obscure the personal relationship between God and man and to make the transaction valid because it removes a legal penalty and satisfies a point of honour” (Williams 1959).

In Anselm’s grand vision, Christ then comes to be the sin offering on humankind’s behalf and stands in our place. The other view is that of Abelard who holds that Christ’s role is to empty Himself from His godly qualities so that he could serve humankind. His role then would be primarily one of being a servant and example. The third Christological view is the Eastern view that Christ comes with power and overcomes and rules on earth with power (See Aulen’s *Christus Victor*, 1931).

Pastoral care dealing with marital issues on a micro level deals primarily with the relationship between husband and wife. The immense scope of pastoral care as a discipline needs to be broadened on a macro level to see that it is only dealing with a relationship within a context of other relationships-this being relationships between husband and wife and their relationship to God and the rest of creation (placed under their trust in covenant with God).

Dealing with forgiveness as displayed through Christ on the cross is profound as it implies judgment. Forgiveness within a pastoral model is different for the pastor as opposed to the psychological model of forgiveness. Within the psychological model, it is about acceptance of the situation as it now is and of the other person, although there may be great value in understanding and accepting the other person, the act that requires a penalty to be paid. The language of the cross is one that speaks of God’s love and self-identification with His creation. It does not speak of or entertain the idea of abandonment and dereliction but one of love and involvement with the epitome of His creation and that is humankind. “It comes from the discovery that God stands by us, in spite

of our estrangement from, him that he remains with us in our need, at cost to himself” (Williams 1959).

### 6.2.5 ESCHATOLOGY

When we speak about eschatology we often think of it as the end and summation of all things, when things are “wrapped up”. When we have an eschatological view of history, things look a lot different. The end (*eschaton*) is the driving force and vision of God. A new look at the history of humankind gives one refreshed hope to see things from the perspective of God. His ultimate aim did not start at the time of creation, it started before time began. It would then become more evident that as God would have foreknown of the intrusion of sin and the distortions of His intent, God was not caught off guard and from this perspective looks at the reality of sin as a glitch, be it a big glitch in the system.

Van Ruler’s pneumatological view of eschatology (1989:1-70) is directly linked to his view on the imminent presence of the Holy Spirit, here and now, in the individual (*Corpus Christiani*), in the Church (*Corpus Christi*) and in society at large (*Corpus Christianum*): “Here we consider the manifold designations of the Spirit and his work that we encounter in the New Testament. The spirit is the pledge, the first fruits, the seal, the anointing, the Spirit of inheritance, the Paraclete, the Spirit of promise and of confirmation (*bebaioisis*). Whenever one attempts to understand and summarise these designations, one is led – in trembling expectation and overwhelming joy – to conclude that the Spirit and the gift of the Spirit constitute our present relationship to the world, as this relationship exists in the eschaton, according to God’s eternal and ultimate purpose” (Van Ruler 1989:67).

In his theology he uses the word like reciprocity to describe the relationship between Christ as the Messiah and the Holy Spirit when they are considered independently, although they are both God. The relationship between God and humanity is also seen as a reciprocal one, a “theonome reciprocity”, thus based on God’s openness and initiative towards humankind.

How does one understand the history of humankind pneumatologically? For Van Ruler we cannot understand the history of humankind unless we look at it through the biblical lens of the Kingdom of God. He says, “The kingdom of God must be seen as the margin that surrounds history.” He quotes Van der Leeuw, “History is eschatologically determined. It cannot be understood from

within itself or even experienced. Its meaning is to be found in the acts of God which take place before one can speak of history and after history is completed. The kingdom of God is nothing other than God's entering into history. For this reason it came, is coming and shall come" (Van Ruler 1989:99). Later he quotes from Van Der Leeuw again, "But this does not take nothing away from the fact that the kingdom of God is not a static theocracy but a militant holiness, revolutionizing this world, not as an imminent reality, but as an imminent reality breaking through our world" (Van Ruler 1989:102).

In this view of the history viewed eschatologically, we understand history as Van Ruler puts it, "History is thus to be understood as God ascending his throne....not so much a feast as it is a struggle. It is a matter of reigning in the midst of adversity (*in medio inimicorum*) (Psalm 110; 1 Corinthians 15). All human opposition to the reign of God comes into the open in the historical process....This opposition and guilt cannot stand in the way of God ascending his throne. On the contrary! The other side of this divine ascension (*troonbestijging Gods*) is to be found in the atonement for guilt. God's throne is the cross. In these two aspects – guilt and History – the puzzle of history is not resolved but summarized. History is to be understood as a permanent syntax of guilt and atonement, and the cross as the most essential life form (*levensvorm*) of the kingdom of God in history" (Van Ruler 1989:103).

### **6.3 THEOLOGY AND HUMAN SCIENCES IN A POST-MODERN WORLD: AN AGE OLD DEBATE OR TIMEOUS INTERDISCIPLINARY DISCOURSE?**

In man's search for understanding and "doing" life, it has been a constant battle for humans to make sense of their world. In the modern era, a heightened tension for people of faith has been experienced because of the seeming clash between faith and science. In a recent article published in *The New York Times* (Randall 2011:41) the cry for scientific reasoning to direct our faith and decisions rather than the nebulous insinuations of faith made headlines.

Roger Bacon (1214–1294), *Doctor Mirabilis* of the late Middle Ages, in his *Opus Maius* (1267), famously used Augustine's handmaiden formula, '*scientia* as a whole was the handmaiden of theology" (Zakai 2009:130), arguing that there is but one perfect wisdom, and this is contained in holy Scripture, in which all truth is rooted: "I say, therefore, that one discipline is mistress of the others – namely, theology, for which the others are integral necessities, and which cannot achieve its end without them. And it lays claim to their virtues and subordinates them to its nod and

command” (see Zakai 2009:130). The term *Regina Scientiarum* was coined in the Middle Ages and Theology asserted itself as the Queen of Sciences. There is an interesting development and also wide discussion on the tensions that exist within this debate. In his paper, Zakai discusses the tension between Astronomy and Theology and he mentions the tension from Sciences to speak on behalf of nature and this arena not being the sole domain of Theology.

Making rash judgements about the human sciences is not only irresponsible but can seriously undermine theology’s credibility if we are found to be false in our assertions. Zakai says about Copernicus’ reaction to his critics of the day, “He ‘disregard[ed] his critics even to the extent of despising their criticism as unfounded’ (Zakai 2009:133). Copernicus held that religious thought and belief were no guarantee against ridiculous astronomical and cosmological errors, as the example of Lactantius (c. 250–325), an early Christian author, shows: “It is not unknown that Lactantius, otherwise an illustrious writer but hardly an astronomer, speaks quite childishly about the earth’s shape, when he mocks those who declared that the earth has the form of a globe. Hence scholars need not be surprised if any such person will likewise ridicule me. Astronomy is written for astronomers” (Zakai 2009:133).

Zakai contends that in the battle between the science of astronomy and theology we should learn from Galileo’s example: “Let us grant then that theology is conversant with the loftiest divine contemplation, and occupies the regal throne among sciences by dignity. But acquiring the highest authority in this way, if she does not descend to the lower and humbler speculations of the subordinate sciences and has no regard for them because they are not concerned with blessedness, then her professors should not arrogate to themselves the authority to decide on controversies in professions which they have neither studied nor practiced. Why, this would be as if an absolute despot, being neither a physician nor an architect but knowing himself free to command, should undertake to administer medicine and erect buildings according to his whim – at grave peril of his poor patients’ lives, and the speedy collapse of his edifices” (Zakai 2009:148).

I am wary of the real tensions, even today, between the human sciences of Theology and Psychology and it would be remiss of me to not mention that they exist. In E.S. Williams’ book, *The Dark Side of Christian Counselling*, he cautions ministers who without great circumspection embrace the theories that has been birthed by men like Freud, who was hostile to the Christian faith: “At the centre of Freud’s thinking was his hostility to the Christian faith, and his motivation was to provide an interpretation of human sexuality that disregarded biblical morality” (Williams 2009:45).

It is interesting to note that in using Freud as an example for ministers and pastoral counsellors, one should be careful of accepting everything as Gospel from the field of Psychology, since especially within this field there is robust debate. In *Memory Wars* (1995), Professor Frederick Crews, who had been an ardent follower of him, says of Freud: “Only much later did it dawn on me that psychoanalysis is the paradigmatic pseudoscience of our epoch – one that deserves to be addressed not in the thrifty spirit of “What can we salvage from Freud?” but rather with principled attention to its faulty logic, its manufacturing of its own evidence, and its facile explanation of adult behaviour by reference to unobservable and arbitrarily posited childhood fantasy” (Williams 2009:48). Later in his treatment of Rogers, he says that he also despised religion and saying “Experience is, for me, the highest authority.”

He goes on to say, “Neither the Bible nor the prophets – neither Freud nor research – neither the revelations of God nor man – can take precedence over my own direct experience” (Williams 2009:68). Rogers also believed in the inherent good of man and in his mind the purpose of counselling is “to help the client to do what feels right, for this ‘proves to be a competent and trustworthy guide to behaviour which is truly satisfying’” (Williams 2009:69). Williams also examined the positions of men like Adler and Ellis and a thorough reading of Williams (2006) would give one an idea from which backgrounds and assumptions these scientists operated from, and from which heart their psychological theories were birthed.

The question is thus still open for consideration: “How then is IRT to be included into the pastoral praxis, practically?” My position is that I see theology as based on and dealing with the revealed will of God and hence primarily with issues of faith, sin, forgiveness, atonement, but most important of all, the enabling of the divine to help and to work through people in a therapeutic environment. Considering the old analogy of Theology as the “Queen of Sciences”, and “Science as theology’s handmaiden”, I see theology’s role slightly differently for the post-modern age. I see theology as the one who enables and oversees the development of thinking as humankind tries to make sense of life, thus, as Jonathan Edwards already explained: as a queen but also a mistress of knowledge.

Scripture uses powerful language about God’s handiwork in nature and history, as in Psalm 19:1-4 (NIV):

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. <sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. <sup>3</sup> There is no

speech or language where their voice is not heard. <sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun.

In this passage I see the obvious evidence of the presence of God and how, no matter where humankind looks, there will be evidence of God's Glory, as also testified by Scripture.

<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine – nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” Romans 1:20 (NIV):

One can only deduce from looking at a few texts that God would leave traces in nature and leaving clues of His presence.

Rather than taking an adversarial position, I believe a dialogical position is the wise one to take, as a dignified queen; not as a despot that rules and prescribes but as a mother that encourages enquiry and engages the debate. As a mother treats her children in their pursuit of knowledge, even when they stumble and at times make inaccurate assertions. She gently calls them to enquire more and think deeper and seek the transcendent and pushes them to ask those hard questions, such as “who made all of this and why?” It is within this dialogical paradigm that we would engage in empathic relationship and so grow together as we grow toward God. After all, most of the behavioural sciences have been born out of theology.

“There is a need for exchange of information between theologians and scientists in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Do we need a reminder that the revelation of God in Scriptures does not invalidate scientific research and fresh understandings? Science, correctly viewed, can become an instrument rather than an enemy of the Christian faith. God's design is that science, like every human discipline, should become a service. Scientific findings, while immensely helpful, cannot be absolutised into a new faith, for they are descriptive and proximate, not ultimate and absolute.” For Brister the definitive difference between science and theology is, “While science's highest achievements have corrected our misconceptions and enriched our lives, science alone can never sustain existence in its eternal dimensions. This is the realm of faith” (Brister 1992:28).

I strongly propose that as pastoral theologians we have a strongly defined purpose and goal which supersedes that of the sciences. A careful dialogue between the sciences and theology is needed and used as purposeful augmentation into our professional pastoral praxis that is distinctively biblical

and within the eschatological purpose of God. This inclusion is done carefully with the intent that theology does not lose its authenticity and superiority and is swallowed up by the human sciences, thus losing its innate spiritual character.

Van Ruler speaks of the place of science within humankind and the world as, “Theology only needs to be a science, not at the end but at the beginning of the *universitas scientiarum*. ...Theology is not a function of the church but rather of the best fruit of the Christianized and christianizing culture, not of the *corpus Christi* but of the *corpus Christianum*. Its place is in the university. In that context, it is not its task so much to give final answers but to pose the first questions and to attempt to keep the other sciences, which must provide these answers, open to that which is above, to God. Theology is science in the ultimate sense. Therefore, things are not as they should be when theology acts as if it is absolute. ... It is theology’s knowledge of questions about the origin and goal of all things that enables the other sciences to discover the actual answers” (Van Ruler 1989:22-25). This view of the role of theology and the assimilation of the other sciences within a pneumatological view of history, gives space for the sciences to fulfil their role independently yet serving the ultimate agenda of God. The role of theology is then, as Van Ruler sees it, to keep pointing them to the one who holds all of humankind together, God.

#### 6.4 THE CHURCH IN GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE

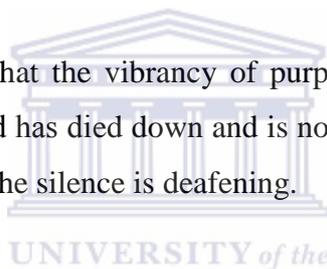
In this chapter my intent is to ask probing questions about the almost impossible, but extremely important, mystery of God’s eternal purpose with humankind, from the “time” before our time. An attempt to answer this question may introduce a different view of humankind and God’s interaction with them? A careful reading of the book of Ephesians indeed influenced my own views on these questions.

In an attempt at identifying God’s eschatological purpose through the pneumatological lens, my question for pastoral care praxis is: “Could Christianity offer the world a perspective refining its purpose and defining what it has been designed to do, which is to restore the Image of God back into humankind?”

In C.S. Lewis’ writings, for instance in his *Letters to Malcolm*, he makes an astounding yet disquieting parallel between the passion of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane and human suffering. “Does not every movement in the Passion write large some common element in the

sufferings of our race? First, the prayer of anguish; not granted. Then He turns to His friends. They are asleep – as ours, or we, are so often, or busy, or away, or preoccupied. Then He faces the church that He brought into existence. It condemns Him. This is also characteristic. In every church, in every institution, there is something which sooner or later works against the very purpose for which it came into existence. But there seems to be another chance. There is a State; in this case the Roman state. Its pretensions are far lower than those of the Jewish church, but for that reason it may be free from fanaticisms. It claims to be just on a rough, worldly level. Yes, but only so far as it is consistent with political expediency and *raison d'état*. One becomes a counter in a complicated game. But even now all is not lost. There is still an appeal to the People – the poor and simple whom He had blessed, whom He had healed and fed and taught, to whom He Himself belongs. But they have become overnight (it is nothing unusual) a murderous rabble shouting for His blood. There is, then, nothing left but God. And to God, God's last words are: 'Why hast thou forsaken me?'" (Lewis 1964:43).

It is becoming even more evident that the vibrancy of purpose that existed at the height of the Church's engagement with Apartheid has died down and is now hardly heard in its calling to be the vanguard of the poor and destitute. The silence is deafening.



As effective as the Church was in dismantling Apartheid, one cannot help but want to encourage the Church toward rediscovering its purpose. A rediscovery of the Church, defining what it is and what it should again become will be presented for consideration for a new approach for pastoral counselling. Often when faced with any crisis we ask the question: "How are we going to achieve this without resources?" Jesus taught us a very important lesson in John 6 when he told his disciples to feed the five thousand people who came to listen to Him preach and teach. The disciples' response is a classic one; they tell Jesus they do not have the 'resources'. He then looks and asks about what they do have; what do they have in their hands?

There is much to be said about the eternal purpose of God. There is much to be said about the intent of God before humankind was created; before sin contaminated and defiled and brought intense complexity to bear to their calling. We see hints of this in Scripture and it warms one's heart when one reads what Paul says about this subject in Ephesians. In line with the original intent for this thesis I wish to empower the pastoral counsellor who works with couples in crisis. I hope to reduce the complexity for him or her so that they could translate that to the couple they are working with. If in counselling all that is addressed is the role of Christ in the salvation of humankind, then what

happened to the eternal purpose of God within humanity and with humanity? As dealt with in the previous section, the eternal purpose of God is to, through Christ, usher in His kingdom reign on this earth.

The orientation of our study from God's eternal purpose perspective is an important aspect. This perspective provides the overall central theme in the Biblical story and forces us to revisit the chronology of the events in Scripture from God's intent, which predates time and would form the canvas onto which the creation events are painted. Viewed from 'before time', we adjust our anthropological perspectives from insights which come primarily from the books of Ephesians and Colossians, and the Gospel of John. We see a profoundly different understanding of God's eternal purpose for humankind, and the role of the Spirit of God becomes more lucid as it moves into centre stage. A pneumatological approach to pastoral counselling, from this Trinitarian perspective, is seen as the most appropriate way to really place God's intimate salvation interest in the affairs of humankind central, that is: via the role of the Holy Spirit – from creation through to glorification.

As a South African minister I was blessed to be born into an era rich in history and vibrant in its transformation toward a democracy. I witnessed man's inhumanity to man and for most of my life was the recipient of unfairness politically and socially. However my history is also rich in Christianity as I also witnessed the attempts to redress the wrongs of Apartheid. I was part of the emerging Church which defied a government using the organs of protection to enforce injustice with legitimised violence. We are now past the time of primary injustices and still the society is in dire need of critical examination.

I witnessed a Church which from the grassroots of our society caused a holy dissatisfaction to arise and destabilise an evil government, causing it to account publically for its endorsements of unfairness and enforcements of draconian laws against its citizens it was called to protect. The public meetings were platforms where messages of hope were preached and pulpits were places from which passionate purposeful resistance to that which is evil was called for. Uprisings resulted which united a unique people under a common cause and purpose to value human life above anything else.

What has happened to that Church which captured my imagination and would call so many men and women to serve God's purposes and rally an oppressed population to a cause greater than themselves? The reality we are faced with today is emptying churches, fewer men and women

responding to the calling of God into ministry, and still the poor are marginalised and disenfranchised. The poor are again robbed of that distinctive voice which cries and speaks on their behalf by the conviction that all men are born in the Image of God. In the face of increased abuse of women and children and neglect of our society, we stand helpless searching for answers. We observe a Church which now and then raises a faint shout for the abandonment of hierarchical structures in the household as if this transition will drastically reduce domestic violence, as though we are addressing its sole cause. No clear thinking-through process is being considered which not only will address the underlying pathology within this relationship but also reverse the repetition of the unacceptable behaviour. There are very few clear voices claiming the need for community transformation. The best we can do seems to be to take legal recourse and imprison perpetrators, which mostly ends in tragic situations. We are in need of a counselling model which could offer Christianity and its community as a deep-cutting solution to our problems. The model proposed here will hopefully stimulate further theological engagement in this direction. The model is specifically interested in how God's work, in and through human agency (facilitated by God's own Spirit), can transform us and our relations in the direction of God's original and eschatological purposes.

The call for a fresh look at the purpose for the Church is an appropriate one. The Church is in fact on trial. Has it lost its purpose and has it become irrelevant in the onslaught of science, also in the form of Psychology? Has the sum total of the transformation of human life been reduced to gleaning over reams and reams of findings based on what we already know with no real solutions to change the thoughts and behaviour of humankind? Have the answers to our society's problems been placed in the hands of interest groups who try to rally support for a cause but fundamentally does nothing to change the circumstances of the very people they claim to defend, or justify the purpose for which they exist? With great interest I listen to the rallying calls for change only to hear a clear call for adversarial positions against some or other cause. The calls for reconciliation within the households and communities are softer. The practical mechanisms for real change of internal relational processes are absent, and the mandates from which they function are shaky.

The Church's voice now has become nothing more than a call for change without a real tangible attempt to effect the changes for which it has been designed. The eternal purpose is to be considered as the reason God created us. What is the relationship He desired with humankind?

Watkins provides a lucid answer: “From the beginning, God wanted a bride to marry, a house to dwell in, a family to enjoy, and a visible body through which to express Himself. All of these images – the bride, the house, the family, and the body – point to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is from Him, through Him, and, ultimately, to Him (Romans 11:36: ‘For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen’). The church lives from something and toward something that is greater than the church itself. That ‘something’ is God and God’s eternal purpose. The church is not only called to proclaim the gospel, but to embody it by its existence and practice. Christ did not die just to save us from our sins, but to bring us together into community. When we come to Christ, we are added to His church, his holy nation” (Watkins 2011:19).

This fundamental mind-shift is crucial for us to be able to reach the couple who are struggling. The mind-shift has to first occur in the way they view themselves as primarily sinners or as primarily a people with whom God eternally desires to have this relationship that is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 6:16: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” The sentiment of God wanting a relationship, and an exclusive one, is captured in Ex. 6:7, Lev. 26:12, Deut. 7:6, Jer. 32:38, Ezek. 37:27, Rev. 21:3, I Pet 2:9-10.

The question may justifiably be asked now: “What has the eternal purpose got to do with the person who is struggling with the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?” In the context of my thesis, where my focus lies, and that is to help couples struggling with troubled marriages and trying to deal with everyday issues of raising kids, it has everything to do with our contemporary context.

If we lose sight of God’s eternal purpose we lose sight of the reason God created us. We devalue the Church and it becomes our servant to meet our needs without the intimate relationship of an eternal God dwelling in us through His Spirit. This specific orientation in dealing with couples in trouble is for them to ask the question: “How far have we strayed from the sweet spot of God’s eternal purpose for our life and what must we do to get back there?”

Sin distorts the view of humankind, stepping into the eternal view presents humankind with a bird’s eye view from God’s perspective. This perspective is especially valuable in pastoral counselling, as the intent of those sessions should become a recalibration toward their relationship with God and between husband and wife. The sin that has disturbed this relationship is seen as a hindrance and not the end result of their existence. In this relationship counseling – paradigm a loving God,

desirous of a loving relationship with His creation, becomes a greater motivator than having God presented as the one who comes to the person with wrath. The reason for this is that the couple meeting with the pastor in counselling sessions with their problems get drawn to see the bigger picture.

The Church then is a place where God's image is restored and nurtured within the family context of God's kingdom. The Church is then, "...a human community of God's people...Wherever the church is gathered it is responsible for natural human needs, such as the need for social interaction, authentic personal development and conduct, vocational usefulness, and the nurturance of hope in eternal life. Indeed, the spiritual and social needs of individuals are the elements in the life of a congregation without which it may not exist" (Brister 1992:51).

The Holy Spirit constantly reminds us as in Romans 8:12-17 (NIV): "<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – *but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.* <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, <sup>14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'*" <sup>16</sup> *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.* <sup>17</sup> *Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory"* (emphasis mine).

The purpose then of pastoral theology would be to make sure that the restoration of relationship with God remains the focus and the nurturing nursery of this transformation dynamic is His Kingdom, His Church. Here Van Ruler's *corpus Christi*, *corpus Christiani* and *corpus Christianum* emphasise an all-encompassing pneumatological approach for the pastor to bear in mind. When one views the work of God through pneumatological tinted glasses, one sees the immense grasp of God and the vital role of the Church as the organism toward this transformation.

## 6.5 THE PRE-INCARNATE CHRIST

When we dare to reconsider the different (Trinitarian) approach to the centrality of Scripture and, with respect, take Christ out of the centre and place the purpose of God at the centre, we may see a different view of our world and we may dare ask the question how is God's multi-faceted, Trinitarian, role to be viewed?

This new lens does not depend on a theoretical perspective which humankind itself provides, but attempts to place a template over humankind that is theological in nature and provides a wholly other biblical view on humankind. I will attempt to offer a top down view of humankind – from God to humankind, rather than a bottom up one – i.e. from creation to God. The primary source for this view would be Scripture and a historical interpretation of God’s intent for humankind.

In the Gospel of John 1:1 we find allusions to Jesus as the pre-incarnate Logos, viewing Him as being before time began, at the beginning of time. One would assume that the text would refer to the beginning of time. His role is defined as the light of man and also as the creator of the world and that He was God. In Colossians Christ is seen not only as redeemer, as there was no sin, but he is seen as the creator at the beginning. We have to review the way we see Jesus: He is not to be limited to His role as redeemer, but He should also be seen as creator, for Himself and by Himself. The pre-incarnate Christ is present in Genesis as the dynamic Word of God, and as such a Trinitarian (and pneumatological) view (together with the Spirit of God that moved over the primordial waters) causes us to view Him, also in his role as Redeemer, as more than just a prophet, or as the model for change.<sup>25</sup>

It is interesting when the Gospel of John is read together with Ephesians and Colossians how a totally different picture develops. In Colossians the real purpose of Christ was to deal with sin and to free humankind from their sin within His role and so reconcile us in Christ. Paul would however also emphasise in this book to the Church that in history the role of Christ was to bring everything under subjection to God. In Ephesians Paul tells the Church of the dynamic role of the Spirit in enabling Christians to be part of the transformation dynamic that was wrought in Christ. Westermann (1974:39) argues that:

“The New Testament speaks of Christ in the context of creation. The connection between Christ and the creation is suggested in the prologue of St. John’s Gospel: ‘In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God ... all things were made through him...’ From this

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<sup>25</sup> Gen 1:3: The word of God then went forth to the primary material of the world, now filled with creative powers of vitality, to call into being, out of the germs of organization and life which it contained, and in the order pre-ordained by His wisdom, those creatures of the world, which proclaim, as they live and move, the glory of their Creator (Ps 8:1-9). The work of creation commences with the words, “*and God said.*” The words which God speaks are existing things. “He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast.” These words are deeds of the essential Word, the *λόγος*, by which “all things were made.” Speaking is the revelation of thought; the creation, the realization of the thoughts of God, a freely accomplished act of the absolute Spirit, and not an emanation of creatures from the divine essence (Keil and Delitzsch 2009).

one has concluded to the pre-existence of Christ or the pre-existence of the *Logos*; and just because it is an expressly mythical explanation many people today cannot make it their starting point; consequently these words lose their profound meaning. But when the words are considered in the broader context indicated above, they have something very important to say about the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. These words do not point to any mythical pre-existence of Christ, but they indicate that, in a broader sense, the Old Testament reflection on creation also belongs to the place in the middle where Christ stands. If this ‘middle period’ has a meaning that can be explained from the course of world history, from the history of thought, from the history of religion, then the New Testament message receives its historical place only before the background of the Old Testament which is its source and context.”

Christ indeed takes His rightful place in the creation story and hence, when seen as redeemer, he fulfils his role as re-creator. When Colossians is read in conjunction with this new perspective on Christ, it indeed places a whole new emphasis on Him.

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. (Colossians 1:15-18, NIV)

Van Ruler’s view of Christ is interesting and combines these Pauline perspectives Pneumatologically. He says, “The Spirit is not only the Spirit of the Son. The Spirit is not even only the Spirit of the Father and the Son. The Spirit is fully God himself, God the Holy Spirit. It is about this Spirit that it must be said that he dwells in us. However this indwelling, in the same way as the incarnation of the Logos, is an act of grace and mercy, necessitated by the intermezzo of sin” (Van Ruler 1984:56).

In reviewing Christ from the perspective of creation, we have a renewed appreciation for who He is and what his role is within God’s plan of redemption and within the context of eschatology.

## 6.6 THE DE/MAGO MODEL: IRT INTEGRATED INTO PNEUMATOLOGY

At the outset of the thesis I suggested that pastoral counselling needs a very definitive theological framework and within that, a carefully selected psychological process in order to enhance its effectiveness. Various arguments, related to the pressure and onslaught of Psychology and humanism on Pastoral Theology which lack good foundations and clear definitions, have been taken seriously in the course of this study. The voice of the practical theologian cannot be silent in an area which God has called us to be part of His transformational vehicle, the Church. I outlined a three part approach that would encompass the areas that, in my mind, a pastor needs to be clearly defined in. The areas are a clear view of:

1. A theological anthropology within which human beings (including couples) in relation with God, their creator, are clearly defined;
2. The acknowledgment of the secular environment in which we function – this broadens our conceptual framework that it is all about our relationship with God. It is broader and encompasses all the human sciences of which He is Lord; and, finally,
3. The spiritual context in which their relationship is developing.

It becomes abundantly clear that when we looked at the interrelatedness of science and theology in this chapter there seems to be a distinct difference in paradigm within which psychology and all the sciences operate. The perspectives of those sciences are that they operate in an observable world and that they examine this world through empirical research. Theology however has a different approach and views humankind from the revealed word of God and its foundation is in faith. Through the vehicle of the Holy Spirit inspired Scripture, God's eternal purpose for humankind is revealed. It is hard to articulate the working of the Holy Spirit and its role in redemption, and even more difficult to define His role as the Spirit integrates redemption into "normal" transforming life of the Christian. However, this is exactly the perspective needing to be explored in pastoral counselling. The work of the Holy Spirit in the world, in history and in human beings has been articulated forcefully by the Dutch theologian Van Ruler, and has attracted the attention of practical theologians such as Rebel and Louw (See Van Ruler 1989:1-70). The Holy Spirit is involved from the outset of the creation and "hovers" over the waters of chaos. We see later in the Bible that the Holy Spirit again is involved with the recreation of humankind at salvation and inhabits the saved person to energise him or her to fulfil God's purpose on this earth. The Spirit dwells, "...in the *corpus Christi*, in the *corpus Christiani*, and in the *corpus Christianum*" (Van Ruler 1989:40). This

livening aspect of God cannot be ignored and especially within practical theology as a discipline, it is even more crucial that the role of the Spirit is elevated and given prominence as God works in the now “spirit inhabited” being (ref. Phil. 2:12-13).

### 6.6.1 CRITERIA FOR A MODEL OF CHANGE

The pertinent question, thus, to be addressed towards the conclusion of this study, is: what would a pastoral pneumatological model look like? What would a real effective theological model for behavioural change entail to ensure that all aspects needed are part of the session to reach the couple in marital distress? What would a psychotherapeutic process, coupled with a carefully thought through theology, entail that would make the goal of making “God inhabiting His people” a reality? What model would be able to have a working relationship with the sciences that would enhance the effectiveness of pastoral counselling as it functions in a postmodern world?

Before I constructed any diagram or outline of a model I tried to identify criteria for an acceptable model. Sexton, Ridly and Kleiner in their article, *Beyond Common Factors: Multilevel-process models of therapeutic change in marriage and family therapy* (2004:142-143) also asked what criteria would be needed in a model for therapeutic change. The criteria they suggested for any change were that the model would have to be: *Comprehensive* – It has to have all the constituent elements or components of the process of change, including the interrelationships of the elements, but also excluding elements and interrelationships that are irrelevant to understanding change. *Heuristic* – The model should unlock and stimulate further investigation of the process of change. *Meta-theoretical* – The model should deal with philosophical assumptions at a deep level and not be constrained by any specific theoretical orientation. *Systematic* – In the process of therapeutic change, as in any system, the whole is more than the sum of its parts and components. The model must be based on a consistent overarching theory, systematically developed. *Practical* – A model of change should have utility (“There is nothing so practical as a good theory”). By integrating up-to-date scientific knowledge and theory, the bridge to respective applications should be apparent. Therapists would be armed with more informed guidance in making decisions and selecting interventions. *Simplistic without being oversimplistic* – A model must overcome the significant problem of failing to include all of the constituent elements and interrelationships. A model of change should be manageable and understandable while avoiding the trap of oversimplifying complex phenomena. This criterion is based on the premise that oversimplification leads to confusion in understanding a phenomenon as does the inclusion of irrelevant information. *Clear* –

A model should provide explicit definitions of key principles, concepts and components. It avoids the use of vague, ambiguous, and imprecise language, making it difficult for readers to interpret the author's intended meanings. Clarity also enables participants in a conversation to have meaningful and unambiguous dialogue.

For the Deimago Pneumatological Transformation Model (DPTM), it is critical that it does not sacrifice its authentic theological position on the altar of pragmatism. As mentioned before, theology provides the *Universitas scientiarum* (Van Ruler 1989:25) when it integrates IRT into a pneumatological model for pastoral counselling. "In the same way that God poses questions – in his own being as God and in all the world of his hands in the whole of reality– so that we in our confession and song can find and give an answer, so does theology pose the questions for science in the *universitas scientiarum*." (Van Ruler 1989:25) The framework that theology provides creates room for mutual dialogue without either discipline being merged and altering its individual character. For me this wholesome interaction and dialogue between biblical theology as historical frame for the sciences proximates the *inhabitatio* of the spirit in our world. It influences without compelling. It calls for something greater without minimising complexities of life. Brister's view of the interaction between Theology and specifically psychology, "While clear distinctions exist between theology and psychology at abstract, theoretical levels, the two disciplines converge on the applied level of their mutual concern – life before God and in the human community" (1992:64).

The suspicion and independence must be allayed through a spiritual dialogue and through careful and humble servitude; the question should be asked what can we bring to the sacred space of authentic dialogue which will enhance the lives of humankind?

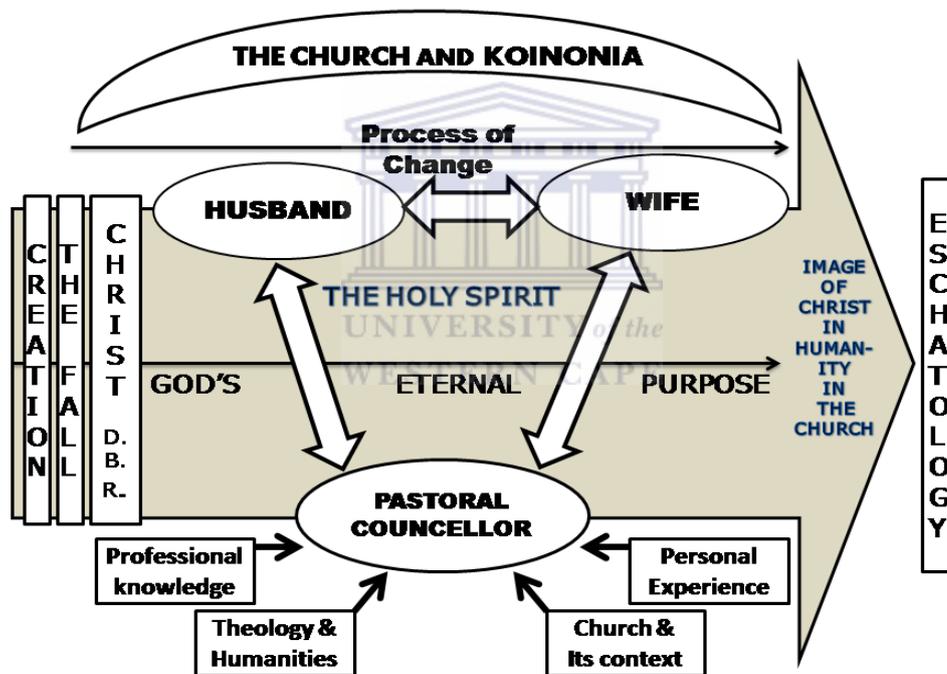
## **6.6.2 THE DE/MAGO MODEL AND ITS CONSTITUENT PARTS**

In an attempt to convey the basic ideas of my proposed model for behavioural change in pastoral counselling – aiming to embody the spirit of the suggested criteria above – I use several diagrams with explanatory notes to illustrate my model. Van Ruler makes a profound observation especially as he speaks of the Kingdom of God within the world. I will use a pneumatological historical world view (*Weltsanschauung*) in which this therapeutic model can be placed. The pneumatological framework then becomes and provides the space for the sciences to develop within.

A specific aspect of the model is the question how to include IRT into this theological overarching model. To my mind IRT provides valuable tools, especially tools to facilitate communication and

dialogue. Integrating IRT into a pneumatologically sound pastoral counselling model could also advance the benefits of IRT and strengthen that model which in my opinion lacks what is crucial, and that is its spiritual component. The outcome for the pastoral therapist is strengthened dialogue in dealing with various challenges that couples face. The intent is thus to include IRT into a proposed Pneumatological Pastoral Counselling model, not only to meet the couple's needs of dealing with their problems but contextualising their problems within the eternal purpose of God. Van Ruler unapologetically proclaims that, "without a doubt it must be said that the Bible considers God's activity with his world, is an eschatological reality" (Van Ruler 1989:97).

It is with these shortcomings in mind that DEIMAGO (DPTM) attempts to contribute to the serving of humankind by proposing a pneumatological model which augments that spiritual aspect missing in IRT.



**Fig. 1 The role and agency of the Holy Spirit within the *koinonia* of the Church as body of Christ: the pastoral counsellor as facilitator of the Spirit's work, language and communication**

The constituent parts of the **DE/MAGO (DPTM)** model in Figure 1 is: firstly, to note that the large arrow pointing to the right is the time trajectory which on that timeline has the creation, the fall, and the Death burial and resurrection of Christ as major events. It also signifies the active working of the Spirit before time began. It stretches toward enabling the eschatology of God and the

embodiment of His will, in the Church. This provision, space and acknowledgement of the Spirit signify an important aspect for this model, i.e. the presence of the Spirit in the whole of creation.

Secondly, the Church and *Koinonia* form the overarching curve above being the actual spiritual household wherein the spirit has been dwelling (*corpus Christiani*) from the beginning of time since God intervened with Israel. This signifies the redeemed person which is the *corpus Christiani*. The pivotal role of Christ is here important in that it transforms the person from an enemy of God into a child. Salvation accompanied by the *inhabitatio* of the Spirit leads the person toward an empowered walk with the Spirit.

Thirdly, in the foreground are the main role players in the counselling room. They are the pastor, who comes to the room with his professional knowledge, his insights from Theology and the humanities, his perception and ability to understand the role of the Church as God's changing agent. Theology needs to be seen here as the beginning of the *universitas scientiarum*. Theology provides the reciprocal space for dialogue between theology and the sciences. And lastly the pastor's also comes with his own baggage, personal experiences of pain and growth. He also comes with his experiential knowledge of seeing how He has seen God works in the lives of couples to transform them into worthy vessels.

On the opposite aspect we also see the couple who respectively also enter into the counselling room with their own respective relational baggage which consists of childhood wounds, past relational hurts and current relational expectations. They also come with the sacred relational space between them which may be good or not so good at that time. They also enter into that room with their hopes to have matters resolved.

It is in this sacred space of complexity that the Holy Spirit works powerfully to gently direct the whole process toward God and His eternal purpose. The theological background provides the arena and frame which accommodates the sciences to enter at its bidding to assist this aim of the Holy Spirit. That takes place to bring wholeness and reconciliation with God.

The major difference, however, between IRT and *Deimago Pneumatological Transformation Model (DPTM)* is that it does not purely depend on psychological processes and techniques to achieve the change objective, but has a deeply rooted dependence and reliance on the Holy Spirit. The process is dependent on the Lord, who is the Spirit, to do His work inside the couple with the pastor acting

as facilitator for God, who is the main change agency in every session, as explained by Paul in cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 (NIV):

<sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Another dimension with which the couple view each other is that they see each other not only as spiritually inhabited beings and temples of God, but also as living their relationship as a reflection of God's image. They also see themselves as being at God's disposal, and in communication with God, through their communication with each other. The recognition of the transcendent God through His spirit inhabiting your spouse challenges mortal man to think in spiritual terms and not just in carnal terms.

The specific behavioural changes that need to take place can be articulated within this dialogical paradigm with deep regard that they are "one through the marital covenant", and both subject to the imperatives of the Kingdom of God. This revisioning of each other places their regard for one another as fellow partakers in this grace they have through Christ (I Pet. 3:7). They are joint heirs of the grace of God and not as children in sibling rivalry and wanting to get their own way, but their adjustment is within the context of the agenda of God.

At the core of the adjustment towards change it has to be asked: what is the goal; who is to be satisfied? Usually, in psychological models, which are client-centred, the aims are to raise the satisfaction level of the couple. This now changes, as the centre of the pneumatological paradigm is God, who is the Spirit. He is not only the object of their affections but also the *agency* which is an integral part of their adjustment activity. It achieves the agenda of God, which is to dwell within His people. The couple does not just see God as a judge they have to face one day, or an external agency who is watching with either approving or disapproving eyes. They sense His love and presence as they grow in *reciprocity* to meeting one another's needs as a couple and in turn they are pleasing to God. In pleasing God and doing His will, they also in turn have the immediate sense of their own satisfaction level raising (Matthew 6:33). Here again the eternal purpose of God is the background and the Spirit "hovering" or "brooding" inside this sacred space, desirous for transformation of the couple to resemble Christ's love for His Church, is the agent of change.

In this model for change *Deimago* offers a synthesis of a pastoral counselling process which at its core has the spirit of God and not the individual. The inference is then that as they move walking by sight they advance in their maturity to walk by the Spirit of God and imbibe God's agenda for their life. God will always act in their interest and the changes they make for their relationship in the context of His will is always the best option and outcome.

The dimensions of the relationships are interesting. The DPTM model reflects the transformation agenda of the Spirit and is fully focussed on the entire tenure of God wanting to have a relationship with humankind and destroying that which has come between them.

In 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (NIV) Paul writes (emphasis mine):

<sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the *Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* <sup>18</sup> And *we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

The accentuating of the Spirit's presence and the agency in the transformation make His role more than just a cursory one. Any diminution of His role in the transformative life of the Christian is a misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian.

The inner working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is core to the theology of Paul, when he speaks to the Christians at Phillipi and mentions right after elevating Christ to the place He deserves, in Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV):

“<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> *for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose*” (emphasis mine).

Here again we witness the acknowledgement of the force of God working in the life of the Christian, that as he is working hard at his salvation learning to know God intellectually, God is busy through His Spirit to work on the inside transforming him.

Three things are worth the mention here and they are:

1. It is God who wills and works for His good pleasure. God is the centre of the agenda and it is His will that is sought, not the desire of the human.
2. That the human partner has to do his/her part and that is to get to know God intellectually and existentially, by studying His Word and getting to know His will.

3. That there is an overriding purpose within which the process is guided.

An issue which is destined to be part of the counselling sessions are the commission of sin. In this process viewing the counselling session pneumatologically, and assuming the couple are Christians and have the Holy Spirit living in them, makes all the difference, as emphasised by Paul in Romans 8:13-14 (NIV):

<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; *but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,* <sup>14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (emphasis mine).

This passage is important in assuring the Christian who has sinned against his wife (or the other way around), by doing any and every kind of sin, that they are not alone and have forgiveness achieved for them through the cross. They need to confess and repent of sin and then forgive each other. After this reconciliation has been achieved they are to be assured that the same Lord, through the Holy Spirit, will never leave them nor forsake them and will be active in deadening sin in their bodies.

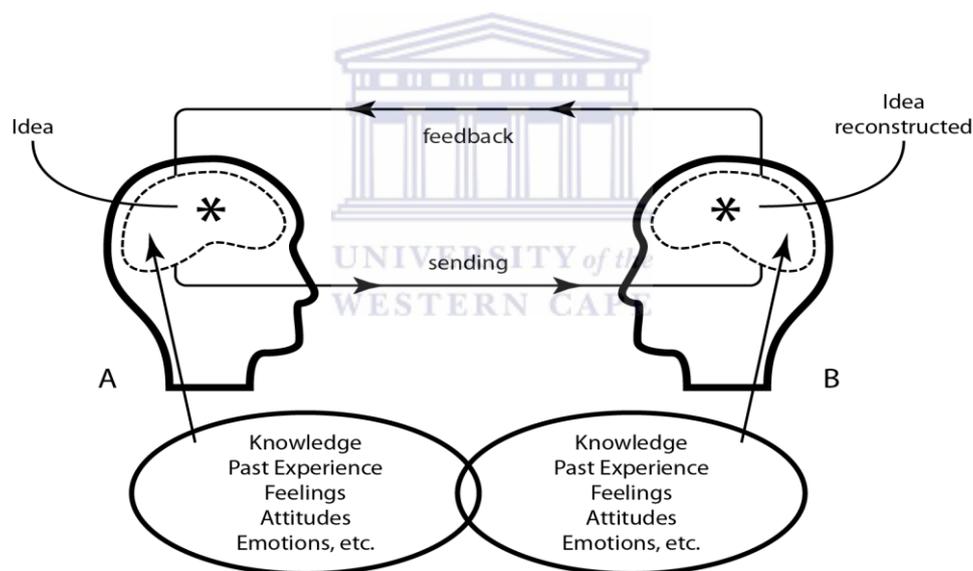
The Deimago model (DPTM) places the Holy Spirit in the prominent position he deserves and needs to occupy, and the Spirit is recognised as the active agency in this entire process and life of the Christian.

An aspect that Deimago (DPTM) has, that no secular humanistic therapeutic model can rely on, is a spiritually empowered communal (*Koinonia*) context. Here Van Ruler's pneumatology would be helpful as it speaks here of the *Corpus Christiani*. This aspect is crucial where the Spirit works and inhabits the lives of those transformed by His inhabitation and steps into *worsteling* to fulfil its role within the spiritual formation of the couple. It is this context that really forms the backbone of the model. When the couple is counselled and the matters resolved, they leave the office and are sent out to continue functioning within the body of Christ, i.e. the Church, exercising their spiritual gifts in works of service. The instance that brought them into counselling, no matter how serious or small, is seen against the backdrop of their purpose in Christ and God's eternal purpose, and this problem is revisioned as an interruption of their spiritual walk and purpose and does not become the overwhelming purpose or reality of their lives. Dwelling on the bad becomes superfluous and yearning for the life-giving walk in the Spirit becomes their overwhelming passion. The notion of a plan that God has for their lives becomes clear: that God's plan is to transform His world He loves

through changing one person at a time and placing them within a fellowship and congregation where His will is practiced.

In this communal context the couple will encounter other couples who have overcome and are walking a life focussed and purposeful (2 Corinthians 1). They will receive encouragement and affirmation for their transforming behaviour and hope gets spoken into their lives, as opposed to being received into a community which does not share your values. Christianity has a clearly defined behavioural expectation and its practice reinforces it when seen in community and communal behaviour.

In the diagram below, the counsellor would try and decipher the concepts and understand the messages as they are given to him by the counselee. The counselee must obviously also understand how “dialogue” and “good communication” function between the person with his or her partner.

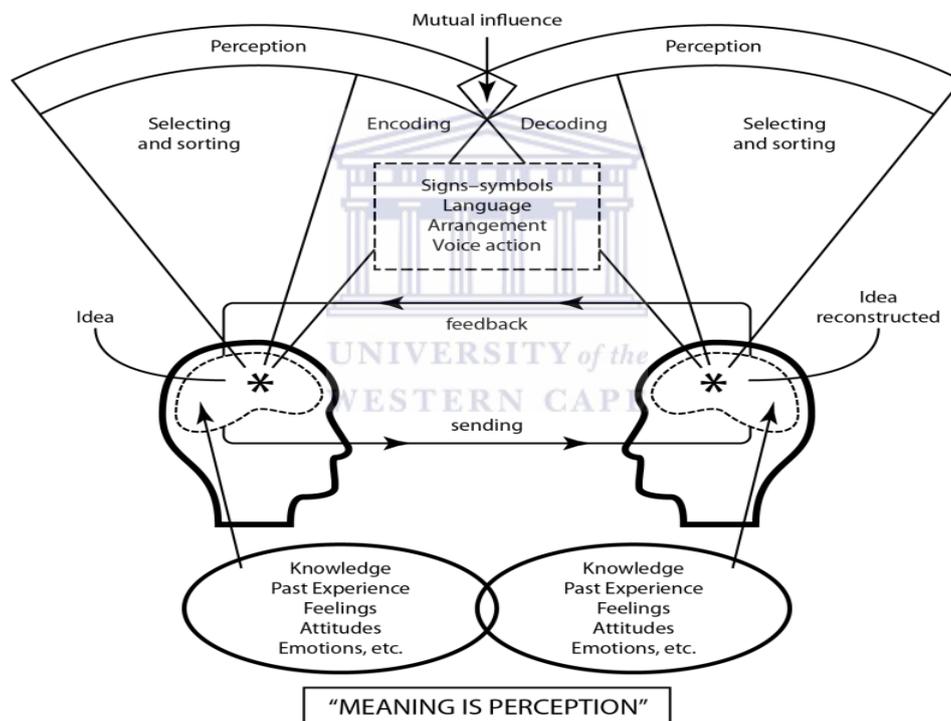


**Fig. 2 The process of communicating ideas: dialogue strengthens understanding (correcting the reconstructed idea through feedback both ways)**

The pastor must understand how authentic communication, through dialogue, with constant feedback and correction of perceptions, work. He or she, together with both partners in the relationship, will become aware that as stated by Del Tarr in *The Role of the Holy Spirit in Interpersonal Relations* that, “the culture-language system has assigned symbols (words) to those ideas. Because all learning is metaphorical, where all new things must be related to old things, the

fan of perception is full of meaning separated into thousands of categories” (Gilbert & Brock 1985:16-17).

Once we understand how the communication of ideas work, we can also identify ways of improving mutual understanding. We all select and sort information conveyed to us through language, symbols, voice, expressions, arrangement of information, etc., as “encoded” by the speaker. We then “decode” the information in terms of our own knowledge, past experiences, feelings, attitudes and emotions. Both partners in a conversation or relationship thus create their own “fan of perception” of what the other conveys. As in general hermeneutics we can create overlapping circles of understanding or “mutuality” in perception. Good communication is created when the area of overlapping understanding grows.



**Fig. 3 Meaning is perception: how understanding can be reached through encoding and decoding, selecting and sorting, of communicated ideas, until the area of overlapping perception (the “fan of perception”) grows significantly.**

In figure 3, the *fan of perception* is explained. The pastor needs an increased awareness that communication occurs in a mass of complexity. In this process there is a distinct advantage for a counsellor who is “walking in the Spirit”, as opposed to one who is reliant on his own skill in

manipulating the processes. A pneumatological model of counselling, as proposed here, will add the dimension of God's Spirit in the communicative process.

Gilbert and Brock (1985:17, 18) comment as follows on the pneumatological aspect of communication: "Listen to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:11-12: it looks as if he had studied this communication model! No one can really know what anyone else is thinking or what he is really like, except the person himself. And no one can know God's thoughts except God's own spirit. And God has actually given us His Spirit (not the world's spirit) to tell us about the wonderful, free gifts of grace and blessing that God has given us. In telling you about these gifts of grace and blessing that God has given us ... we have even used the very words given to us by the Holy Spirit, in words that we as men might choose. So we use the Holy Spirit's word to explain the Holy Spirit's facts."

The normal objective of the IRT dialogue would be to enhance the exchange of ideas and the transference of feelings and emotions. The extant IRT dialogical dynamic, used within the "space" between the couple, becomes an ideal space for pneumatological communication. It is within this "space" that the Holy Spirit enters the "*worsteling*" as Van Ruler puts it. The struggle of humankind to coalesce to God's will is a profound dynamic and would function well as a behavioural change mechanism to alter relationships. The pastoral counsellor's function and role here is to enhance emotional safety between the couple and help them to deepen their understanding of each other and increase the connection. The space between the couple is facilitated by the pastor to increase the overlapping "fan of perception", and to ensure that the couple stay in connection. IRT provides the ideal tool and platform for the pastor to effectively contain the transference effect that naturally exists in the counselling situation (with resultant blaming and dependency syndromes), and help the couple to stay in connection so that they can do their own work in the presence of and assistance of the Spirit. This specific mechanism contains the transference, usually projected onto the counsellor, and according to Hendrix is the ideal and fertile soil in which the Holy Spirit can do His work in the minds and hearts of the couple. It is within this empathic relationship that the real change takes place.

As stated before, IRT has been proven to be an effective tool for behavioural change and harnessing this process within a pastoral model will be wise, especially when the integrity of the pastoral process, including the Holy Spirit working in the life of the couple, is not violated. I developed a diagram which illustrates the composite parts in this dialogical paradigm and delineates how each

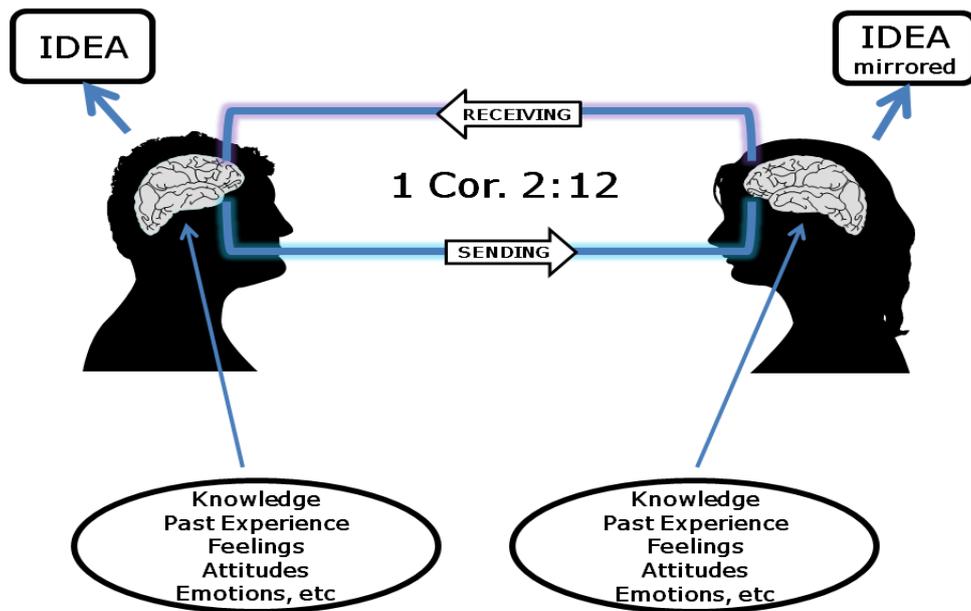
part work in this model, where IRT functions within a *Deimago Pneumatological Transformation Model* (DPTM).

The model which I am proposing has its roots in pastoral theology and a specifically selected pneumatological paradigm, with the Holy Spirit at the centre. The model's theological underpinnings and pneumatological framework are to be found in Scripture. This model includes IRT as an excellent dialogical adjunct which augments its practical working and provides the practical dialogical platform within which the couple engages each other. The imperative for dialogue as a means of resolving conflict is found in Christ's teaching of His disciples (cf. Matthew 18:15) and this pneumatological framework forms the outer shell of the model. This spiritual foundation for dialogue, God's willingness to be involved in our conversations, to in fact reason with us, is also found in the Old Testament (cf. Is. 1:8) and is extensively found in Paul's encounter with those he wanted to persuade (cf. Acts. 17:2, 17:17, 18:4, 18:19, 24:25).

It is this spiritual, pneumatological aspect of communication that needs to be added to IRT, to enhance its effectiveness. The dynamics within IRT which is reduced to the human being in connection with the universe is not just reduced to the interrelatedness of humankind as a compilation of atoms and molecules but as humans born in the Image of God. That within the world of conflict and disharmony God has a special interest in humankind and their ability to have a wholesome life.

### **6.6.3 THE DIALOGICAL PROCESSES OF IRT PLACED WITHIN A PNEUMATOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

The dialogical model of IRT, as I have pointed out, is effective as it regulates energies that exist within the dialogical dynamic to keep the couple in connection. In figure 4, I would like the couple, as the pastoral counsellor works with them, to be seen not only as spiritual entities in connection with God through the presence of the Holy Spirit, but also as physical-psychological entities. They come to the relationship and view themselves, as IRT views people who enter relationship, not as perfect, but with their woundedness and diverse backgrounds and experiences. IRT, through its processes, identifies where the wounds are and through dialogue presents the areas that need to be



**Fig.4 Incorporating the Holy Spirit’s “language” into IRT to effect “pneumatological communication” and understanding**

changed. With the renewed view of humankind, provided by a pneumatological understanding of their situation, they see themselves within an environment which is hostile to the Kingdom of God and their desire is to be part of the work of God, who wishes to restore humankind to Himself.

The couple see each other as individuals with thought processes and help each other take ownership of their behaviour and take responsibility for the decision to make the changes needed from the negative present to a positive outcome for both of them.

In this interpersonal encounter I place the Holy Spirit centre stage and give a name to the unknown force that operates within the dialogical centre of that relationship. IRT tries to find the answers of this invisible force that is so powerful to enable transformation within humankind. I am reminded of Paul on Mars Hill who acknowledges all the gods and then tells them of the one that is named the “unknown God”. Here one can safely state that the power that works the generative power within humankind’s relationships is the Spirit of God, the same one who hovered over the chaos of the primordial pre-creation account. It is the same force that works mightily in the lives of the object of God’s affection, i.e. humankind.

### **6.6.3.1 THE COUPLE AND THE PASTORAL COUNSELLOR**

Against the spiritual backdrop of God's working in history and in His creation, we see the main "actors" in this dialogical dance. The couple and the pastoral counsellor now become a unit symbolizing God's gentle hand through the pastor reaching in to facilitate change. We acknowledge that each of the participants arrive with their own assumptions of what they have been taught about God's counsel including their own emotional baggage. The awareness the Spirit's presence would enable the pastor to apply the healing promised by God to those who submit their will to Him. The pastor becomes a facilitator of God and conduit for healing.

### **6.6.4 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON IRT**

As an IRT practitioner I use the skills taught to help couples in trouble to engage one another in a dialogical dynamic that is non-threatening and non-accusatory. The couples are taught to engage one another in a systematic dialogical process where each one is allowed the space for articulating their own feelings and pains and desires. It uses psychological methods which are useful and gentle.

I have seen the changes in the lives of many individuals and couples who arrived in my office in a highly reactive mood and mode, and after helping the couple to recognise these behaviour patterns as adaptations or defence mechanisms within a threatened relationship, with the couple's guided involvement, have identified the origins of the pain. IRT helps one realise that although people arrive at one's office after they have done wrong, or as a Christian would see them to have sinned, they are still, as IRT sees them, wounded people. As a minister I have shifted in the way I view people and now try to see them as I think God sees them. I believe God sees them as people who have divine potential and in desperate need of His intervention to enable them to become what they have been created for. In such a theological perspective one sees people as being on a continuum and as part of their process of discipleship in becoming like Christ.

IRT has identified a wide range, a spectrum, a continuum within which they can identify the exact stage in which their development has been interrupted, and, like in the Christian community, and the requirements for them to grow to maturity. The only difference is that IRT does not primarily give credence to a Spiritual background but functions well within that.

In my practice I have seen many couples arrive reactive and angry. In one case, which I will call John, he was continually angry and was easily triggered. His assimilation and integration with other people were a tough task. He regarded any attempt to form a relationship with him to be one fraught with the potential to hurt him and retreated in the safety of his cocoon to rather keep people at a distance than allow them into that vulnerable sacred space. His reactivity was debilitating to him and even limited his chances of promotion in his workplace. Even though he is skilled beyond his years, he lacked the interpersonal skills to effectively work with others as a team. His inability in relating with others was debilitating not only to himself but also started to affect his primary relationship with his new wife. Fear that this anger could turn toward her haunted her daily. His deeply embedded anger caused him to not react well to stress and this unpredictability of behaviour caused his wife to ask for help.

John became a Christian and with his new found hope, believed that he needed a relationship greater than what he had before which could save him from himself. After becoming a Christian, the process of educating him on what this new relationship in Christ meant started. He needed to understand what it meant that God would never leave or forsake him. Having him revision himself now as a child of God and not the child of an abuser meant the world to him. Understanding the dynamic of “leaving and cleaving” and “becoming one” changed the way he viewed himself and his wife’s relationship now directly under the auspices of God. He was no longer accountable to, nor under the authority of his father and was now directly under God’s care, authority and guidance. He believed he could change and through careful instruction, in order to reframe his new relational paradigm, carefully structured therapy sessions using IRT ensued. Using the tools offered by IRT and through a consistent process of therapy he identified the source of his anger. The “parent-child dialogue” was used carefully to achieve safety and through a process of guided dialogue the aspects that haunted him was dealt with. The feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability were dealt with and were now in his past and did not need to cloud his future. The adaptive behaviour to protect him through violence and aggression could now be seen as superfluous and unneeded. A further result was that he has restored relations with his paternal father and the animosity that defined their relationship has now been paid to rest. He could finally relate to his father as a man and not as a wounded child.

Although I am shortening the account for brevity’s sake the excellent outcome and tremendous thankfulness and transformation that followed must not minimise the complexity of the sessions and the pathologies that was at work in the sessions.

I can attest on account of personal experience and many years of using IRT, coupled with an ongoing theological educating process, that the outcomes have been favourable in most cases. In the events that the joint two-pronged approach was not as successful there was unwillingness on the part of the person to sufficiently engage the process. In cases where there was failure, it was marked by a conscious choice and unwillingness on the part of the counselee to submit to a new behavioural paradigm found in the Kingdom of God under Christ. There are many examples, even more complex than the example used above, where this transformational “miracle” has been witnessed. These events, or as I have come to call them “holy moments”, are evidence and affirmation to me of the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit of God unequivocally gets all the glory and honour and praise.

I would recommend a pastor who would like to practice this therapy to avail them to be tutored and coached properly. The teaching is intense and the expectations are high, with practical exercises in all sorts of dialogues. To have favourable outcomes there needs to be ample guidance and supervision to ensure the process becomes second nature.

#### **6.6.5 THE DIALOGICAL TOOLS FOR PASTORS TO USE IN DEIMAGO**

I need to emphasise that the usage of these tools are the propriety property of Imago and I would recommend careful instruction before attempting to engage couples.

I am including only two primary dialogical processes to illustrate the usefulness of these IRT tools:

##### **6.6.5.1 GENERAL DIALOGICAL SKILLS:**

The important aspect of the dialogical process is the dialogue. In the dialogical process, mirroring is important as it allows the sender to check whether he has adequately articulated what he wants the receiver to understand. The receiver has an opportunity to check whether they fully understand what has been sent. This dance is wonderful to observe and is definitive in its rhythm. In this process the receiver suspends judgement and defensive attitudes and listens to understand and allow him or her to validate the one who sends. This gives the couple the opportunity to speak uninhibited to express how they feel without being interrupted.

<p><b>1. Mirror</b></p> <p>“So if I am right I hear you saying...”</p> <p>Then: “Tell me more...”</p> <p>OR</p> <p>“Is there more about that?”</p> <p><b>Sender:</b> Resend important information, which the receiver might have missed.</p> <p><b>Receiver:</b> Keep on mirroring and say, “tell me more” until your partner indicates that he/ she has said everything.</p>
<p><b>2. Summarize</b></p> <p>“Let me see if I got everything...”</p> <p>(Summarize the central points of the sender’s message)</p> <p>“Did I get all of it right?”</p> <p>(Also mirror the information that was not included in your summary)</p>
<p><b>3. Understand</b></p> <p>“I understand what you are saying and it makes sense because...”</p> <p>(Give a few reasons why it makes sense to you)</p> <p>If it does not make sense to you say:</p> <p>“Help me to Understand”</p>
<p><b>4. Empathize</b></p> <p>I can imagine how you must feel or must have felt...”</p> <p>(Mention one or more feelings)</p> <p>If your intuition is wrong your partner will tell you how she / he feels, and then you mirror it.</p> <p>If your intuition was right and you mirrored correctly, ask:</p> <p>“Is there more about that?”</p>
<p><b>5. Exchange</b></p> <p>If there is nothing more about the matter, then ask:</p> <p>“Can we change places?”</p>

The next dialogue, which is the ‘commitment dialogue’, is quite fundamental to establishing agreement by the couple to stay in the relationship.

### 6.6.5.2 THE COMMITMENT DIALOGUE

In this dialogue the partner who sees a specific behavioural aspect in such a serious light that it would threaten their relationship and cause him/her to want to leave the relationship, can through this guided dialogue articulate exactly what the action is and what the resultant outcome would be if this behaviour is left unchanged. The dialogue limits the focus to the behaviour and not the person.

Sender	Receiver
1. "One thing that would make me leave the relationship is..."	Mirror 100%
2. "And the reason why I would do this is..."	Mirror 100%
3. "And the feeling which I cannot express is..."	Mirror 100%
4. "And the reason why I cannot give expression to these feelings is because I am afraid of..."	Mirror 100%
	(Summarize everything) "So what I hear you saying is... Do I have it all?"
	(Validate) "I understand what you are saying and it makes sense, because..."
	(Empathize) "And I can imagine that you must feel... Is that how you feel?"

### 6.6.5.3 THE "BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE DIALOGUE"

This is a powerful dialogue which helps the couple to articulate the problematic behaviour, identify its source(s), and in a systematic way communicate the required changes needed. The entire dialogue also has validation of feelings included which helps the sender to feel 'heard'. It also helps

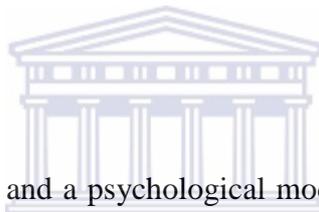
the sender to articulate and communicate to the receiver that the source of frustration lies intertwined how they experienced life in their formative years and how current behaviour of the partner is frustrating. This is stated in a non-accusing way and seeks for behavioural change that will lessen fear. The purpose is not seeking control but the improvement of the relationship affirming that the listener has the capacity to positively contribute to the relationship by adjusting behaviour and lessening fear. It also presents the hearer with the challenge to stretch into behaviour that he/she is not familiar with but deemed doable. Time frames and internal checks and balances are placed to make sure that the relationship would be on an improving curve.

Sender	Receiver
1. "I want to make an appointment with you to talk about a frustration"	1. Make the appointment as soon as possible. 2. "I am fully prepared to listen to your frustration"
2. State frustration in one short sentence	3. Mirror 100%
4. "I feel frustrated when..."	4. Mirror 100%
5. "And what hurts me the most about it, is..."	5. Mirror 100%
6. "And it frightens me that..."	6. "Tell me what these feelings remind you of from your childhood?"
7. Answer to question	7. Mirror 100%
8. "And what I felt then was..."	8. Mirror 100%
9. "And because of that, I made a decision as a child to..."	9. (Summarize the sender's tale like a story, validate it and say) "And how it must have been was..."
	10. "And if I could go back in time today, I would tell your parents..."
	11. "And now it makes complete sense to me that when I ... and if I do that, I understand that you could feel..."
	12. "What is it that you want from me?"
13. "My overpowering need is that you would always, always... and never, never..."	13. (Mirror and say:) "What can I do specifically to help you with this?"

14. Mention 3 requests for behavioural change that are positive, can be measured and are specific.	Write it down.
	15. Select one request that will stretch you without breaking you, and say which you will give as a present
16. “Thank you. To receive this gift will lessen my fear of ... and will help me to feel...”	16. “You are welcome! If I stretch myself to give you this gift, it will help me to develop...”

There are many other dialogues which can be used effectively but this would need to be illustrative, not exhaustive for the pastor.

## 6.7 CONCLUDING WORD



I trust that by juxtaposing a Biblical and a psychological model about the “image” we have of the “other”, including the marriage partner, I could encourage the dialogue between the sciences and also place pastoral counselling in its rightful place through a pneumatological emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in counselling.

My aim was at the outset of the thesis to provide a set of tools which would be helpful for the pastor to deal with different aspects of marriage counselling, including hermeneutical, dialogical and therapeutic tools. There is no question that our world as we know it is in constant flux; even our basic relations are changing and are challenged in new ways daily. The pastor runs the risk of losing track of coping mechanisms to accompany the processes of life, including foundational relations such as marriage. I have found that the counselling models available in the market of ideas, as well-intentioned as they may be, do not always provide a practical platform for the pastor.

Increasingly I have sensed a growing suspicion between theology and the sciences and perceived a polarisation between the disciplines. What I hoped to achieve was to embed IRT, an effective psychological dialogical model, within a pneumatological theological framework. The concern is always that one would be swallowed up by the other. I believe that with the help of Westermann’s biblical exegesis and Van Ruler’s pneumatology, in their respective reflections on creation and the

Holy Spirit, this psychological model was embedded adequately within a comprehensive theological framework. In this way the integrity of both disciplines, as they complement each other, could be maintained. The human sciences can proceed their investigations of the human reality without interference, while theologically the relevant insights that enhance our understanding of humankind can be appropriated into a suitable eschatological framework.

Westermann argues convincingly that humankind must not just be seen as created by God for a relationship with Him, in isolation, but also for a relationship with all of creation. “The same goes for philosophical, psychological and sociological anthropology in so far as any of them sets itself up as an absolute” (1974:79). All sciences need to operate, finally, in relation to the whole of reality. He further argues, and I concur: “It is only in this way that the importance of the Yahwistic Creation narrative will be seen: man, from his very origins, is concerned providing the means of life (economics), the mission to work (the science of work, its history and its laws), community (sociology), and speech (linguistics). The author is not occupied with man as an object of theological study, but with man in all areas of his human existence” (1974:80). A holistically renewed theological anthropology, with theology providing the framework, as Van Ruler says, points us to God and enriches the interplay between theology and the other sciences rather than deepening suspicion and animosity. The words of the Psalmist then resonate from creation and its voice is undeniably that of God, the creator of humankind. If science is practiced right it could do nothing else but pay homage to the Creator and ultimately serves His purposes (Psalm 19:1-4, NIV):

“1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. 3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun.”

I am reminded of a story told about an event in the life of Martin Buber, when he was visited by a student. He was busy studying and meditating, when the young man came to talk to him. He admits that he was not present “in spirit” and paid no presence of mind to this young man. The young student spoke and then left. He later learnt that this young man, after leaving, went and took his own life. His reaction to this event was profound and would alter the way he approached his ministry for ever. Many ministers and councillors may have had similar experiences.

“Since then I have given up the ‘religious’ which is nothing but exceptions, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy; or it has given me up. I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never taken. The mystery is no longer disclosed, it has escaped or it has made its dwelling here where everything happens as it happens. I know no fullness but each mortal hour’s fullness of claim and responsibility ... I do not know much more. If that is religion then it is just *everything*, simply all that is lived in its possibility of dialogue.” (Buber 1965:12-14).

It is with such a holistic view of humankind in mind that the pneumatological approach brings pastoral counselling to life and firmly into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Humankind in its entirety is taken into consideration and the conflict in its narrow sense, in a particular relationship, now becomes an opportunity for the pastor to fulfil his role as mediator to help the couple make sense of their world within the bigger picture. The presence of the pastor in the dialogical setting helps the couple contextualise their problem and search for deeper understanding. A pneumatological approach takes all the other sciences into consideration as they directly or indirectly influence the couple’s reality and allows them to dialogue as they take all these influences into consideration in searching for the other.

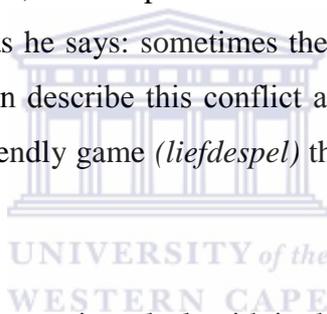
The pastor’s role then is one of mediating the presence of the Holy Spirit and in his immediacy be a visible reminder of God’s love and care. It is then that his role is elevated and changed when he, like Buber, realises the presence of mind that is life altering to those whom he is blessed to shepherd. The Holy Spirit then works through each of those in the counselling room with an agenda which is that of enhancing and deepening relationships. Buber speaks in this regard of “I” and “Thou” and “The Wholly Other”.

What would make one explore the crucial relationship between husband and wife so extensively, in a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach, in an attempt to provide for the pastor a renewed perspective on marriage and practical theology? For me it lies herein that the perspective that is needed for the pastor should be a uniquely theological one, in honest dialogue with other scientific knowledge. However, when our pastoral praxis is engulfed and determined by secular approaches only, then the whole exercise can merely be about humankind and what pleases them. In this respect I tried to illustrate that a distinctly pneumatological perspective is not only desired but also essential for the pastor in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The essence for me is found in the unique role that humans play in the administration of the world, their whole world, including all their relations. Van Ruler provides

us a unique angle to understand our humanity and our relation to the so-called “secular”. What one sees in the Godhead, the dynamic relationships within God, how they work and function relationally is reflected by in the “dance” between husband and wife.

I have followed Van Ruler’s crucial distinction between Christology and pneumatology. The Christological categories do not fit the human reality of what we as humans are supposed to do and how we can do it, in the same way as the pneumatological categories: “What is called substitution in Christology, is called reciprocity in pneumatology. *Theonomous* reciprocity: it is the Spirit that does and gives everything. It is the Spirit, for example, who sets our will free so that we obtain a truly free will. Nevertheless, a *theonomous* reciprocity is still a genuine *reciprocity*. The chief characteristic of the Holy Spirit is that it sets us to work” (1989:35).

These are a few things that come together for me when I view the role of humans, e.g. husband and wife, humanity’s stewardship function, and the presence of God through the Spirit, aptly described by Van Ruler as a “struggle”. It is as he says: sometimes the relationship is like the one the Holy Spirit has with humankind: “One can describe this conflict as a struggle (*worsteling*), a wrestling match that is a joust (*toernooi*), a friendly game (*liefdespel*) that is more like a conversation.” (Van Ruler 1989:41)



After struggling through the many perspectives dealt with in this study, I now see more clearly what Paul is illustrating in Eph 5, speaking about the relationship between husband and wife: “<sup>32</sup>This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church.<sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” (Ephesians 5:32-33, NIV) It indeed is a profound mystery which God displayed in creation: to create man and woman after His Image. We observe the perfect dance between the persons in the Godhead and as each one works together they have the perfect relationship of mutual reciprocity. We see the dance spiritually when the Spirit works in the life of the believer. We see that this reciprocal perspective which Paul has of husband and wife, this “reciprocal relationship”, is likened to that of Christ and His church.

The human sciences, although they add rich perspectives and sobering data to the way we understand our world, can only offer human suggestions to solutions for human problems. They are truly anthropocentric and hence the potential exists within them that they can fail. The pneumatological perspective on marriage counselling, which is also part of another deeply human and imperfect science, theology, offers a theocentric approach with a unique perspective which humans need in order to make unselfish decisions in their relationships. When one looks at all the

sciences their study is limited to human data and emotional responses. Pneumatology offers a perspective to human life in view of humanity being “the image of God”, a perspective which millions of people have experienced as giving purpose to their life on this earth.

It is in the dialogical space that is specially constructed when one human looks the other human in the eye that the full personhood is placed into the cauldron of desired change. It is the pastor who represents God’s grace, gentleness and love for the couple, who can facilitate a gentle “dance” to take place, as it were. His intent is to get the partners to revision themselves even though they may be in conflict; they can have the hope that they are constantly drawn toward what God has in mind for them. They can, in spite of arriving at a point of helplessness in their conflict, hold onto divine hope for their relationship.

What I learnt from this study is that humankind needs to be attentive to the Holy Spirit to bring them to where God wants them to be. The reality of the relationship where conflict is resolved can restore to them the aliveness that every human being desires. The pneumatological model deals with real relationships where godly principles like forgiveness and redemption is not borrowed concepts, but uniquely spiritual ones.

I trust that this study has provided a renewed look at pastoral care, in that it provides a pneumatological pastoral theory for an integrated IRT praxis. These two then walk hand in hand to affect change in individuals which enhances relationships within families and eventually our nation. When all is said and done it is up to the person concerned in any relationship whether he or she will walk by the spirit of God or follow their own agenda and continue to be self-seeking and rob the relationship of its vitality.

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