CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

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One of the consequences of evolutionary theory is that man has been
called "the naked ape" (Morris 1967). This view is widely held by the
man in the street and by respected scholars. Christians who accept the
scriptures as the word of God however take a higher view of human
nature. A typical Christian response to what it means to be human is
presented by Sire (1976):

> Man is created in the image of God ... Man was created good, but
> through the Fall the image of God became defaced, though not so
> ruined as not to be capable of restoration; through the work of
> Christ God redeemed man and began to process of restoring man to
> goodness, though any given man may choose to reject that redemp-
> tion (p 29-35).

Seventh-day Adventist educators have good reason to warmly affirm
Sire's views. The difficulty with Sire's statement, and with others
like it, is that the concept "image of God" has been defined in a
variety of ways. The Christian educator who wishes to facilitate the
restoration of the image of God in his students does not always have a
sharply defined understanding of his goals.

It is not the purpose of this paper to provide a theological exposition
of the term, image of God. This has been done elsewhere (Barth 1958 p
192 ff; Berkouwer 1962; Clines 1967; Jewett 1975). It is the purpose
of this paper, rather, to explore some of the areas of contact between

human personality theory and the Christian understanding of the image
of God. The literature that presents human personality within the
context of the image of God (Genesis 1:26; 5:2 and 9:6) will be briefly
reviewed. This will be followed by an attempt to synthesise the common
elements of the literature surveyed. A model will then be advanced
that presents the concept of the image of God in a structured form.
The paper concludes with a summary statement of the significance of the
issues addressed for Christian teachers.

Definitions of the Image of God

From the time of the church fathers, scholars have wrestled with the
meaning of the term - image of God. Clines (1968) in his survey of the
relevant literature notes that:

> For Ambrose, the soul was the image; for Athanasius, rationality;
> ... for Augustine,... the image is to be seen as the triune
> faculties of the soul... for the reformers it was the state of
> original righteousness enjoyed by Adam before the Fall, the entire
> excellence of human nature including everything in which the
> nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals in
> which sense the Fall is vitiated and almost destroyed, nothing
> remaining but a ruin, confused, mutilated and tainted by impurity
> (p 54-55).

Twentieth century interpretations have been just as varied. Clines
(1969 p 55-56) drawing on the work of J J Stamm notes that the image of
God has been discussed under four categories:

(i) As a spiritual quality of man: his self-consciousness and
self-determination (Delitzsch), his talents and understanding of
the eternal, the true, and the good (Dillman), his self-
consciousness, his capacity for thought and his immortality
(Konig), his reason (Heinisch), his personality (Procksch,
Sellin), his vitality and innate nobility (B. Jacob).

(ii) The image consists in man's rule over his fellow creatures

(Holzinger, Koehler in 1936, Hempel).

(iii) The image is the term for the immediate relationship between God and man (Vischer).

(iv) The image consists in man's form which is similar to God's (Gunkel, von Rad in 1935).

It will be shown later that each of the categories described above fits comfortably within a single conceptual framework.

Clines (1968) suggests that the Old Testament view of man was that of a psychosomatic unity in which the corporeal animated man was the essential dimension of the image of God. Seventh-day Adventists agree with Clines' (1968 p 86) holistic approach when he asserts that:

> The body cannot be left out of the meaning of the image; man is a totality, and his solid flesh is as much the image of God as his spiritual capacity, creativeness or personality, since none of these higher aspects of human being can exist in isolation from the body (p 85).

Clines (1968) goes on to complete his over-view of the meaning of the image by suggesting that, "...it comes to expression not in the nature of man so much as in his activity and function. This function is to represent God's lordship to the lower orders of the creation" (p 101).

The difficulty of arriving at a commonly accepted definition of the image of God can be illustrated by comparing the views of three significant twentieth century scholars. Buber (1947, p 110) agrees that the "human capacity to give form" represents " a supreme peak of mankind" and that this capacity, "the genius of forming" demonstrates "man's imaging of God." Buber stops short of attributing "creative powers" to human kind. For him, 'creation... means only the divine summons to life hidden in non-being" (1947 p 110). However, he

strongly affirms the "existence of an autonomous instinct", the originator instinct" that is quite distinctive from the human passion to be busy. "What is important," Buber (1972) asserts, "is that by one's intensively experienced action something arises that was not there before"(p 111). While Buber does not accept the term "creativity" (man... cannot create, p 131), he strongly affirms those distinctively human capacities that are implied by the term and by which the image of God is authenticated in action. For the sake of simplicity, the term "creativity" is used in this paper to refer to the aesthetic dimension of human personality.

Barth's understanding of the image of God (1958 p 181 ff) has been well summarized by Clines (1968) as follows:

> "'Male and female created He them' must be recognized as 'the definitive explanation given by the text itself' of the image of God. The relation and distinction in mankind between male and female, man and wife, corresponds to the relation and distinction of the I and Thou in God Himself...God's image in man is the reciprocal relationship of human being with human being... the image comes to expression in the 'juxtaposition and conjunction of man and man which is that of male and female.'" For Barth then the concept of relationship is the essential element of the image of God (p 60).

For Gerstner (1962 p 89) the "ability to know (mind) and love (will) is the _imago Dei_ because in so knowing and loving God, man knows and does in finite measure what God knows and does in infinite measure." Gerstner (1962 p 92) expands these concepts to include man's rational capacities, his social interactions, his dominion over the environment and his capacity to participate in the Creator-creature relationship.

Of recent years a number of lesser known scholars have made suggestions

concerning component elements of the image of God. Jewett (1975 p 21, 32,33) suggests that it includes the powers of rational transcendence, self-determining will and the dualism of male and female. For Andreason, (1982 p 13-15) it includes the power of choice, freedom to think, freedom to act and freedom to love God. Van Leeuwen (1985) presents a broader picture of the meaning of the image. She summarises her view by suggesting that the book of Genesis speaks of God:

> as giving human beings a special kind of control over the rest of creation: to name its animals; to fill the earth and subdue it; to till...and keep the garden; to have dominion...over every living thing that moves upon the earth. Thus it seems that a significant way in which persons originally imaged God was as accountable overseers of His creation, endowed with the capabilities, the curiosity and the relative freedom to carry out the mandate.

The ways in which humans image God is further refined and extended (Van Leeuwen 1985 p 226-227) to include accountable dominion, freedom, sociability, sexuality, dignity, self-consciousness and a need for consistency.

An unidentified writer representing the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists suggests that the moral image of God includes the power of choice, freedom to think and act and to love and obey God (1988 p 85).

Sire, (1976 p 29) presents personality, self-transcendence, intelligence, morality, gegariousness and creativity as attributes representing the image of God while for Holmes (1983 p 107 ff) "only Jesus Christ fully embodies the image of the living God." Holmes sees persons "as relational beings" and then as responsible beings that can

be better understood in the context of the effect of sin and grace on both relationships and responsibilities.

A survey of the above catalogue of definitions reveals considerable diversity of opinion. However by drawing together common elements, a meaningful picture begins to emerge. An initial synthesis of the various views of the image of God is presented in Table 1.

A Synthesis of Views

Some explanatory comments will now be made about entries within each of the nine Columns of Table 1. Detailed comments concerning their significance for personality theory is reserved for later in the paper.

The entries in Column 1 embody two related concepts - firstly that of the upright human form that distinguishes man from beast and secondly that of a corporeal body - a psychosomatic unity through which all of the pshchological dimensions of human existence are expressed. This view contrasts with the view which portrays humans as possessing a body and a soul.

Column 2 entries are virtually identical and clearly refer to the human capacity to experience the richness of a world of colour, sound, smell, taste and touch with self-awareness to experience not only the perceptual richness of the world but also a sense of the self that is a part of and at the same time distinct from that which is perceived. In

TABLE 1

SYNTHESIS OF A SAMPLE OF TWENTIETH CENTURY INTERPRETATIONS OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

THEORIST	COLUMN 1 Physical Attributes the Person	COLUMN 2 Self-Awareness to Perceive	COLUMN 3 Rational Thought to Think	COLUMN 4 Emotionality to Feel	COLUMN 5 Self-Determination to Choose	COLUMN 6 Freedom to Act	COLUMN 7 Creativity to Create	COLUMN 8 Capacity to Relate	COLUMN 9
Delitzsch		Self-Consciousness			Self-Determination				
Dijkman						Talents		Understanding of Eternal True and Good	
Konig		Self-Consciousness	Capacity for Thought						Immortality
Heinsch			Reason						
Procksch, Sellin									Personality
Jacob									Vitality Innate Nobility
Iblizinger Koehler Hempel						Rule over Fellow Creatures			
Vischer								Relationship Between God and Man	
Gunkel Von Rad	Man's Form								
Clines	Corporeal Animated Man					Representative of God's Lordship over Creation	Creativeness	Spiritual Capacity	Personality
Buber							Originator Instinct		
Barth								Reciprocal Relationship	
Gerstner			Ability to Know (Mind)		Ability to Love (Will)	Dominion		Creator - Creature Relationship	
Jewett			Rational Transcendence		Self-determining Will			Dualism of Male & Female	
Andreason			Freedom to Think		Power of Choice	Freedom to Act		Freedom to Love God	
Van Leeuwen		Self-Consciousness	Consistency		Freedom	Accountable Dominion		Sociability Sexuality	Dignity
SDA Ministerial Association			Freedom to Think		Power of Choice	Freedom to Act		Freedom to Love and Obey God	
Sire		Self-Transcendence	Intelligence		Morality		Creativity	Gregariousness	Personality

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the world of academic psychology, this dimension of human personality involves the study of consciousness, sensation and perception. Thousands of articles and books have been written that describe this the most fundamental question of psychological theory - how is it that the world of matter and energy can be translated into the entirely new dimension of conscious experience? How is it that our specialised organs of sense are able to select from the "booming buzzing confusion" of physical energies surrounding us and construct a meaningful picture of the world and of our place in it? This represents the first of a series of quantum leaps that will be observed as we begin to appreciate what Eccles and Robinson (1984) have described as "the wonder of being human". In a word, Column 2 describes the human capacity to perceive.

Column 3 contains a number of entries each bearing on the human capacity to manipulate the data of consciousness in a variety of ways. This area of human personality represents those human abilities concerned with learning, memory, logical thought and its application to problem solving. Each of these topics is well represented in the psychological literature and is a fruitful field for psychological research. Column3 refers then to the human capacity to think.

No entries appear in Column 4. An initial survey of the literature does not reveal any sources that directly include emotionality in relation to the image of God. However the inclusion of emotionally loaded terms such as 'love', 'relationship' and 'sexuality' in Level 8 would suggest the emotional component of personality to be a valid inclusion. The study of human emotion is well represented in the

literature and forms a significant ingredient of human personality. Emotion is generated as individuals perceive the elements of a situation (Column 2), and reflect upon it (Column 3). As such emotion is qualitatively different from perceiving and thinking and represents a new dimension of personality. Column 4 refers then to the human capacity to experience emotion.

In the study of perception (Column 2), intelligence (Column 3) and Emotion (Column 4) Christian scholars find little that is opposed to the biblical view of human personality. The situation changes dramatically however with the contents of Column 5. A naturalistic world view that excludes the supernatural and affirms that "the cosmos exists as a uniformity of cause and effect in a closed system" (Sire 1985 p 62) comes into direct conflict with the Biblical view of human nature which assumes that humans have the capacity to choose and to determine the direction of their lives. If humans are nothing but complicated machines or smart animals, then it is reasonable to assume that Skinner (1971) is correct when he suggests that human behaviour is determined entirely by biological influences and social reinforcements. A Christian view of human personality however accepts that God-like characteristic which allows humans, at least under some circumstances to break free from external and internal influences and make a choice that is not determined by either. The capacity to express love at the level of principle and the capacity to be responsible for our actions are dependent on the capacity to choose. While our perceptions of a situation (Column 2), our rational thought about the situation (Column 3) and our emotional response to those thoughts (Column 4) may influ-

ence a choice, it is possible to use the freedom of self-determining
will to make a choice that is independent of any or all of those
factors. Column 5 refers then to the human capacity to choose.

Column 6 refers to the human capacity to translate the psychological
event of choosing into the physical event of acting or a mental event
such as accepting. Reflection on this capacity suggests that this
human characteristic is qualitatively different from any of the
characteristics described in Columns 2 to 5 and that any action depends
upon the interaction of the perceiving, thinking, feeling and choosing
that preceeded it. Exceptions such as the sucking reflex in babies or
the coughing reflex in adults would not be included in what it means to
act. However, complex tasks such as typing or driving that have become
automatic reflexes would be included as these tasks originally required
the active use of those characteristics presented in Columns 2 to 5.

Column 7 refers to the dimension of personality that reflects both the
desire and capacity for creative expression. The modalities of creative
expression include but are not limited to language, music, and the
visual arts. It is suggested that human creativity is qualitatively
different from each of the dimensions of personality discussed so far.
Its expression, however, depends on the active involvement of each of
these dimensions - perception, thinking, emotion, choice and action.

At first glance it may appear that many of the items presented in
Column 8 are unrelated. However, each item in this level is concerned
with relationships - relationships with fellow humans expressed as the

"dualism of male and female", "sociability and sexuality", and "gregar-
iousness"; and relationship with our Maker expressed as an
"understanding of the eternal, true and good", "relationship between
man and God", "freedom to love and obey God". Once again it is
intuitively obvious that behaviour at this level is qualitatively
different from each of the elements described in Columns 2 to 7. It
will also be obvious on reflection that each of the characteristics
described in Columns 2 to 7, separately or in combination, are
intimately related to the capacity to relate to fellow humans or to our
Maker. Relating to others may involve the full richness of language in
all of its creative forms including every-day communication, humour,
poetry and literature. It includes also the special relationships of
family and friends and the intimate relationships of the marriage
union.

Relationship to God includes coming into fellowship with Him through
His created works, the development of a growing communion in a life of
prayer and faith as well as the experience of private and public
worship.

The items appearing in Column 9 do not appear to fit comfortably within
the above synthesis and will be addressed individually. Seventh-day
Adventist Christians do not accept the doctrine of the "immortality of
the soul" and find no place for this concept as a part of the image of
God. The characteristics, "personality, vitality, innate nobility and
dignity" are dimensions that could well be included in an elaboration
of the concepts outlined above. Personality is a global item that

encompasses all of the levels of functioning so far described. Innate
nobility and dignity ascribe value to the human person. The term
vitality describes one aspect of the mode of functioning. None of
these terms in Column 9 add to an understanding of the levels of human
functioning and will not be referred to further.

Table 1 shows that there is considerable overlap in the views presented
and that with two exceptions, each entry has contributed to the overall
pattern. The following section of the paper relates the synthesis
presented in Table 1 to the discipline of academic psychology. The
synthesis is to be viewed as tentative. The problem of integration is
complicated by the fact that it is necessary to take account of a
widely divergent spectrum of personality theories that derive from a
number of psychological traditions.

Maddi (1972) has addressed this problem by providing a conceptual
framework that integrates the extensive array of personality theories
into a single model. Van Leeuwen (1985 p 215-230) appears to be the
first Christian scholar to recognise the potential of Maddi's
conceptual structure to provide a bridge between Christian and secular
views of human personality.

Maddi's model suggests that dimensions of personality can be addressed
at four levels. At the first level, attention is directed to those
psychological dimensions perceived to lie at the "core" of personality.
The view of personality presented here places those elements that
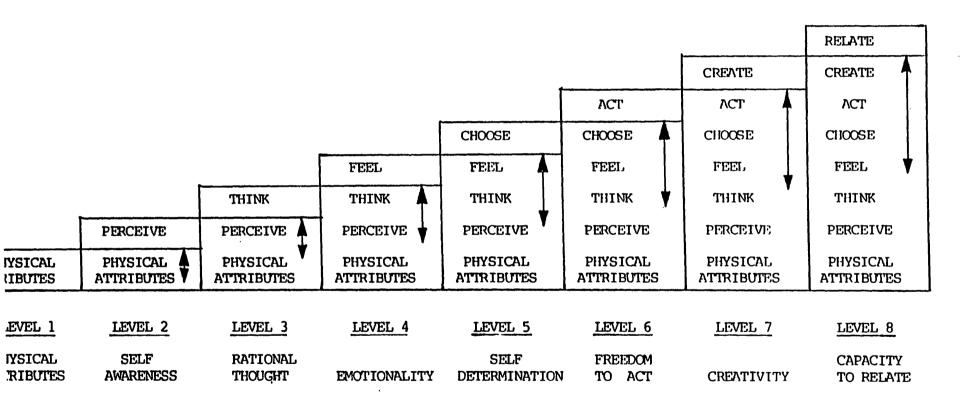define the image of God at this level. Thus according to the model

presented in this paper an individual's physical attributes, self-awareness, thinking, emotionality, self-determination, freedom to act, creativity, and capacity to relate are core characteristics that are central to human personality. Lower levels of Maddi's model represent the elaboration of personality that occurs as a result of physical growth and cultural interaction. Christian psychologists to date have contributed little that is distinctively Christian at the lower levels of Maddi's scheme. There is, as we have seen, a measure of agreement among Christian scholars about what constitutes a Christian view of core characteristics and these concepts are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 presents a schematic representation of the core characteristics of human personality as derived from Table 1 and the discussion following it. Core characteristics are presented in a structured progression that represents an ascending order of complexity each as a function of the whole person as was the case in Table 1. Reading Table 1 from left to right, each of Columns 1 to 8 represents a qualitatively different core characteristic and parallels Levels 1 to 8 in Table 2. Just as succeeding layers of an onion encapsulate all smaller layers within it, it is suggested that each new dimension of personality embodies all of those characteristics that precede it. Each of the less complex core characteristics affect the more complex characteristics. For example, changes to perceptions or emotions can affect actions or relationships. It should be noted that the model also allows for the converse. For example, changes to actions or relationships can also affect perceptions or emotions. These reciprocal relationships are represented in Table 2 by two-way arrows.

TABLE 2

A CUMULATIVE HIERARCHICAL MODEL OF CORE CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

DERIVED FROM CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

							RELATE
						CREATE	CREATE
					ACT	ACT	ACT
				CHOOSE	CHOOSE	CHOOSE	CHOOSE
			FEEL	FEEL	FEEL	FEEL	FEEL
		THINK	THINK	THINK	THINK	THINK	THINK
	PERCEIVE	PERCEIVE	PERCEIVE	PERCEIVE	PERCEIVE	PERCEIVE	PERCEIVE
PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES	PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES	PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES	PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES	PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES	PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES	PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES	PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6	LEVEL 7	LEVEL 8
PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES	SELF AWARENESS	RATIONAL THOUGHT	EMOTIONALITY	SELF DETERMINATION	FREEDOM TO ACT	CREATIVITY	CAPACITY TO RELATE

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The model equates the human core characteristics of physical attributes perceiving, thinking, feeling, choosing, acting, creating and relating with those dimensions of human personality that define of the image of God. The model allows us to relate any of the lower levels of core characteristics - perceiving, thinking, feeling - to the image. However the image of God in humans finds its fullest expression in the human capacity to relate to fellow humans and to the Creator. The model thus provides a means by which Cline's (1969) four categories of image, discussed earlier in this paper, can be integrated within a simple conceptual framework.

The model presented in Table 2 builds on mature Christian thinking and adds to it a structured form and relates it to the literature of psychology. It thus provides in Maddi's (1972) terms a model of the core characteristics of human personality.

It is not likely that there will be complete agreement among personality theorists for some time to come. Ratzsch (1986) observes that "one's expectations, mind-set, conceptual framework and in some cases, specific beliefs, have some effect on one's perception" ... and that "perception is an active process, and not ... the passive process of having things outside of ourselves imprint objective information on our minds through the neutral medium of our senses"(p 49). Thus any conclusions reached on the nature of human personality inevitably will be tainted by previously held beliefs. Personality theorists are thus

trapped by the typical Catch 22 situation. For this reason, it is most unlikely that personlity theorists would ever arrive at an adequate view of human personality theory without the aid of Divine revelation.

Significance for Christian Educators

What then is the significance of the foregoing theory for Christian educators? Three points will suffice at this time:

(i) One is confronted with a sense of wonder when considering the mysteries of human perception, thinking, feeling, choosing, acting, creating and relating. How for example, do we construct a view of the world out there, synthesising it as we do from the patterned input of electrochemical impulses from the sensory nerves and from other areas of the brain? Our teaching should reflect that sense of wonder.

(ii) We are not likely to develop an accurate understanding of human nature unless we incorporate into theory those dimensions of personality that are clearly revealed in the scriptures - for example the human capacity to choose. We need to be continually aware of the theological implications of the material that we teach and ensure that all psychological theory presented is in harmony with scriptural principles. Students need to be made aware of the theological implications when this is not the case.

(iii) As noted in the introduction to this paper, humans were created perfect in every respect but through the Fall, the image of God has been defaced. The human capacities to perceive, to think, to experience emotion, to choose, to act, to create and to relate have been weakened and distorted. The challenge of Christian education to restore in humans the image of their Maker involves then not just the restoration of a right relationship with God, but touches on all of those areas by which the image is defined - human relationships, sexuality, conscience, creativity, our relationship to the environment and all of the core characteristics upon which they are built. What a challenge!

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