A MODEL FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING
WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

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The model of pastoral counseling ministry developed in this dissertation is intended to make visible a comprehensive resource to the pastoral counselor for counseling with some African American women. The problem of the dissertation is to make visible theological and psychological-ethical resources for the construction of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for counseling some African American women clients. The model contributes to the conceptualization of the nature, purpose, and meaning of pastoral counseling with some African American women who experience themselves as estranged from self, God, and others, and who seek Christian grace.

In order to solve the problem, I analyzed the historical and socio-cultural experiences that most African American women share in this culture in Chapter II. Implications for a model emerged. Traditional theological and theoretical sources informed by the locus of womanist theological response provided a means for developing a model of pastoral counseling ministry that attends to the spiritual need for grace in the lives of some African American women.
In Chapter III, the theoretical formulation of Heinz Kohut was explicated and analyzed for its potential to contribute to the theoretical construction of a model of pastoral counseling ministry with some African American women with spiritual concerns. Self psychology method and theory, in conversation with my experience, the experiences of my clients and womanist theological criteria, provided a framework for organizing and analyzing data with an emphasis on intervention.

In Chapter IV, Paul Tillich's theology of the self provided a conceptual framework for organizing and analyzing the historical, social, and ultimate experiences of the human being. Tillich's theological anthropology, in conversation with my experience, the experiences of my clients and womanist theological criteria, contributed to the construction of a theology of pastoral counseling ministry based on the norm of grace.

Chapter V is the first movement for the construction of my proposed model. I constructed a model of practical correlation and engaged a conversation with the womanist, theoretical and theological themes that I had selected as resources for solving the problem of this dissertation.

In Chapter VI, I constructed my model, a theology of pastoral counseling ministry with some African American women, using the norm of grace. Chapter VII demonstrates the model based upon my experience counseling some African American women at Georgia Association for Pastoral Counseling in Atlanta, Georgia.

Chapter VIII is the conclusion. I summarized the problem of the dissertation and the significance of the study, reported the conclusions of the study, and recommended further research.
The significance of the study is that a comprehensive contextual pastoral counseling resource using holistic variables is now visible to the pastoral counselor for counseling African American women who experience themselves as estranged from self, God, and others, and who have spiritual concerns and a need for grace. The variables that are visible include analysis of: (a) her personal contextual experiences; (b) her relationship with self, God, and others; (c) her internalized psychosocial images; and (d) the theory and method of intervention.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

My purpose in this dissertation is to develop a theory of pastoral counseling informed by my understanding of Paul Tillich's philosophical-theology of human being and my understanding of Heinz Kohut's analysis of how the self structures psychologically in relationship. This theory proposes that the self structures and restructures meaning in the context of historical socio-cultural, and ultimate relationships. Some African American women clients who I have counseled have reported that they have experienced the therapeutic relationship as a means of grace in their lives, helping them to experience self meaning in a significantly different and helpful way. My understanding of what they are reporting to me is analogous to but not the same as the experience of empathic introspection in the therapeutic relationship, articulated by Kohut; and Tillich's philosophical theory of New Being.

The intent of the project is to explicate and correlate the lines of relation between three foci: (1) my understanding of New Being as a norm of pastoral counseling conceptualized in the context of the African American women's experience of race and gender oppression within the context of western culture; (2) my understanding of Paul Tillich's philosophical theory of human being and New Being in relation to the existential condition of estrangement; and (3) my understanding of Kohut's theory of how the self
becomes pathological in relationship, and how the self is restored psychologically in relationships. The dialogue between these three will provide form for a proposed model of pastoral counseling for some African American women clients.

The rationale is based on my opinion that the internal needs of some African American women clients are not met adequately by the social and political focus of the church community, nor adequately by the field of mental health. An in-depth, interdisciplinary approach is needed to attend to the nature and dynamics of the internalized psycho-social experience of race oppression which constitutes the personal, social, and cultural reality of suffering. I will redefine the concepts of my understanding of Kohut’s empathy, and Tillich’s philosophical theory of New Being based upon my experience with some African American women and my understanding of the need for a theory of pastoral counseling which is adequate for counseling some African American women clients.

**Thesis**

My thesis is that the theory of New Being and the concept of empathy are important for the formulation of a theory of pastoral counseling which seeks to address the psycho-social suffering of some African American women clients. Race oppression, a normative experience for African American women, differentiates her experience of her self from that of white women. A further distinction is that white women, by their cultural location, perpetuate the experience of race oppression among this population. It is necessary to discover resources for pastoral counseling theory from within the cultural context that will be sensitive to the particular experiences of some African American women clients.
I propose that Heinz Kohut’s theory of empathy is culturally sensitive. Kohut developed self psychology from within a patriarchal framework to account for the phenomena of narcissism, and to develop a theoretical frame for responding to pathology of the self. In the theory building process his critique of classical psychoanalysis led him to a theory of self psychology and to the explication of normative narcissistic development of the self and the conditions of psychopathology. Although his control clinical population was white middle-class males of western culture. I propose that his theory of empathic introspection may be adequate for building pastoral counseling theory for some African American women in western culture. This is the case because I have applied the theory and method of self psychology counseling with some African American women clients. This theory and method have the potential to organize and analyze the personal experiences of African American women clients and to respond to the results of the analysis with treatment. Further, this theory has the potential to serve the end of the goal of this project.

I am an African American woman pastoral counselor and have experience with some African American women clients who report experiencing themselves as feeling estranged from themselves, others, and God. The experience of cultural racism deprives some developing African American women of adequate mirroring and idealizing relationships. One reason for inadequate mirroring and idealizing opportunities in this culture is the traditional cultural and social location of African American women which functions to limit the accessibility of empathy.

In light of the social location of African American women, I will redefine empathy and New Being in terms of a theory of pastoral counseling which is adequate for counseling
some African American women clients, acknowledging the experience of social and cultural racism and its effects on their psychological development. I propose that my understanding of the concept of empathic introspection in self psychology as formulated by Kohut, and my understanding of Tillich’s philosophical theory of New Being have the potential to contribute to the formulation of a pastoral counseling theory for counseling some African American women clients.

The proposed model is both psychological and theological. My purpose is to engage and correlate the phenomena of narcissism and estrangement, and the concepts of empathic introspection and grace.

The Problem

The persons to whom my theory of pastoral counseling seek to respond are those African American women clients who are suffering from a sense of falling apart which is manifest in therapy as a crisis of being dynamically divided and estranged from themselves, others, and God. Various authors have written about the importance of understanding the psychological adaptation tasks of African American clients for the purpose of assessment and treatment.

Arthur C. Jones, an African American psychologist, in his article, “Psychological Functioning in African-American Adults: Some Elaborations on a Model, with Clinical Applications,” suggests four major areas, independent and interrelated, that are important in the assessment process of African Americans: (1) developing a means to cope with racial oppression; (2) maintaining desired influences with respect to the majority culture; (3)
establishing roots within traditional African American culture; and (4) the influence of personal experiences and endowments. Jones continues,

Racial oppressions is a fact of life for all Americans, regardless of social class or geographical location. This is a natural outcrop of the need of majority Anglo culture to have objects of projection for various undesirable personal characteristics. . . . The psychological defense mechanism of project appears to explain well the dynamics of oppression. The powerful symbolic meanings mediated by color make African people particularly vulnerable to such projections.

. . . The high visibility of African people (because of skin color) serves to maintain this convenient use of dark skinned people as a projective repository. . . . In adulthood, this also requires that the individual develop strategies for dealing with experiences of race oppression.

Optimal African American male and female psychological development depends upon “conscious, deliberate strategic, reactions to racism, rather than unconscious reactive strategies which mask unconscious self doubt and insecurities.”

For the African American male, racial oppression, from the majority culture that is dominated by White males, is most intense and difficult at the time of young adulthood. White males find the young adult transition quite challenging as well . . . societal domination by White males compensates underlying feeling of insecurity accompanying attempts to develop masculinity . . . in the process, White male’s insecurity is expressed in part via the collective projection of threatening personal material onto African American males.

The activity of the majority culture may inflict underlying wounds of insecurity which manifest in compensatory behavior in the African American male such as

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2Ibid., 298.

3Ibid., 299.

4Ibid.
hypermasculinity, womanizing, internalization of racist projections in the absence of integration of a self appreciation or “confident masculinity.”

African American females have similar experiences as their male counterparts in confronting racism as cultural projection in young adulthood. Jones wrote:

While Black women have been seen as projective objects of White males’ unintegrated sexual passions, yet stripped of the delicate ‘pedestal’ status assigned White females, with many of the Black men internally demasculinized, some African American females have been left having to ‘do it all’ (work, raise children, etc.), with little pay or personal reward. Moreover, the essentially White women’s liberation movement has offered very little to the African American woman, whose dual struggles with racism and sexism have been different from the experiences of middle class White females. In fact, White women have sometimes been viewed as co-equal oppressors, in partnership with White males.5

Some consequences of the racial threat to African American women in this culture are the reactive adaptive defenses that act as powerful survival mechanisms, but also have the affect of alienating her from parts of herself. Alienation from parts of her self creates psychological vulnerability that manifests in behavior that is the consequence of unconscious adaptive reactivity to racial projection. One priority for a theory of pastoral counseling for this population would focus on personal resources of the individual for building conscious, thoughtful, adaptive strategies.

The reactive defenses that result in alienation of African American women led to the formulation of the problem. My conceptualization of the problem in this dissertation is influenced by my personal experience in therapy and by my observations practicing pastoral counseling at Georgia Association of Pastoral Care (GAPC) as a practicum resident from 1995 to the present working with African American women clients. Typically they have

5Ibid., 300.
sought pastoral counseling in their religious community prior to their experience at GAPC. Their presenting problems are related to feeling estranged from themselves, others, and God. They often begin by admitting feeling depressed and with little or no self-esteem. Wanting to be included in their sense of life as being important to God, themselves, and others, they are bewildered to find ways to image themselves in life roles that are meaningful. Not knowing how to respond to their self needs, they have a sense of things falling apart and they don’t feel they have the resources to find meaning.

The African American women clients with whom I have worked range from age 30 to 62 years. Most are in the childbearing stage of life. Middle and lower class socio-economic status, they are in professional and service occupations. They are divorced in most instances and are the primary caregivers in family of origin roles and in nuclear family roles. They are active in their church communities, but feel distant from others; they are lonely and depressed. A common goal of therapy for some of them is to overcome feelings of estrangement in relationships by a process of getting to know themselves, God, and other selves.

It is my feeling that some of my clients’ unconscious adaptive strategies that may be useful for coping in the larger dominant society create vulnerability in regard to adaptive strategies for being in generative relationships. They seek life mentoring from an African American woman pastoral counselor whom they sense can understand their lack and guide them to themselves, to God, and to other selves. In the development of the therapeutic relationship, the way to self is uncovered through a process of thoughtful introspection.
In helping my African American women clients overcome alienation, I have found Kohut’s and Tillich’s formulations helpful. My clients suffer from what I understand as a problem of the self as developed in the work of Heinz Kohut’s narcissistic development of the personality, and from what I understand as the condition of estrangement as understood by Paul Tillich. The problem, characterized both psychologically and theologically, prevents strengthening of the vulnerable self. Significant parts of themselves are tucked beneath defenses, alluded to previously in this chapter. They carry the conscious and unconscious adaptive armor of shame, grandiosity, idealization of dominant cultural norms, and are emotionally distant. In addition to the personal injuries of the self from early relationship experiences, they suffer from injuries of the self as a result of experiences of negative racial images ascribed to them in this culture. Their sense of feeling estranged is the result of both personal developmental injuries to the self and injuries sustained in direct relationship to their socio-cultural location. It is my feeling that the problem of feeling estranged, lonely, and cut off from self, others, and God, is a reality that has been, in part, projected onto the African American woman because of her socio-cultural location in western society. I propose that contributions of traditional psychology toward a theory of pastoral counseling for this population may be found in the self psychological theory developed by Kohut. I will describe three vignettes from my clinical practice to explore my proposal.

Clinical Vignettes

Vignette One

B is a 45-year old African American woman client. She has a master’s degree and teaches computer science. She is divorced and has one teenage son who is in his first year
of college. She is the second oldest of five children. B came to counseling because she felt sad. B felt she had to do it all for herself and others, that there was no one who seemed to be concerned with her needs. Most importantly for her, B felt that she had spent a lifetime channeling her resources to support others at the expense of knowing and supporting herself. She declared that she came to therapy to find out who she was and what she wanted. Her selection of a woman African American pastoral counselor was deliberate. Early in the therapy process her grandiosity and her fragile sense of self surfaced. Deprived of adequate mirroring and idealizing relationships to strengthen her fragile self, she refers to herself as having low self-esteem and a negative self-image. She attributes her experience of her self as the consequence of her family of origin role of having to be strong and very efficient, on the one hand, and to her cultural role a Black woman, on the other hand. In her awareness, her sense of feeling estranged is an experience that is in part a consequence of her socio-cultural reality. Based on my understanding of self psychology, B suffers from a psychological disorder of the self which is described by Kohut as narcissistic personality disorder. Her psychological disorder of the self resulted from the internalization of family of origin relationships influenced by cultural location, and other significant relationships which in turn created a situation that she experiences and reports as estranged from her self, God, and others. B’s experience is analogous to, but not the same as my understanding of the human predicament of estrangement conceptualized by Paul Tillich.

**Vignette Two**

J is a 44-year old African American female. She is divorced and has one daughter who is married with no children. J is the oldest of five children. Her sister died when she
was five. She is the sole surviving daughter. Her presenting problem for therapy was her desire to get to know herself. She said she felt disconnected from God, others, and herself. J said her only child graduated from college and married, therefore, her daughter was no longer in need of J’s care. Her parents are well advanced in age. She lives alone and has no friends outside the family of origin. She is the primary caregiver emotionally for her family of origin. J said she had accomplished more than she had hoped in life in a practical and material sense, but felt sad because she had lived her life to someone else’s drumbeat. She said when she came to therapy she was aware of that she was like someone who had been asleep all her life, and she was made aware of that reality because she felt awake in the therapy relationship with me. Her goal became leaving therapy awake. She likened her forty-five minutes of therapy to a Christian hymn, “Amazing Grace.” J placed emphasis upon the stanza which included, “I once was lost, but now I’m found, blind, but now I see. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.” Exploring her fragile self, she was able to talk about her need to sit with an African American woman pastoral counselor who knew what it may be like to grow up an African American female in an environment where among other personal difficulties, the pain of racial oppression must be reckoned with. She reported that after caring for others it was her turn to be cared for, encouraged, and affirmed, but her turn never came, not even from her family. These experiences saddened her, giving her a false image of herself as being able to do without. Early in the therapy she said, “being a strong African American woman is like never quite doing enough and being objectified as if my feelings really don’t matter at all.” Exploring her concern, she discovered that years of disappointment had cheated her from developing
the capacity to receive self caring. She surmised that the problem was spiritual and that therapy was the “grace” that she needed in her everyday experiencing of herself. Her conceptualization of grace is analogous to how I understand Tillich’s conceptualization of New Being. Based on my understanding of Kohut’s self psychology, I theorize that the client’s experience of being awake or of experiencing grace is brought on by the therapist’s empathic introspection. In the therapy relationship she felt a sense of her self, not estranged from her self. She began to develop a curiosity about herself. She wanted to have that feeling of herself outside of the therapy room. The processes of the therapist’s empathic introspection and J’s transmuting internalizations as a result of optimal frustration in the relationship would assist J in her pursuit.

**Vignette Three**

S is a sixty-three old African American woman. Who resides in Atlanta and was raised by her parents in rural Georgia. S is the second eldest of seven siblings. Her oldest brother, who was like a second father, died of stomach cancer. One of her sisters died of complications of breast cancer. Relationships with her mother, who is ninety-six, and her father, who died of cancer five years ago, were reported as good and close with an emphasis on closeness with her mother. Relationships with her siblings were close with a special closeness with the sibling who died of breast cancer. The relationship with her older brother and a female sibling born after her is characterized as close and conflictual. Her parents were divorced when she was a teen. Her relationship with her father did not resume until she was in her late forties. The reunion was “healing.” S was married at the age of twenty at the direction of her mother. Her mother worked out the marriage arrangements with a
friend in an adjoining county. S married a soldier and traveled with him, bearing their children until he retired from the Army. S divorced her husband and established her home in Atlanta upon his retirement from the military. S described herself as a dutiful child and woman in regard to her relationships with her parents, siblings, spouse, children, God, and other individuals in her life. Having experienced a heart attack and the breakup of a long-standing relationship with a significant male, S reported that she looked inside herself and was discouraged to find her situation as a sense of being estranged from God, who she believed was the source and strength of her life. Assured of her tradition of God, she attempted to align herself with God through pious activity. These attempts proved fruitless and she was prompted to come to pastoral counseling to explore "eternal" concerns. She found herself in my presence in a pastoral counseling relationship after having pursued her concern with three pastoral counselors prior to our relationship. She purposefully sought me out because I am an African American woman pastoral counselor. "Where from and where to am I?", she asked me in our initial session. She felt that she had been dutiful in all her relationships in life personally, socially, historically, and ultimately, but had a sense of having missed herself, others, and God. She said that she felt estranged in relationships. She reported that her reflection about her experience of her self left her without a clue as to what to do, how to proceed or even how to get at thinking about her self, God, and other selves in relationship. Her goal for therapy was to uncover sources in counseling which could help her connect with herself, God, and others, by attending to her longing for evidence of an encounter with the eternal. S's experience of my attentive listening and attending to her inner world of reality left her first curious, and then enabled her to interpret
meaning for herself in relationship with me. The persona of the dutiful self camouflaged the fragile sense of self, which emerged in the counseling process. S suffered from what I understand as the defected self, a psychological disorder of the self as conceptualized by Kohut.

The three vignettes describe persons who have in common a presenting problem of feeling estranged from themselves and environment in some profound way. Based upon my understanding of self psychology, chronic empathic failure in the family of origin environment failed to strengthen the fragile sense of self, creating a disorder of the self. Family of origin roles and rules that are influenced by race and gender in the larger society have reinforced defenses to defend against the anxiety of fragmenting of the grandiose self. The socio-cultural experience of gender and race compounds the disorders of the self because of the internalization of distorted racial images that further define them. Socio-cultural expectations further deprive them of affirming relationships of the self.

Review of the Literature

My training at GAPC has introduced me to several models for understanding psychological human development. Feminist psychologists and psychotherapists suggest these models be based upon the development of the healthy Caucasian male of western culture and possess characteristics of a patriarchal world view. Patriarchy refers to the organization of society according to the theory of supremacy of the Caucasian male in western culture. Patriarchy raises issues of power, race, and gender.⁶ Sometimes patriarchy

is harmful to persons who are not Caucasian and male because models of personality developed in this world-view are not always helpful for understanding psychological development of women. The limit of traditional mental health has been “to invest White middle-class values with the legitimacy of psychological normalcy.”

Feminist psychologists and psychotherapists have done much to bring the issues of power and gender to the discussion of human development. Feminist criticism of the field of psychotherapy resulted in the development of feminist therapy in the 1970s. Feminist therapists attempt to re-conceptualize the goals of therapy and the role of the therapist in order to make the therapy process compatible with the new theories of women’s psychology and the goals of the women’s movement. Feminist therapy is distinguishable from the traditional and from the nonexist approaches to therapy. The distinguishing feature of feminist therapy is the analysis of the social, political, and economic depression that affects women individually and as a group.

The crucial aspect of the work of feminist therapists that is important for my concern for this proposal is in helping clients distinguish the situations in their lives of which they are personally responsible from circumstances and intrapsychic attitudes that reflect broader


8 Ibid., 269.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.
social problems. With an explicit commitment to what is conceived as feminist values, acknowledgment of the need for a race and gender specific approach in the development of theory distinguish feminist therapy from other approaches to therapy. I believe feminist values and guidelines are important. Some of these guidelines are:

- Recognition of women’s oppression based on gender, race, and class
- Relevance of socio-cultural context
- Focus on women’s empowerment
- Diverse therapeutic modalities
- Demystification of power in the therapeutic relationship
- The therapist and other women as role models
- The therapist’s ongoing self-examination and reflection on her values
- Encouragement of growing experiences in addition to therapy.

Clearly these guidelines are compatible with and useful for the development of theory which includes the experiences of some African American women clients. There is very little theory of therapy that explicitly considers the race and gender of African American women in the development of the theory. Further, there is very little research that includes the socio-cultural experiences of gender and race of African American women clients in the development of the theory.

A review of feminist psychotherapy well illustrates this. Jean Baker Miller in her pioneering work in the field emphasizes the relevance of social and political reality in

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11Ibid., 270.

12Ibid., 271.
women's development. Miller, a feminist psychologist, and her associates of the Stone Center are developing a self in relation theoretical framework for understanding women's psychology. Miller affirms that relationships are an important starting point for women's functioning. She takes seriously the impact of the social and political reality of women in regard to understanding women's psychology. Miller raises questions as to the methods available to women to enhance their own development. She insists on the careful consideration of the cultural reality of women's psychic experiences and the problem culture presents when discussing issues of transformation and change.\footnote{Jean Baker Miller, \textit{Toward a New Psychology of Women} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 83.}

One example of feminist attending to race is Beverly Greene. A feminist psychologist, Greene enters the feminist discussion by pointing out the strengths of feminist therapy for developing a model of therapy, which considers the presence of race in therapy with women of color. She explores feminist therapy guidelines and proposes an important strength:

Of particular relevance for women of color seeking psychotherapy is that a central focus of feminist therapy is to empower women. 'Empowerment is usually understood as a process of helping a powerless individual or group to gain necessary skills, knowledge or influence to acquire control over their lives.' Feminist approaches have helped women of color to acknowledge deleterious effects of sexism, racism, and elitism: to deal with negative feelings imposed by their status as ethnic minorities; to perceive themselves as causal agents in achieving solutions to their problems; to understand the interplay between the external environment and the inner reality; and to perceive opportunities to change the responses from the wider society.\footnote{Comas-Diaz and Greene, \textit{Women of Color}, 273.}
Unfortunately, the disadvantage of the application of feminist therapy guidelines has been the almost exclusive focus on gender issues with scant or little focus upon race issues in the socio-cultural situation which has determining effect upon the psychology of women. This "contradiction," as Beverly Greene terms it, reflects a social distortion, not the inadequacy of these guidelines for providing therapy with women of color.

Some characteristics of the experiences of women of color which are distinctive from White women's experiences are identified by Greene: (1) skin color is a determining variable of life experiences in the United States; (2) ethnicity remains from generation to generation with no chance of moving into mainstream America as afforded some second generation European women; (3) racial and gender alliances are essential; (4) white women have greater social acceptability primarily because they insure the Caucasian race; and (5) women of color endure racial oppression from dominant and from within ethnic/racial groups. . . . Women of color share with men of color the experiences of racism, identity conflict, oppression, colonialism, and cultural adaptation. . . . African American women attempt to cope with [these] racial life stressors with the same character-logical and defensive structures she uses to respond to other life stressors.\textsuperscript{15}

Greene proposes a form of therapy for women of color that she has coined a feminist ethno-specific approach. A feminist ethno-specific approach is an approach which pairs the woman client with a therapist of the same ethnic/racial background. Her rationale:

\begin{enumerate}
\item The therapist can understand the culture/ethnicity/race of the client from a first hand experience;
\item the therapist can serve as an affective and more adequate role model for the client because a therapist from the same ethnic/racial group can, through her
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 5.
presence, raise the client’s consciousness as to what a woman of that background can accomplish; (3) the therapeutic relationship can be more equalized because therapist and client share the same culture/ethnicity/race, thus the balance of power in the therapeutic context, rather than reproducing the inequalities of the world at large, better approximates the feminist philosophy of therapy; and (4) the therapist is more likely to be invested in the client’s success in therapy.¹⁶

This model considers variables that are needed in all therapeutic relationships in order for change to occur. Greene’s emphasis on racial sensitivity is directed toward the therapist who is encouraged to be gender and race specific in a therapeutic approach with women of color. Greene’s feminist ethno-specific approach, particularly her emphasis upon gender and race specific sensitivity is related to my research concern and is included for that purpose.

With Greene’s emphasis in mind, I am aware that Kohut, in his formulation of self psychology theory did speculate concerning the importance of considering environmental factors as well as genetic and dynamic factors in the construction of personality. I propose that self psychology of Kohut can contribute to the correction for concerns such as identification of the therapist with the client, inappropriate use of the balance of power in the therapeutic relationship, and is adequate for developing a model of therapy to respond to the psychotherapeutic needs of some African American women clients for empathy during early development, and therapeutic restructuring.

**Womanist Theology**

One resource available for an African American woman when she reflects upon her self as feeling estranged from self, God, and others in relationship has been the biblical

¹⁶Ibid., 276.
narrative and the African American denominational church. Womanist theology is an ecumenical and interdisciplinary discipline that attends to the voice and experiences of African American women. The designation womanist is based on the definitions found in Alice Walker’s book, *In Search of Mother’s Garden.*

Womanist theologians explore Walker’s definitions in an interdisciplinary and ecumenical light. The most common understanding of womanist is that a womanist is committed to an integrated analysis of race, gender, and class. This commitment arises from a deep concern for the inadequacy of traditional feminist and Black theological modes of discourse. Feminists have a history of ignoring race and class issues. Black theologians have a history of ignoring gender and class issues. Both Feminist and Black theological analysis have begun to explore issues of race, gender, and class. Womanist discourse retains Feminist, Black theological and Eurocentric modes of analysis. Womanist analysis is biased and understands that all forms of theological discourse are open for reconsideration and critique. This critique seeks a diverse and faithful community that includes the experiences of African American women. The uniqueness of womanist thought is that it emerges from and remains a part of the communities it challenges, namely the African American religious community and the traditional academic discourse.

Womanist theologians Renita Weems and Delores Williams enter the conversation with their various contribution to the Hagar Sarai narrative. Weems in her book, *Just a

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Sister Away, explicates the biblical narrative of the relationship between Sarai and Hagar and relates the story to particular aspects of the relationship between African American women and white women in America since slavery. Biblical themes of race and socio-economic oppression are used to conceptualize the contemporary relationship between African American women and white women under patriarchy in America. Weems places emphasis upon retelling the story from the perspective of oppressed Hagar as a means of including Hagar’s experience in the story of relationship, and thereby to include the African American woman’s experiences in the story of women’s relationships in western culture. Weems writes: “... whether we are Black or white we are all Hagar’s daughters. When we feel abandoned, abused, betrayed, and banished: when we find ourselves in need of another woman’s help (a friend, neighbor, colleague, relative, stranger, another man’s wife): we, like Hagar, are in need of a woman who will ‘sister’ us, not exploit us.

Womanist theologian Delores Williams responds to Weems’ work. “Weems is correct: None of us [women] is safe from the ravages of a society which makes room for only a chosen few and keeps at bay a vast majority... womanist and feminist can build bridges over which future generations of women can cross from bondage to freedom.”

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19Renita Weems, Just a Sister Away (San Diego, CA: Laura Media, 1988), 17.

20Ibid.

21Ibid.

Feminist and womanist theologians agree that the Bible is meaningful to women as they struggle to value themselves, and should not be discarded as a valuable resource.\textsuperscript{23} For womanist theologian Delores Williams, the question may be posed in this way, “How can oppressed people develop a positive and productive quality of life in a situation where the resources for doing so are not visible?” I pose the ethical question: “What theological and therapeutic resources are visible for faithfully counseling African American women clients that considers their socio-cultural location in the development of theory and practice?” While the answer to that question is very little, Williams identified womanist theological critique as the locus for correcting the oppressive patriarchal oriented interpretation of the Bible and the African American denominational church.

\textbf{African American Womanist Pastoral Counseling}

African American womanist pastoral counseling theories are emerging. While there is no comprehensive model of African American womanist pastoral counseling that considers the social, cultural, and intrapsychic dimensions of the African American woman’s reality, there are some womanist pastoral counselors who have developed theories for responding to the pastoral counseling needs for this population. Carolyn McCrary’s theory of interdependence and Linda Hollies’ theory of the contribution of sister to sister toward wholeness represents pioneering efforts to construct theory that is relevant for a theory of pastoral counseling that responds to the nature and function of relationships for this population.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 193.
Carolyn McCrary’s theory proposes to examine the effects of the internalized oppression of racism and sexism on the lives of African American women. She further proposes to develop a method of interdependence that will enable this population to move beyond internalized harmful images given to them in culture, toward health and wholeness.\textsuperscript{25} Linda Hollies also developed theory that considers the social and cultural location, and intrapsychic needs of this population. Her theory proposes “sistering” as the movement toward connection in relationships for this population.\textsuperscript{26} In summary, my goal in this dissertation is to develop a model that is comprehensive, which takes seriously the social location of African American women and their own voice.

Definitions

Essential for this dissertation is the use of the terms: model, pastoral counseling, and African American women. A model is a conceptual guide outlining the process of pastoral counseling with African American women. It is interdisciplinary in nature drawing on psychology and theology.

Pastoral counseling is the ministry of grace to some African American women clients in the context of a pastoral counseling relationship wherein the revelation of God is experienced. Pastoral counseling proceeds in the context of a caring relationship between a pastoral counselor and a client wherein the mediums of reason, imagination, and revelation are employed.


The term, African American women, refers to the experiences of the historical and socio-cultural events, consequences, and feelings that are specifically related to race and gender that are shared by all African American women, regardless of their circumstances in life. Further, I am referring to the psychological affects that the judgements of race and gender have made upon the African American woman’s experiences in this culture.

**Project Design**

The project design is chapter by chapter. In this chapter, Introduction, the dissertation proposes to develop a theory of pastoral counseling with some African American women clients, which is based on the psychological theory of empathy and the theological concept of grace. This theory of pastoral counseling proposes that the self restructure meaning in pastoral counseling through the process of grace. New Being, experienced as grace, is facilitated by the mediums of revelation and reason in the context of an empathic relationship when transmuting internalization occurs and result in the strengthening of the fragile self, which overcomes the feelings of existential estrangement. The fundamental problem of the self that is addressed in this research is characterized as the “situation” or “common human experience” of estrangement from self, God, and other selves, and the desire for self value which is analogous to self-esteem or self-acceptance.

While distinct in nature, the psychological theory of empathy and the theological concept of grace are interwoven in the therapeutic process of healing. Based on my experience, I believe that healing for some African American women clients involves a process of internalizing grace which they refer to as the experience of Christian Grace and is conceptualized by self psychology as self empathy. Moreover, I believe that the
internalization of empathy during the therapeutic process is one manifestation of the concept of grace. Further, I believe that the concept of grace represents a normative approach for pastoral counseling with some African American women.

The theory of empathy and the concept of grace are distinct concepts in this project. I believe that the psychological healing process involves grace as a consequence of the client's capability to internalize the function of empathic introspection of the therapist.

In Chapter II, I present an analysis of the historical and socio-cultural experience of some ancient African American women and some African American women under the impact of patriarchalism in western culture. This analysis is intended to raise implications and questions that guide the task of developing a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women clients. This analysis is intended to reveal important consistent patterns in the history of African American women that relate to her self-experience and self-understanding in relations with her self, God, and others. This analysis is further intended to examine the impact of socio-cultural variables that are brought to bear upon an African American woman's personality and the resources she utilizes in her meaning-making project. Questions and implications for a model of pastoral counseling will be drawn from the patterns made visible in this analysis.

In Chapter III, I delineate my understanding of the self psychology of Heinz Kohut to describe: (1) His conceptualization of what constitutes pathology in the self; (2) how the self structures in response and in relationship to its environment; and (3) how the self structures in the context of an empathic therapeutic relationship through the process of transmuting internalization. I suggest that the self psychology approach to personality
development has the potential to contribute to the development of a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women clients. I redefine empathy as analogous to New Being as defined in the Introduction of this project, and therefore, analogous to my understanding of the theological norm of New Being/Grace as conceptualized by Tillich. Detailing how Kohut’s ideas meet the criteria developed in Chapter II will do this.

In Chapter IV, I present my understanding of Paul Tillich’s theology of the self. My purpose is to illustrate Tillich’s theory of how the self responds and develops a sense of cohesion and community in relationship with the self, God, and other selves. I explicate Tillich’s understanding of the theological ethical, and genetic (related to the development of something) dynamics of the predicament of the self in regard to the nature of the self’s faith interactions with its socio-cultural, historical, and ultimate dimensions and centers of value and meaning. Tillich understands the self’s meaning and valuing center to be triadically structured. I suggest the relevance for construction of a theological anthropology for some African American women using Tillich’s theory. I suggest that my understanding of Tillich’s reference to the concept of grace as God’s transforming potential for the self have the potential to contribute to a theology of pastoral counseling with some African American women.

In Chapter V, I move toward the construction of a method of practical correlation. Practical correlation is the interdisciplinary conversation between Womanist pastoral counseling, the Tillichian concept of grace, and the Kohutian concept of empathy. This is the first movement toward the construction of a comprehensive model of pastoral counseling that is adequate to contribute to a model of pastoral counseling with African
American women using the norm of grace, experienced as Christian grace by my clients. The self will be described from my understanding of Tillich's theology of human being, the categories of being and the meaning of participation. I suggest the relevance of Tillich's theory of the nature of being and participation for developing a theological anthropology for African American women clients. I suggest that Tillich's understanding of how the self experiences grace is suggestive of and correlates to the psychological process of healing analogous to the psychological restructuring activity of Kohut's understanding of transmuting internalization, through the process of empathic introspection. This chapter represents my conversation with Tillich and Kohut based upon my clinical practice. I believe there is an analogy between my understanding of Tillich's and Kohut's theories and what I do as a pastoral counselor.

In Chapter VI, I will construct a model of pastoral counseling with some African American women clients, critically correlating the similarities between Tillich and Kohut's concepts with grace as norm. I will critically correlate the pastoral theological norm of grace, and the psychological norm of empathy to systematically develop a pastoral theological model of counseling using Tillich's theological understanding of the instance of grace and Kohut's conceptualization of the activity of empathic introspection in the life of some African American women clients who have been deprived of adequate mirroring and idealizing relationships during early development. I redefine empathy and grace in terms of a theory of pastoral counseling from a self psychological perspective. I will construct a theoretical model of pastoral counseling ministry that responds to the situation of some African American women's experiences of estrangement. I suggest that estrangement is
comparable to the feelings which self psychology describes as the self experience of fragile self. I show how the estranged self is psychologically and theologically constructed in a pastoral counseling model.

In Chapter VII, I use the case material of my experience with J, B, and S, three African American women clients, to illustrate my model and to get at how these various theories address some African American women’s experiences of estrangement.

In Chapter VIII, I summarize the problem, the limitations of the study, and the conclusions of the study. I conclude with recommendations for further study.

**Method**

For the purpose of this dissertation project, Tillich’s method of correlation, a pastoral theological method, and the method of practical correlation will be used.

Tillich’s method of correlation will be brought into conversation with my understanding of pastoral counseling based upon my experience counseling with some African American women clients during my practicum at GAPC. Using my understanding of Tillich’s theology of the self, I will draw an analogy between my experience and Tillich’s theories. Tillich’s method takes into account the existentialist who raises the “question” and analyzes the human situation to which the theologian can then give the “answer,” an answer given not from the situation but from somewhere else, and not from the human situation itself.

Some of the Tillichian concepts help me to form the experiences of estrangement, and disconnection, and grace that African American women feel, and some Kohutian concepts help me to talk about what is going on in the pastoral counseling relationship. Not
all of what they say is helpful because their primary reference group was White males, and not African American women. In order to develop a conceptual model of pastoral counseling of pastoral counseling process that contributes to an African American woman’s sense of her self as a whole person in mind, body, and spirit, in relationships with herself, God, and others. I must borrow concepts from Tillich and Kohut. This method of borrowing is a pastoral theological method.

The method of practical correlation satisfies the Womanist criteria of analysis. Practical correlation is an interdisciplinary and ecumenical conversation between Womanist pastoral counseling, the Tillichian concept of grace, and the Kohutian concept of empathy.

Limitations of the Research

This research is limited to: (1) my use of the Kohutian theory and method; (2) Paul Tillich’s theological application of New Being experienced as grace and normative possibility for the human situation, in response to the situation of estrangement that is normative human experience; (3) my construction of a theology of pastoral counseling using the theology of Tillich; and (4) the case study of three African American women clients. The rationale of the limits in regard to major contributors stems from my desire to pursue this topic in a manageable fashion. I hope to allow close attention to these contributors to strengthen the quality of in-depth critical analysis and constructive use of their work.

Another limitation of my work is in the interest of the use of the concepts of empathy and estrangement, and my theory of grace as normative for pastoral counseling. The way in which these concepts are employed in this proposal does not preclude other
normative approaches to pastoral counseling, but does represent my contention that they are normative for some African American women clients seeking psychotherapy.

A further limitation of my work is the contention that the psychological theory of empathy is analogous to, but not the same as, the theological theory of New Being, each experienced by some of my clients as Christian grace. It is my opinion that Tillich's theory of the self as estranged is one way to think about Kohut's characterization of the fragile self. I will suggest that the self, as formulated by Tillich, restructure meaning through the process of grace. There are other ways to conceptualize Kohut's application of empathy in the healing process. This research cannot explore other applications in the interest of narrowing the focus.

Lastly, this research is limited by the fact that I intend to use clinical case studies from my own pastoral counseling clinical experience to demonstrate the plausibility of this study. The premise of this model lies with its conceptualization of the genesis of the self's psychosocial development, arrest, and reconstruction of some African American women's experiences in the clinical setting, informed by the perspectives of Tillich and Kohut.

**Conclusions and Implications of the Dissertation**

This analysis proposes to build theory which may be tested clinically to demonstrate my contention that the Kohutian theory and method as well as Tillich's theology, meet feminist therapy guidelines for therapy with women of color, particularly some African American women clients who experience themselves as estranged and disconnected from God, self, and others. This analysis is further intended to determine that the Kohutian theory of the self and the method of intervention and Tillich's theology of the self, meet the
theory of the self and the method of intervention and Tillich’s theology of the self, meet the womanist theological interdisciplinary and ecumenical criteria for developing a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women.
CHAPTER II

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN:
AN HISTORICAL SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS

The intent in this chapter is to explore the history of the African American woman from ancient African origins to the present. Particular attention will be drawn to her socio-cultural reality during her history, especially regarding her race and gender roles.

African American women experience race and gender discrimination in this culture. Any analysis of African American women’s experiences that ignores race and gender issues cannot make appropriate assumptions. A model of pastoral counseling that makes assumptions concerning ministry to African American women clients and ignores the experience of race and gender discrimination is incomplete. The emphasis on race and gender discrimination is important for the development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for African American women clients. Further, attention will be drawn to the particular resources available to African American women from ancient African origins to the present.

The assumption of the analysis is that there are sparse theological pastoral counseling resources visible to the pastoral counselor that include the personal, historical and socio-cultural experiences of African American women. A further assumption is that there are potential theological resources that are available from majority culture to construct
a theology of pastoral counseling that responds to the spiritual needs of some African American women clients.

This analysis is intended to explore the historical and socio-cultural experiences of some African American women under the impact of patriarchalism in American culture in order to identify psycho-social needs arising from the historical and socio-cultural context to which a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women must respond. This analysis of the African American women’s experiences is further intended to raise implications and questions that guide the task of developing a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women clients utilizing dimensions of Paul Tillich’s theology of the self and Heinz Kohut’s theory of self psychology.

In order to know the prominent questions and the implications arising from the historical and socio-cultural context of African American women and to discover psychological needs thereof, a review of selected bibliography beginning with ancient African history until the present will be undertaken.

This analysis is intended to reveal prominent consistent patterns in the history of the African American woman, which relate to her experience and understanding of her self in relationships with herself, God, and other selves. This analysis is further intended to examine the impact of socio-cultural variables that are brought to bear upon the African American women’s personality, and the resources they utilize for meaning making. Questions and implications for a model of pastoral counseling ministry for some African American women will be drawn from the patterns identified in the analysis of the African American woman’s historical and socio-cultural reality.
The principle of analysis for the development of a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women is a focus upon the realities of the experiences of the African American women who: (1) are representative of my pastoral counseling training experience at Georgia Association for Pastoral Counseling; (2) are a significant minority in this country; and (3) as a population, have historically claimed that spirituality has a significant role in their meaning making. More specifically, some African American women clients whom I have counseled have claimed that the Grace of God is a very important spiritual resource for them in their historical and socio-cultural experiences in terms of meaning.

By African American woman’s experience, I am referring to the historical and socio-cultural events, consequences and feelings that are specifically related to race and sex that are shared by all African American women, regardless of their circumstances in life. Further, I am referring to the psychological effects that the judgments of race and sex have made upon the African American woman’s experience of herself in relations with her self, God, and other selves.

Other studies have been done on African American women’s experiences. The limit of this analysis is to certain aspects of the African American woman’s reality in regard to the historical and socio-cultural dimensions and to the psychological dimensions.
The African American Woman's Historical and Socio-Cultural Experiences as Contexts for the Development of a Model of Pastoral Counseling

The Ancient African Heritage

African American women arrived on the shores of America as slaves. She had an African history, an African heritage, and an African legacy. In this section of the study I will examine those aspects of her historical experience.

Andrew Billingsley, an acclaimed African American sociologist, put forth the argument that African American family structure is both weak and strong to counter the argument of many scholars that the African American family structure is weak. In his book, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder*, forwarded by womanist theologian Paula Giddings, Billingsley argues that the strengths of African American families are by far more powerful and contain the seeds of their survival and rejuvenation.¹ In this study he compiled data concerning the African heritage of African American people to support aspects of his argument concerning the strength of African American families. Billingsley wrote, "As late as 1963 two leading social scientists went unchallenged in their assertion that, while other ethnic groups had historical and cultural backgrounds to help define them, African Americans were without such historical and cultural context. . . . The claim was that the African American has no history and culture and context to guard and protect."² Billingsley countered this argument by social scientists by examining eras of ancient African history, heritage, and legacy. I will


²Ibid., 83.
summarize Billingsley’s analysis of the African historical connection in order to discover the influences of history and culture upon the African woman.

**The Historical Heritage: African Origin**

Billingsley’s analysis of ancient African history and culture focused on research findings of noted archaeologists, paleontologists, and other scientists and scientific data to support his argument. Following is a summary of some of the data he used.

Louis and Mary Leaky, pioneering archaeologists, working in Ethiopia in 1974, unearthed the complete skeletal remains of Lucy. Lucy was estimated to be three million years old. A year later they unearthed the skeletal remains of a family of thirteen whom they called the ‘First Family.’ Other skeletal remains were unearthed in 1981 which proved to be older than Lucy’s family. A discovery of the skeletal remains of a boy in Kenya in 1984 dated 1.6 million years. Scientists suggest that he resembled modern day African Americans and given a cap and clothing would blend in on the streets of America as an African American teenager. His only distinguishing feature being a low forehead and a beetle brow.³

The assumption of these archaeological findings suggests that the oldest skeletal remains of the ancestors of modern day human beings are located on the continent of Africa. A further assumption is that distinguishing characteristic features of the population of skeletal remains who inhabited Africa millions of years ago are analogous to but not the same as distinguishing features of African American people. DNA testing and research and subsequent archaeological finds support these assumptions.⁴

Until recently the support for the theory of the African genesis of modern humanity came exclusively from archaeological excavations and the examination of fossil remains. A few years ago, major breakthroughs in laboratory research by molecular biologists, chemists, and geneticists revolutionized the study of human evolution. Three different universities—Emory, Berkeley, and Yale—working independently verified the findings of

³Ibid., 84.

⁴Ibid., 85-86.
paleontologists with respect to the African genesis. Examining cell structures over time . . . these laboratory scientists have been able to trace the evolution of modern human beings back to . . . a common female ancestor in Black Africa whom some scientists call Eve.5

This data shows that Eve from whom all humankind descended was a “dark haired, dark skinned, dark eyed, woman of about twenty-five years old when she died.”6 She was muscular and strong. She lived with a group of about twenty-five people, male and female, like herself. Eve’s relational community was nomadic, and technological fossils indicate she made tools from stones. “Her genes are now in all the 5 billion people living in the world, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin.”7 “Scientists now know that between 90,000 and 180,000 years ago, African people who were descendants of Eve migrated to other parts of the world. Scientists know that it takes about a thousand years for skin color and other physical characteristics to change completely. Scientists know that basic cell structure did not change.”8 Scientists know that different races have evolved as a result of migration and environmental adaptation, and essentially that humankind has remained the same. Billingsley quotes Harvard paleontologist and essayist Stephen Jay Gould concerning research on the African genesis: “It makes us realize that all humans, despite differences in external appearances, are really members of a single entity that’s had a very recent origin

5Ibid., 85.
6Ibid., 86.
7Ibid.
8Ibid.
in one place. There is a kind of biological brotherhood [kinship] that’s much more profound than we ever realized."⁹

**The African Cultural Legacy**

Billingsley’s study focused upon ancient Egyptian culture in order to identify the Black African identity. Billingsley’s examination of the African Renaissance revealed the identity and values of the ancient Egyptians. The examination of data revealed that the ancient Egyptians were Black Africans. This assumption is based upon artifacts, fossils, scientific data, and ancient portraits of Black African inhabitants that were preserved from the elements through time. The ancient Egyptians were remarkably gifted, original and creative. They were scientists, engineers, astronomers, mathematicians, artists, philosophers, and teachers. They held deep religious and spiritual values and made no distinction between the spiritual, the intellectual, and the physical elements of the universe and of man. They were farmers, horticulturists, orchardists, and arborists. They were master builders and ancient Egypt was the center of learning. The world first monotheist resided in ancient Egypt.¹⁰

This analysis of ancient Egypt reveals that the identity of the people there were Black African. The analysis further reveals that the Black African valued creativity and industry, education, and spirituality. They were originators of theoretical and technological systems that supported and advanced their society and their spirituality.

An analysis of the ancient African Renaissance reveal the ethical values of the ancient Egyptian people in what Billingsley refer to as “family codes.” Family codes reveal the

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⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 88.
value and the roles of family members to include extended and other kin. The family codes consisted of the following elements:

(1) the role of the man as husband and father; (2) the role of the woman as wife whose childbearing and child rearing provide continuation of the family, and the role of preserver of the man’s property; (3) marriage was highly valued and the responsibility of the man to establish a family and a home; (4) children had high value and were the responsibility of parents and tribe to care for; (5) there was a strong emphasis on love and honor; (6) extramarital sexual conduct was discouraged (though polygamy was tolerated); (7) the child’s role was to love mother and obey the father; and (8) boys were given preferential treatment.\(^\text{11}\)

The salient theme that emerges from these elements for me is the theme of relations within the context of family to include extended family, with explicit roles to safeguard the value system or spirituality of the family members in a communal environment.

Billingsley’s intent for analysis of ancient African data, in part, were to support his counter-argument in relationship to his claim that the African American family’s strength in fact is rooted in a distinct history and culture and that there are discernable patterns to support his argument. In addition to this, Billingsley’s data suggests that there are socio-cultural patterns regarding African American women.

The analysis of the ancient African history of Black Africans reveals that all modern humankind, regardless of race or national origin, are the genetic descendants of “Eve,” a Black African woman. Genetically and physically, Eve was the authentic modern human being. In appearance, Eve looked like a modern day African American woman with physical characteristics similar to “the contemporary tennis star Martina Narvaltlova.”\(^\text{12}\) Eve’s

\(^{11}\text{Ibid., 90-92.}\)

\(^{12}\text{Ibid., 85.}\)
descendants populated the regions of the world and adaptation to other regional environments changed physical but not the genetic and essential characteristics over time. From this analysis I assume that the contemporary African American woman shares the same genetic and historical legacy as does the 5 billion modern human beings on the earth. This assumption implies that the contemporary African American woman’s innate psychological resources and physical development are genetically and structurally the same as the rest of the human population. This assumption means that the African American woman’s psychological structure is essentially normative.

For the purpose of developing a model of pastoral counseling for African American women this assumption underscores the importance of including the African American woman’s ancient historical heritage and legacy as a resource in the development of the model that will respond to her need for ministry and make assumptions concerning her psychological needs.

The cultural legacy of the Black African is gleaned from historical data collected from ancient Egypt. The ancient Egyptians valued their own creativity and their spirituality in harmony with nature. Moreover, they were family focused and placed high value upon “family codes,” which served the organizing and sustaining needs of the family system. Moreover, there is the evidence that the ancient Black Africans had roles, which identified the social location of family members.

The salient assumptions that emerge from this aspect of the analysis is that the ancient Black African woman’s social location had distinctive characteristics: (1) her role as a child was to love her mother and obey her father, and to be nurtured by her parents and
the entire community; and (2) her role as a female adult was to marry a male, bear and nurture children, protect her husband’s property, and honor the elderly. As a child she was the responsibility of her parents and the entire community to be cared for and raised to adult status. As an adult, an important part of her role was to insure the continuation and protection of the family. Important for the analysis of the African American woman’s historical experience is the acknowledgment that she is identified alongside all other human beings as descendant of modern humankind having a legacy of a particular, distinct and generative social location.

The African American Heritage

The Dutch and the Spanish forced African women and men from their homeland of Africa in the 1600s. They were delivered to beaches of Virginia slaves of Americans of Western European descent. The African slaves and the American masters and mistresses were descendants of the historical and socio-cultural heritage and legacy of their foremother “Eve” who is the genetic mother of all humankind, and the ancient Black African socio-cultural legacy that valued the sustaining function of each family members value and social location.

In this section I will analyze the influences of slavery, racial, and sexual discrimination, the impact of acculturation, and the institution of the Black Church as the important historical and socio-cultural relationships brought to bear upon the African American woman’s experience of herself in relations from slavery through the present. The intent of the analysis is to explore how the dominant patterns of race and gender influence her meaning making. The goal of this analysis is to identify the psychological needs that
must be responded to in the development of a model of pastoral counseling for ministry with African American women.

**The Legacy of Slavery**

Noted earlier, data analyzed in the research cited from other studies about African American families evidenced that family values are an important legacy for African Americans. The attack upon the African legacy of the family value system began when European Americans justified their treatment of African slaves to gratify their projective patriarchal need for superiority, domination, and control.

Editors of the book, *A Pictorial History of the Negro in America*, provide important data concerning the African American historical and socio-cultural experiences in America through the mid-twentieth century. "John Hopkins, a Spaniard and his captain Francis Drake, transported human cargo on board his ship Jesus of Lubeck in Spanish-controlled waters in the early 1600s. After him, in 1619, a Dutch ship dropped anchor at Jamestown, Virginia, with a similar cargo of Africans, and the American colonies first cargo of African slaves."

Elizabeth was the name given the first African woman to set foot off that cargo ship onto American soil as an African American slave. Elizabeth’s genesis in America was characteristic of the experiences of all African Americans’ experiences who followed her into the institution of slavery. The legacy of the American heritage began for this population under the patriarchal control of European American males. Patriarchalism in this study

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refers to the domination, power, and control the European American male possessed over the destiny of African American people’s self experiences in relations in America.

The slavery system deliberately disrupted the African American value system of family by introducing a system of displacement intended to reinforce and secure the commerce and insure the success of the institution of slavery. It was customary for family members and tribal members to be separated to safeguard against rebellion. The communal mode of relatedness that was the legacy of the African American experience was threatened. The normative experience of the African slave woman and man who arrived in America in the 1600s was as follows: (1) the individual was taken away from family members and community relations; (2) the receiving community for the individual—to include the master, the mistress, and fellow slaves and others—spoke different languages; (3) the projection of a system of mythology upon the African American that assaulted their center of value and meaning which is the family system; (4) they were forbidden to practice any customs or rituals familiar to them; (5) they were forced to adapt to foreign customs and rules. The African American value system in regard to the self of the African American woman and man in relations and in regard to social location was immediately diluted under the impact of slavery. Paula Giddings wrote:

So, by the eighteenth century an incredible social, legal, and racial structure was put into place. Women were firmly stratified in the roles that Plato envisioned. Blacks were chattel, White men could impregnate a Black woman with impunity, and she alone could give birth to a slave. Blacks constituted a permanent labor force and metaphor that were perpetuated through the Black woman’s womb. And all of this was done

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14Ibid., 14.
15Ibid., 10-14.
within the context of the church, the operating laws of capitalism, and the psychological needs of White males. Subsequent history would be a variation on the same theme.\footnote{Paula Giddings, \textit{When and Where I Enter} (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), 39.}

The sexual exploitation of African American women and men by European American males further diluted and threatened to erode the legacy of the African American family value system. European males sexually exploited African American women and men for economic profit and for personal pleasure. The African American woman bore children who would become slaves and then would be brutally sold without regard to her. Both slave mother and slave child were property of the master. Slavery had no concept of a slave father. Everybody was the master's property. Sexual partners for African American women and men were chosen by the master and marriage was prohibited. Under the impact of sexual exploitation, the African American woman and man had the common experience of having their system of family values, the locus of socio-cultural orientation from the ancient African heritage, assaulted and distorted by external factors.

According to Andrew Billingsley's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the African American family, resources of the African legacy, specifically the spiritual values (for example, socio-cultural patterns of relatedness outlined in the family codes), survived.

A number of African family patterns survived the American experience, diluted and transformed by it, but not destroyed. Primary among these African family features is the emphasis on the specific roles of male and female; family ties; extended family versus nuclear family and beyond; parent and community child centered focus; the honor of the elderly; role reciprocity and flexibility among male, female, and children; restraint which balanced the rights of all persons against the requirements of the family and community; responsibility which refers to the assumptions of obligations for the
well being of others beyond one's own selfish needs and desires; and the function of polygamy.\footnote{Billingsley, Climbing Jacob's Ladder, 95.}

There is strong evidence to support the assumption that the African American woman’s self experience during slavery was characterized by the socio-cultural events of estrangement forced upon her as a result of race and gender discrimination and exploitation. The evidence also shows that the discriminatory and exploitative customs of slavery altered the African American woman’s experience of her self in relations specifically from a sociocultural perspective. Systems of estranged relations were forced upon the African American woman and man in this culture with no regard for their humanity. Further, the African American woman along with the African American man became the object of projected derogatory mythology challenging the rich historical and socio-cultural heritage of African Americans. This was and is a harmful, distorted, and limiting self-experience imposed on African Americans in this culture.

The evidence shows that the spiritual value system which provides an orientation for meaning and a continuing relational experience of self in community in the family system was not destroyed, but in fact, served to sustain the African American woman through today. Andrew Billingsley wrote, “The long view of history might well suggest that the very idea of family is so deeply ingrained that the black families sustain themselves in part during periods of transition by clinging tenaciously to certain basic values.”\footnote{Ibid., 95-96. (Billingsley’s note that there were free slaves during the American slave trade era. A study showed a pattern of the transmission and maintenance of African family values among over fifty percent of free Africans.)}
Based upon Billingsley's study, it is reasonable to assume that the African American woman from slavery until the present has an African heritage and legacy transmitted to her through historical and socio-cultural patterns. These patterns contribute to and undergird some African American women's spirituality, or what this writer refers to as her meaning-making project. Some African American women's spirituality serve as a resource that enables her to define meaning for her self in relations with her self, others, and God. The patterns of the sustaining community from ancient African culture were spiritual in nature and provided an orientating principle for socio-cultural location. The "family codes" of ancient Egyptian community life indicate that the heritage and legacy of the African American woman may be characterized as relational.

What effect did the impact of patriarchalism have upon African American women and men whose socio-cultural location was informed by dynamic relatedness in community and who found themselves in the oppressive and estranging customs of slavery? Estranging customs refer to the routine practice of separating African Americans from their familiar surroundings, their kin, their tribe, and forcing them into a foreign culture with new definitions of what being in relation meant. These estranging customs and patterns were hostile, brutal, demoralizing, and inhumane.

What has occurred in the socio-cultural history of African American women and men in this country under the impact of slavery and under the discriminatory practices of race, gender, and class since slavery is a crying shame. Womanist theologian Renita Weems in her book, *Just a Sister Away*, focuses upon socio-cultural relationships between the Old Testament characters of Sarah and Hagar in her response to the institution of race, gender,
and class that characterize relationships between African American women and White women in America.

Weems brings the focus to bear upon the race, gender, and class issues in the story of Hagar and Sarah that continue to plague relationships between Black and White women in America today. Weems provides a womanist critique of the structures of race, gender, and class that bear upon the relationships of women in America today creating social rivalry. Weems, in her analysis of Hagar and Sarah’s story identify the challenges of a patriarchal paradigm upon African American women. In the final analysis Hagar’s spirituality was the resource which sustained her at a critical time. The God, who appeared to this Egyptian slave woman, appeared for the sake of her progeny, the child Ishmael. Weems wrote:

Just as Ishmael must have wept for the senselessness of Hagar, Sarah, and Abraham’s ways, maybe it will take our children weeping on our behalf, our children weeping for the sins and prejudices and stubbornness of their mothers and fathers—to convince God to intervene on our behalf. Perhaps a global community will be saved—if we are to be saved at all—because of the little children whose innocent tears will prostrate heaven . . . . Though their tears have not always moved us, hopefully they will move God . . . God have mercy upon us.\(^{19}\)

Weems concludes her analysis of the Hagar/Sarah parallel with Black woman/White woman legacies of the issues of race, gender, and class with the judgement that these institutions are sin, and that these relationships affect our children. The resource in this story is spirituality and ultimately responds to the needs of our children, a characteristic of ancient Egyptian values. The spiritual values of relationships represented in Weems’ analysis are also values that represent the African American woman’s spiritual values that are the legacy of ancient Black African tradition.

\(^{19}\)Tbid., 19.
In spite of the attempts of the discrimination of race and gender since slavery in America, the African Americans have been able to sustain themselves in distinct patterns that have been preserved since slavery. In her discussion of the African American family, Nancy Boyd-Franklin, an African American family therapist, explored the African legacy for resources of strengths in the African American family. In the overview of her book, *Black Families in Therapy: A Multisystem Approach*, she wrote:

I will focus on the concept of family kinship and collective unity and on the role of religion and the African philosophy of life. . . . Kinship ties make up one of the most important and most enduring aspects of the Black American heritage. . . . The sense of family survival has persisted through the centuries and these survival skills are some of the most lasting strengths of the Black Afro-American family today. . . . The other aspect of the African legacy, the central role of religious and spiritual beliefs in many Black families . . . . The legacy of this belief system has survived years of slavery and has influenced both the strong sense of ‘family’ and the very strong religious or spiritual orientation of many Black Afro-American families today.\(^{20}\)

Within these distinct patterns of African Americans are unique dimensions related to African American women. Discrimination and privilege are key distinguishing factors. One feature which distinguishes the African American woman’s experience of discrimination from that of the African American man is the presence of sexual oppression in America since slavery. Features, which distinguish the African American woman’s experience from White women is privilege, which comes with patterns of patriarchy. Giddings wrote about the reality of the Victorian plantation.

Southerners encourages organic family units among their slaves . . . family relationships among American slaves both discouraged rebellion and runaways, and encourages a self-sustaining reproduction of the labor force. The Victorian family ideal also carried a specific consequence for women. White southern women found

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themselves enmeshed in an interracial web in which wives, children, and slaves were all expected to obey the patriarchal head of the household. The Victorian ‘extended’ family also placed the white woman on a pedestal so high that she was beyond the sensual reach of her own husband. Black women were consigned to the other end of the scale, as mistresses, whores, or breeders.21

The African American woman’s social location is related dynamically to the discriminatory customs of race and gender in this country since slavery. The distinct patterns of spiritual values in the family codes of ancient Black African legacy has served to sustain some African American women despite continuing attempts of race and gender discrimination.

**The Legacy of Cultural Adaptation**

The slave status beginnings in the patriarchal system in America, with all the attending prohibitions on African American heritage and legacy, gave way to the encouragement for the African American and other people of color to acculturate American cultural patterns. Acculturation is defined as a process of intercultural borrowing between diverse peoples resulting in new and blended patterns, especially modifications in primitive culture resulting from contact with an advanced society.22


Native Americans, descendants of slaves and immigrants, all learned in countless ways that the individuals viewed as having the most value and power in the United States were those who embraced the homogenization of the melting pot. . . . This thrust

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toward homogenization urged would-be adherents to give up their ethnicity and abandon their pre-American cultures. People were encouraged to change names; disavow old country values, beliefs, and languages; relinquish familiar cultural practices; become ashamed of their less than 100% American heritage.  

Pinderhughes described some of the troubling realities of the melting pot ideology.

The contributions of the unmelted were largely ignored. In human services . . . the definition of problems, i.e., what is pathological and deviant, the theoretical constructs that determine assessment and intervention methods, the strategies devised, the programming services, and even the evaluation of outcomes had been developed in terms of what seemed appropriate for the White American middle class.

The melting pot ideology was an illusion to people of color because of the obvious features of race such as skin color and physical characteristics. The prevailing ideology was and is an illusion because of the added dimension of sexual oppression in the case of the African American woman.

Arthur C. Jones, an African American psychologist, in an article entitled "Psychological Functioning in African American Adults: Some Elaborations on a Model, with Clinical Applications," analyzed racial oppression as the reason for psychological adaptation among African American women and men.

Racial oppression is a fact of life for all Americans, regardless of social class or geographical location. This is a natural outcrop of the need of majority Anglo-culture to have objects of projection for various undesirable personal characteristics . . . the psychological defense mechanism of projection appears to explain well the dynamics of oppression. The powerful symbolic meanings mediated by color make African American people particularly vulnerable to such projections . . . the high visibility of African peoples (because of their skin color) serves to maintain this convenient use of dark skinned people as a projective repository. In adulthood, this also requires the


24Ibid., 3.
individual to develop adaptive strategies for dealing with experiences of race oppression. . . .

Jones further suggests that acculturation is an adaptive psychological strategy of African American people as a result of race oppression.

For African Americans, acculturation is a strategy for success within the majority culture where exclusion from that culture is culturally reinforced because of the perpetual force of racism. Internalization of majority culture values carries with it the risk of loss of one's anchoring to one's self and community. Vigilance and awareness can promote balance and sanity in the choice of values and behaviors that match one's own sense of self and integrity. For contemporary African Americans, ignorance or avoidance of the pervasive influence of the majority culture is synonymous with massive psychological denial . . . .

Jones distinguishes the experience of the African American woman from the African American man and the White woman in regard to gender issues. African American women have been seen as, "... projective objects of White males' unintegrated sexual patterns, and stripped of the delicate 'pedestal' status assigned white females. With the demasculinization of some African American men, women have been left to 'do it all.'... African American women's experiences have also differed from White females who have been coequal oppressors, in partnership with White males.

In overview of his analysis, Jones makes the assumption that for African Americans, dealing with racism requires adaptive functioning. The cultural rootedness of African Americans is critical to the achievement of adaptive functioning in America. This cultural

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26Ibid., 301-303.

27Ibid., 300.
rootedness is spiritual in nature, and when conscious, growth occurs naturally. Jones' analysis leads him to the assumption that spirituality is an important resource of African American culture, and when accessed and made conscious leads to personal growth and fulfillment.

This section reviewed the analysis of research that focused on how the African American woman and man adapted in America in the presence of race and gender oppression. In the adaptive process, from slavery to the present, the salient resource of some African American women and men has been spirituality.

The Black Church Experience

For African Americans, the Black Church has been the only place of freedom that was accessible. In this section I will analyze the function and resource of the Black denominational church.

Black denominations have been a place of meaning and comfort. Henry Mitchell says, “Because of the culture of racism, all black religion has of necessity been concerned with the affirmation and support of Black selfhood. The more brutalized and alienated the black group involved, the more religion has had to compensate for the scars . . . the black religious response is to the underlying Black experience in America, past and present.” Mitchell noted the significance of the space in the Black Church where African Americas owned property and sought healing and nurture in the preaching and the hymns. Mitchell

28Ibid., 306.

noted "it would be hard to imagine a church being really Black culture which did not sing 'Amazing Grace' with all its improvisons."30

In a study conducted by Andrew Billingsley, it was discovered that African American women outnumbered African American men in church participation. It was further documented that the social class of church members among African Americans was primarily working and middle class.31 Billingsley’s study also indicated the importance of the Black Church in the Black community:

1. Religious orientation is the greatest historic strength of black families.

2. It is completely owned and controlled by the African American people.

3. It represents freedom, independence, and respect for its leadership, as well as the opportunity for self-esteem, self-development, leadership and relaxation.

4. It was a community center and recreational center that encouraged education, business development and democratic fellowship beyond its members.32

One assumption of this study is that some working and middle class African American women particularly turn to the Black Church community for meaning and community.

Delores S. Williams, a womanist theologian, describes the function of the African American denominational church for the African American woman. "The African American denominational churches told women they were 'somebody' in a society that hated their race and spurned their womanhood . . . historically, the African American denominational churches have also been places where black women aside from venting their pain in

30Ibid., 48.

31Billingsley, Climbing Jacob’s Ladder, 373.

32Ibid., 354.
emotional response, have come for decidedly theological reasons. They love God and the Spirit and they come to church to celebrate the great work of the Spirit that brings and sustains whatever is positive in their lives.”33

Williams further raises the issue of the struggle of African American women in the contemporary African American Church. “The African American Church functions like a two-edged sword. They sustain Black women emotionally and provide ‘theological space’ for Black women’s expressions of faith. But they suppress and help to make invisible Black women’s thought and culture . . . through their uncritical use of the Bible and through patriarchal theology.”34

Williams identified womanist theological critique as the locus for correcting the oppressive patriarchal oriented interpretation of the Bible and the African American denominational church.

Today a theological corrective is developing that has considerable potential for bringing black women’s experience into theology so that black women will see the need to transform the sexist character of the churches and their theology. This corrective—emerging among black female theologians, ethicists, biblical scholars, ministers, and laywomen—is called womanist theology . . . Womanist theology emerged from what some saw as characteristic of black women’s experiences of relation, loss, gain, faith, hope, celebration and defiance . . . its aim is discourse and work with black women in the churches, it also brings back black women’s experience into the discourse of all Christian theology, from which it has been previously excluded. Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African-American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women’s struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women’s and the


34Ibid.
family's freedom and well-being. Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical disability and caste... Womanist theology considers one of its primary tasks to dialog with the church and with other disciplines.35

The discussion of womanist theological response has direct implications for this dissertation project. For example, I am an African American woman pastoral counselor. Some of the African American women clients whom I counsel at GAPC report that: (1) they are experiencing a sense of estrangement in relations; (2) they have sought pastoral counseling on previous occasions with male pastoral counselors and did not feel related; (3) they chose me because of my race, gender, and perceived spirituality; (4) they have a strong desire to discover meaning for themselves in relationships with others; and (5) their spirituality is very important.

The locus for the development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for African American women clients is the examination of human experience of the self of the African American woman as primary source in the light of her historical and socio-cultural experiences of self in relation. Given the human experience of some of the African American women clients who I see at GAPC, and given their historical and socio-cultural reality, womanist theological response is the locus for the development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for this population.

Conclusion

Several themes emerge in this analysis of the historical and socio-cultural experience of the African American woman's experience in this culture in America. Those salient themes which emerge are: (1) the historical ancient African heritage; (2) the ancient

35Ibid., xiii-xv.
Egyptian Black legacy of family; (3) the experience of estrangement in relations which is a legacy of the patriarchal institutions of race and gender discrimination; (4) the sustaining character of spirituality from ancient Black African legacy from slavery to the present; and (5) the relational nature of personality development and its embeddedness in social relationships.

The salient pattern that emerges from this analysis is the resource of spirituality which has served as a strategy that has supported the African American woman's need to have integrity in relations and to promote personal growth in a cultural context that is hostile to her well-being and that is structured to inhibit her developing her full potential as a human being.

The assumption of this analysis is that while the pervasive presence of race and gender discrimination patterns brought to bear upon the experiences of some African American women in this country since slavery have threatened her center of value and meaning with themes of estranged relations from self, others, and God, the ancient themes of her African heritage of spirituality continue to be a locus and resource of meaning and value.

Questions and Implications for the Development of a Model of Pastoral Counseling Ministry with Some African American Women Clients

Questions that this analysis of the historical and socio-cultural experiences of the African American woman seeking pastoral counseling that the development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry must address are:
1. What ministry is visible to the pastoral counselor to respond to the personal, social, and contextual and historical patterns which bear upon the reality of the African American woman client?

2. Can a model of pastoral counseling ministry be developed that responds to the needs of an African American woman client that includes her personal and socio-cultural and historical patterns of being in relation in the development of the model?

3. What theological and behavioral science resources are visible to construct a model of pastoral counseling ministry that attend to the personal, socio-cultural, and historical needs of the African American woman client?

The assumption of this analysis is that no comprehensive model of pastoral counseling ministry for African American women clients is visible that includes her experiences of her self personally, historically, and socio-culturally in the development of the model. The dissertation will show that there are theological resources that are available to construct an anthropology that includes the experiences of the African American woman alongside all human beings. Theological resources will contribute to the construction of a theory of pastoral care that responds to the spiritual patterns and needs of the African American woman, using the theological perspective of Paul Tillich. Further, the dissertation will show that the psychology of the self as developed and explicated by Heinz Kohut, particularly in regard to his understanding of the role of empathy, identify patterns of relations of the self that are useful for responding to the needs of some African American women clients. This dissertation will develop an interdisciplinary comprehensive model of pastoral counseling ministry that will respond to the social, cultural, ultimate, and empathic needs of some African American women clients. I will develop theory by correlating Kohut’s theory of the narcissistic personality disorder and the potential for restructuring of the self in therapy with an emphasis on empathy with Tillich’s theory of the estranged self
and the potential for reunion, using the womanist method, the disciplines of theology and psychology and from my experience.
CHAPTER III
HEINZ KOHUT'S SELF PSYCHOLOGY

The focus of this chapter is to define and evaluate the major contributions of Heinz Kohut's psychoanalytic psychology of the self. I will approach the task as follows: (1) illustrate the genesis and evolution of the theoretical formulation of Kohut’s theory of the self; (2) point out the dynamic features of the pathology of the self as Kohut's clinical concern and focus; (3) illustrate narcissism and the nature of human development as essential for understanding Kohut’s characterization of what constitutes the self; (4) show how the self develops in relationship to self objects; (5) define empathy and the method of introspection; and (6) explicate psychotherapy with the narcissistic personality disorder client and how health may be experienced through the process of transmuting internalization.

I will explore how Kohut conceptualizes the restoration of health as dynamically related to empathic relationships throughout life. In this discussion, it is important to note that self psychology as formulated by Heinz Kohut is a promising resource in the formulation of psychosocial theory in regard to some African American women clients.

Kohut’s theory of the self is evolutionary. I will explore his method and important concepts of his theory of self psychology.
The rationale for this chapter is based upon the assumption of the analysis of Chapter II that no model of pastoral counseling, in the development of the model, that include variables of African American women’s experiences of her self personally, historically, and socio-culturally. This chapter will show that the psychology of the self developed by Heinz Kohut, because of its normative perspective of human experiences in relationships, contributes to a model of pastoral counseling that responds to the needs of some African American women clients.

The Clinical-Theoretical Formulation

Kohut’s formulation of the theory of the self is understood to have evolved through three significant stages. These stages will be discussed in order to give a broad overview of Kohut’s work.

The first stage (1950-1959) reflects Kohut’s initial interest in applying psychoanalysis to non-clinical data and to establish a methodology, which could account for the subjective experience of human beings. Paul H. Ornstein gives an overview of Kohut’s work, and suggests that three significant areas are addressed during the first stage:

(1) the application of the psychoanalytic insights to literature and music and its reverse: the gaining of clinical insights from these non-clinical resources; (2) the appreciation of the importance of the psychoeconomic aspects of the psychoanalytic experience and the capacity for theoretical abstractions (metapsychological formulations) from them, especially as these illuminate the earliest phase of personality development; (3) the definition, refinement, and reconceptualization of the psychoanalytic method—its range, the areas it can encompass, and the boundaries beyond which it cannot reach—leading to corrections, reformulations, and extensions of theory.¹

Kohut’s emphasis led to his observation that the method of introspection and empathy created an in-depth understanding of the forces at work in the structure of the self. While affirming his genesis from and affinity with classical psychoanalysis, Kohut used his creativity to reformulate his clinical-theoretical observations. Further, he enriched the theoretical conceptualization of the assessment of the phenomenon of narcissism. Kohut’s clinical-theoretical observations led him to conclude that the major tool of psychoanalysis is introspection, rather than free association.

The second stage (1960-1965) witnessed Kohut’s curiosity, which propelled him beyond analysis of transference and resistance. He shifted his focus on the unconscious to human creativity by studying the biographies of some famous people.

Kohut made several significant accomplishments during the second stage of his formulation of self psychology: (a) he refined the method of introspection and empathy; (b) he reworked and reformulated the concepts and theories of psychoanalysis around a developmental axis and the structuring of the personality; and (c) he gave a careful attention to the differences between the transfertes of psychoneuroses and borderline personalities which became a prelude of his reformation of the concept of narcissism.

The third stage (1966-1977) of Kohut’s clinical-theoretical formulations is noted most significantly for his reformulation of the concept of narcissism, the nature and constitution of the self and its development and therapeutic treatment of the narcissistic

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2 Ibid., 9.

3 Ibid., 28.

personality disorders. Clinical introspection led him to the observation that the self is bipolar in constitution. Object relationships of the self were defined as self-self object and self-object. He proposed that the self develop through a process which he coined as transmuting internalization.\(^3\)

Heinz Kohut's clinical-theoretical reformulations were based upon his proposition that he understood his formulation of self psychology to be a product of his introspective-empathic clinical work with persons whom he asserted suffered from narcissistic personality disorder. The dilemma of these persons did not become evident until their narcissistic transferences were activated in the therapeutic relationship. The transference manifested emotional states of "emptiness and depression" which became most evident when the relationship with the therapist was interrupted. Two primary characteristics of these persons are: (a) tendencies toward becoming fragmented and (b) they exhibited a "depleted self."\(^6\)

Kohut characterized narcissistic personality disorder: "In the narcissistic personality and behavior disturbances, in the contradistinction to the psychosis and borderline states, the outline of a specific nuclear self has been established in early development. The structuralization of the pattern of the self has remained incomplete; however, with the result that the self reacts to narcissistic injuries with temporary breakup, enfeeblement, or disharmony."\(^7\) A psychoanalytic response to such persons call for an introspective-empathic

\(^3\)Ibid., 56-64.


\(^7\)Ibid., 9.
relationship, which creates the potential of reactivation of the mirroring and idealizing transferences. Kohut understood that classical psychoanalytic theory and practice failed to meet the needs of persons suffering with the disorders of the self. While remaining within the classical tradition of psychoanalysis for most of his career, his theory of the self evolved from the classical theory, positing a reorientation. He wrote,

At first I tried to orient myself in the area of my interest with the aid of the existing psychoanalytic literature but finding myself floundering in a morass of conflicting, poorly based, often vague theoretical speculation, I decided that there was only one way that would lead to progress: the way back to the direct observation of clinical phenomenon and the construction of new formulations that would accommodate my observation. As I saw it, it was my task to outline a psychology of the self against the background of a clear and consistent definition of a psychology of complex mental states in general and of psychoanalytic depth psychology in particular.¹⁸

Self psychology represents Kohut’s precedent setting clinical-theoretical effort to conceptualize a response to persons suffering from narcissistic personality disorders. Following will be an in-depth exploration of how Kohut characterizes the self.

The Psychopathology of the Self

Kohut analyzed the genesis of the narcissistic personality disorders. He observed that the control population which he studied were suffering from specific disturbances in the realm of the self and of those archaic objects cathexed with narcissistic libido (self-objects) which are still in intimate connection with the archaic (i.e., objects which are not experienced as separate and independent from the self).⁹ He believed that the pathology of his patients were genetic in nature and was derived from the empathic failure during the

¹⁸Ibid., xx-xxi.

early development of the self. Because of his assertion, Kohut further believed that a narcissistic person must be understood in terms of his/her deficits and his/her assets.

In the development of persons with narcissistic personality disorder, the “deficits” of the person remained (1) fixated [arrested] on archaic, grandiose self configurations and/or (2) on archaic, overestimated, narcissistically cathexed objects. The fact that these archaic configurations have not become integrated with the rest of the personality has two major consequences: (a) the adult personality and its mature functions are impoverished because they are deprived of the energies that are invested in the archaic structures; and/or (b) the adult, realistic activities of these persons are hampered by the breakthrough of the investment of these archaic claims.\(^\text{10}\) The pathogenic fixation of these persons functions to make them vulnerable to the archaic configurations, diverting much of the psychic energy away from their creativity.\(^\text{11}\)

Concerning assets Kohut wrote: “In consequence of the attainment of these cohesive and stable psychic configurations these patients are able to establish specific, stable narcissistic transferences, which allow the therapeutic reactivations of the archaic structures without the danger of their fragmentation through further regression. They are analyzable.”\(^\text{12}\)

Unlike the person suffering from psychoses and borderline pathologies, the narcissistic personality disorder person has developed a cohesive, nuclear self enabling

\(^{10}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{11}\text{Ibid., 4.}\)

\(^{12}\text{Ibid.}\)
him/her to establish mirroring and idealizing transferences. The capability to establish the mirroring and idealizing transferences in an empathic therapeutic setting is helpful for developing psychological structures that will compensate for deficits.

Kohut’s theory establishes that it is important to understand the psychopathology of the narcissistic personality disorders by understanding the self as constituting two poles: (a) grandiose-exhibitionist (mirroring self-image) and (b) the idealizing parent-imago (the self’s need to merge with an omnipotent idealized object). Kohut’s assertion is vital to the clinical-theoretical approach proposed.

Disturbances in the psychic development of both poles of the self are a consequence of the failure in the empathic relational environment with parents or persons in the parent role. A parental empathic failure is the chronic inability of the environment to satisfy the mirroring and idealizing needs of the child and leads to disturbance or disorder in the development of the self. The disorder will manifest as deficits. Empathic failure is occasional does not result in disorder. Where there is disturbance in the development of one pole of the self, the healthy pole will compensate the pole with the deficit, build new psychic structures, and facilitate a cohesive self.

In his work with Caucasian males, Kohut argued that the disturbance of the self is the result of the chronic failure of the mother to be an empathic self-object (mirroring the grandiose needs of the self) and the father’s chronic inability to be an empathic self-object, permitting idealized merger with the child. Females suffering from disorders of the self derive disturbances from the same chronically nonempathic relationships.  

argues that both parental figures must display a chronic inability to be empathic toward the child in order for disturbance in the development of the self to result in the disorder of the self.

Kohut "subdivided the disturbances of the self into two groups of vastly different significance: the primary and the secondary (reactive) disturbances."\textsuperscript{14} The secondary or reactive group "constitute the acute and chronic reactions of a consolidated, firmly established self to the vicissitudes of the experiences of life, whether in childhood, adolescence, maturity, or senescence. The entire gamut of emotions reflecting the state of victory and defeat belongs here, including the self's secondary reactions of (rage, despondency, hope) to the restrictions imposed on it by the symptoms and inhibitions of the psychoneuroses and of the primary disorders of the self."\textsuperscript{15} This group is not pathological.

The primary self disturbances are persistent and subsist beyond occasional occurrences. There are five classifications of the primary disturbances. The first three of the primary disturbances are considered beyond analysis. They are:

1. Psychoses, indicating permanent and tragic distortions of the self; 2. Borderline states, representing permanent and tragic distortions which are overlaid by defensive structures; and 3. Schizoid and paranoid structures that keep the self distanced, protecting the self from developing permanent depletion or distortion. These three forms of psychopathology are not analyzable... while a rapport between patient and therapist may be established, the diseased (or potentially diseased) sector of the self does not enter into the limited transference amalgamations with the self object imago of the analyst that can be therapeutically managed by interpretation and working through.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 191.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 192-193.
The two forms of primary self disturbance remaining are:

(4) the narcissistic personality disorders (temporary breakup, enfeeblement, or serious distortion of the self, manifested predominantly by autoplastic symptoms [Ferenczi, 1930], such as hypersensitivity to slights, hypochondria, or depression, and (5) the narcissistic behavior disorders (temporary breakup, enfeeblement, or serious distortion of the self, manifested predominantly by alloplastic symptoms [Ferenczi, 1930], such as perversion, delinquency, or addiction.  

These disorders are analyzable and describe the patient who is able to enter limited "transference amalgamations with the self-object analyst and is capable of the working through process which is central to the analytic process." Kohut seems to respond to the narcissistic personality disorders and the narcissistic personality behaviors as essentially the same, though the difference in the two is that the behavior disorders express the disturbances of the self in perverted behavior. This study will refer to the narcissistic personality disorder. I will now discuss briefly Kohut's understanding of the resistance of the disordered self.

The self, experiencing chronic nonempathic selfobjects, becomes fixated with archaic self and object configurations. These configurations become separated from conscious awareness. Structures of the self, which are defensive, are created. The defensive structure defends the self against the ongoing disturbances of chronic empathic failure from its selfobjects. At the same time the archaic configurations of self and object continue to strive to be mirrored and idealized.

17Ibid., 193.

18Ibid.
Using the method of introspection and empathy with his patients, Kohut concluded that persons suffering from narcissistic personality disorders have two defensive structures: (a) vertical split where the need of the self is to be mirrored is displayed either in terms of grandiose images and/or images of enfeeblement or emptiness; and (b) a horizontal split stemming from conscious repression of the intensified need demonstrated in states of distance, indifference, or coldness. These defenses protect the nuclear self “against the reactivation of the infantile need for acceptance because of the fear of renewed traumatic rejection.”

Kohut concluded that in clinical practice, while other defenses are present, one defensive structure would become more pronounced than the other would. One will be manifested openly and the other will be latent.

In summary, Kohut concluded that defects in the development of the self occur as a result of the chronic empathic failure of the parents during the early development of the child. He wrote, “I believe . . . that defects in the self occur mainly as the result of empathy failures from the side of the self-objects—due to the narcissistic of the self-object; especially . . . due to the self-object’s latent psychoses—and that even serious realistic deprivations (what one might classify as ‘drive’ [or need] frustrations) are not psychologically harmful if the psychological environment responds to the child with a full range of undistorted empathic responses.”

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provide empathic self-objects. Trauma leads to fixation of the archaic self and the self object structures.

The characterological nature of the narcissistic personality disorders is the lack of self cohesion and firmness. The pathology of the self is manifested in the dependence of the self on the self-object, and the fragmentation and enfeeblement of the self in the absence of the self-object. The defensive structure/object structure of the archaic self inhibits evolution toward mature narcissism. The defensive structures which were developed to protect the defective nuclear self from chronic nonempathic encounters and further trauma also serve to inhibit maturation toward further psychological development which Kohut understood to be mature narcissism. The defensive structures develop as vertical and horizontal split that protect the nuclear self from further trauma. With the proper diagnosis, the analyst provides a therapeutic relationship that fosters the reintegration of the split-off psychological structures through the process defined by Kohut as transmuting internalization. The concept of narcissism as used by Kohut is key for comprehending his theory.

Narcissism

Kohut distinguished his preference of the term narcissism rather than narcissistic self: Since the self is, in general, cathexed with the narcissistic libido, the term “narcissistic self” may with some justification be looked upon as tautology. . . . Narcissism, within my general outlook, is defined not by the target of the instinctual investment (i.e., whether it is the subject himself or other people) but by the nature or quality of the instinctual charge.²¹

The nuclear psychopathology of the narcissistic personality disorders consists of (1) defects, acquired in childhood in the psychological structure of the self, and (2) secondary structure-formations, also built up in early childhood, which are related to the primary defect in one of two similar, but in certain crucial respects, different ways... these two types of secondary structures—distinguishing them on the basis of their relation to the primary structural defect of the self—defensive and compensatory structures.22

The libidinal investment of the self in self, and the libidinal investment of the self in its self object relationships are important concerns for self psychology because “... reexperiencing and working through the lethargies, depressions, and rages of early life via the reactivation and analysis of their archaic, traumatic self-selfobject relationships in the transference”23 is central for cure. The self relates to the self object as if the self object is not a separate object and as if the function of the self object is only related to the needs of the self. The self object is not experienced as having its own needs. This relationship is understood as a self-self-object relationship, and is a most important concept of narcissism. Kohut postulated a narcissistic line of human psychological development based upon this concept: “This means that narcissism, like object love, evolves from archaic to mature forms and that, under certain circumstances, we find it useful to examine these two developmental lines and their relative levels of maturity by focusing first on the one and then the other. In any event, the formulation that narcissism is replaced by object love—that narcissism is archaic and object love mature—is in error.”24

22Kohut, The Restoration of the Self, 3.


24Ibid., 185.
Kohut postulated that narcissism is a normal line of human psychological development. His rationale is twofold. The self's narcissistic development is facilitated by the quality of relationships between the self and its self objects. The quality of the self's relatedness facilitates or hinders the cohesion of the self and the formation of idealized psychic structures. Narcissism is a given for each potential client. This conceptualization of the nature of narcissism assists the therapist in understanding the meaning of health in regard to the client.

Further, narcissistic relationships are understood to be essential for the development of formation and ultimately the cohesion of the self. Mirroring and idealizing needs, in relationships of the self with self-objects, must be provided to the self who cannot provide these functions for itself. In narcissistically charged empathic relationships, where the idealizing and mirroring needs of the self are met, the self can internalize the functions of the idealizing and mirroring objects during childhood. Therefore, in the normal psychological development of the self-narcissistic relationships are essential for formation and cohesion of the self, and in fact self-object relationships remain essential throughout life.25

Kohut developed his theory of the self to consist of "three major constituents" (the pole of ambitions, the pole of ideals, and the intermediate area of talents and skills) that subdivide the self/object into three objects: (1) those in which the damaged pole of ambition attempts to elicit the confirming-approving responses of the self/object (mirror transference); (2) those in which the damaged pole of ideals searches for a self/object that will accept its idealization (idealizing transference); and (3) those in which the damaged intermediate area

25Kohut, The Search for the Self, vol. 1, 63-64.
of talents and skills seeks a selfobject that will make itself available for the reassuring experience of essential likeness (twinship or alter ego transference).\textsuperscript{26} Kohut postulated three lines of narcissistic development in 1984.

The narcissistic lines of development refer to the selfobject relations of the self. The selfobject relations have origin within the parental mirroring and idealizing relationships of empathic self-object experiences in early formulation, which is a part of the constellation of the primitive self. Inevitable empathic failure of the mirroring and idealizing self objects leads to formation of the grandiose and idealizing images. This results in the child's attempt to defend against dissolution of the perfect experience of empathic attunement with the primitive selfobjects.\textsuperscript{27} Carrie Doehring, the author of \textit{Taking Care: Monitoring Power Dynamics and Relational Boundaries in Pastoral Care and Counseling}, says that empathic attunement is what is culturally failing in our society. Doehring talks about the social context of empathy: "In a culture in which attunement may be greatly lacking in many relational contexts (in community, in work relationships, and in the corporate world) there may be a demand for 'perfect attunement' in dyadic healing and nurturing relationships. The parent, the minister, the counselor, or the teacher is expected to be an expert at attunement and empathy."\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26}Kohut, \textit{How Does Analysis Care?}, 192.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{28}Carrie Doehring, \textit{Taking Care: Monitoring Power Dynamics and Relational Boundaries in Pastoral Care and Counseling} (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 80.
Doehring’s analysis focuses upon why Kohut’s work is so important for this dissertation project. Don S. Browning, author of *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies: A Critical Conversation in the Theology of Culture* talks about Kohut’s work. Kohut underscores a “fundamental need [of human being’s] to care for the next generation, especially one’s own children. Self actualization and care for the other come together; the most actualizing thing we do is care for and actualize the strengths of the succeeding generations.²⁹

Kohut directly confesses that he wants to liberate his psychoanalytic colleague from their typical view of the normal or essential nature of man, ‘namely, man as an insufficiently and completely trained animal, reluctant to give up his wish to live by the pleasure principle, unable to relinquish his innate destructiveness.’ Such a view of the essence of human nature gives rise to what Kohut calls and image of man as Guilty man—man is constantly infringing upon the rights of others in an effort to satisfy his own insatiable appetites. . . . Kohut believes that what is useful and good about Guilty man should be supplemented by and subordinated to the self psychological viewpoint. In contrast to Guilty man, Kohut calls his view Tragic Man. . . . Kohut uses tragedy in the sense of ‘striving, resourceful man, attempting to unfold his innermost self, battling against external and internal obstacles to its unfolding; and warmly committed to the next generation.’³⁰

Kohut’s shift of emphasis from Guilty Man to Tragic Man casts the human predicament in the light of self actualization that links the human situation to preceding and succeeding generations of care.

The narcissistic pathology manifests itself when the grandiose self image assigns the previous archaic state of perfection with the primary selfobjects upon the self. All experiences, which are unacceptable to the grandiose self, are projected to objects outside


³⁰Ibid.
of the self. Healthy grandiosity is accomplished when the parents, as selfobjects, meet the mirroring and idealizing needs of the self.\textsuperscript{31}

The second constituent of the self, or line of narcissism, refers to the idealizing parent imago. In this instance, the self assigns power and perfection to the selfobject. The self becomes one with the self object psychologically. The self feels "empty and powerless when [threatened] with separation from [the object] and attempts . . . to maintain a continuous union with it."\textsuperscript{32}

"Twinship and alter ego" are the final line of narcissistic development. Kohut postulates that this line of development consists of identifying a self object with which the self may align. The genesis of the alignment is based upon similar experiences from the developmental stage of latency.\textsuperscript{33}

Important for understanding what Kohut is postulating concerning the concepts of narcissism is a discussion of Kohut's understanding of the self and self objects. Defining Kohut's conceptualization of the self and self object relationships will be the focus of the next section.

\textbf{The Self and Self Object Relations}

Kohut's conceptualization of the self evolved during the course of his research of the narcissistic personalities. The genesis of his efforts began within the lines of classical psychology. In the process of investigation he broadened his own understanding of the self

\textsuperscript{31}Kohut, \textit{How Does Analysis Cure?}, 107.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 37.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., 194.
and his understanding of the function of empathic introspection in the treatment of this population. In his later understanding of narcissism, he defined the self as the core of the personality and the center of its initiative. "We cannot . . . penetrate to the self per se; only its introspectively or empathically perceived psychological manifestations are open to us, demands for an exact definition of the nature of the self disregard the fact that 'the self' is not a concept of an abstract sentence, but a generalization of 'self' and 'self representation' (or similarly, of 'self' and a 'sense of self') are, therefore, based on a misunderstanding." 34

The self is referred to in terms of a supraordinate self and references are made to the activity of the self internalizing images of the self from the socio-cultural context. The self's mental representations are images derived from the socio-cultural context. Kohut's method of empathic introspection accesses the inner world of the self.

The method of empathic introspection illuminates the dynamics and genesis of the development of the self. For most of Kohut's work, the self's constitution is bi-polar in nature. The self consists of grandiose self and idealizing self. The grandiose self emerges as the result of parental mirroring and contributes to health affirmation of self manifest in ambitions. The idealizing self results from permitting the child to admire the parent and manifests in the development of goals. Later in Kohut's work he formulated the self as tri-polar. He concluded that there is a twinship arc or pole which constitutes the self's talents and gifts. The tension arc stimulates the development of the grandiose self and the

34 Kohut, Restoration of the Self, 311.
idealizing self.\textsuperscript{35} I will reference bi-polar self for this dissertation in regard to limiting the scope of this project.

The "bi-polar" self is the core of the nuclear self. Its contents of grandiosity and idealization constitute the structure and potential for the self to have a sense of continuity. Continuity is made possible by separating some mental images of the self from the self and by adding more appropriate images to the self. The result of this process is nuclear self. Kohut says:

... this structure is the basis of our sense of being an independent center of initiative and perception, integrated with our most central ambitions and ideals and with our experience that our body and mind form a unit in space and a continuum in time. ... Furthermore, that the sense of the continuity of the self, the sense of our being the same person throughout life—despite the changes in our body and mind, in our personality makeup, in the surroundings in which we live—does not emanate solely from the aiding content of the constituents of the nuclear self and from the activities that are established as a result of their pressure and guidance, but also from the aiding specific relationship in which the constituents of the self stand to each other.\textsuperscript{36}

Kohut based his conclusions concerning the genesis and the constellation of the self upon reflection and analysis of his clinical work. He wrote,

... while traces of both ambitions and idealized goals are beginning to be acquired side by side in early infancy the bulk of nuclear grandiosity consolidates in nuclear ambitions in early childhood (perhaps mainly in the second, third, and fourth year), and the bulk of nuclear idealized goal structures are acquired in later childhood (perhaps mainly in the fourth, fifth, and sixth years of life). It is also more than likely that the earlier constituents of the self are usually predominantly derived from the relationship with the maternal self-object (the mother’s mirroring acceptance confirms nuclear grandiosity; her holding and caring allows merger experiences with the self-object’s idealized

\textsuperscript{35}Kohut, \textit{How Does Analysis Cure?}, 194.

\textsuperscript{36}Kohut, \textit{The Restoration of the Self}, 177, 179, 180.
omnipotence), whereas the constituents acquired later may relate to parental figures of either sex.\textsuperscript{37}

Kohut reconstructed the nature of the nuclear self in regard to relationships of the self with parents and its environment. The nuclear self structures in response to the quality of the relationships during its development. Kohut’s emphasis upon the significance of the contributions of the parental and environmental relationships have on the structure of the self is important for this dissertation.

Optimal frustration is the process by which the self structures. In infancy the child has a feeling of omnipotence and perfection which is derived from the contextual relationship with the mother. The mother’s empathic responses are not always flawless. When the mother’s empathic responses are experienced as less than perfect, tension is created in the child. In ideal or normal development, the child experiences the tension of the mother’s imperfection optimally and internalizes some aspect of the original feeling, and establishes a sense of grandiosity and idealization.

Optimal frustration is the medium through which the child develops internal psychological structures. Occasional empathic failures of the parents and environment facilitate the child’s need to become totally embedded in its selfobjects and to develop a self.

With each of the mother’s minor empathic failures, misunderstandings, and delays, the infant withdraws narcissistic libido from the archaic image of unconditional perfection (primary narcissism) and acquires, in its stead a particle of inner psychological structure which takes over the mother’s functions in the service of the maintenance of narcissistic equilibrium, e.g., her basic soothing and calming activities; and providing her physical and emotional warmth and other kinds of narcissistic sustenance. Thus as this continues to hold true for the analogous later milieu of the child, the most important aspect of earliest mother-infant relationships is the principle

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 179.
of optimal frustration. Tolerable disappointments in the pre-existing (and externally sustained) primary narcissistic equilibrium lead to the establishment of internal structures which provide the ability for the self to self-soothing and the acquisition of basic tension tolerance in the narcissistic realm.\textsuperscript{38}

The mother's less than flawless empathic responses to the child are essential and inevitable occurrences that create the experience of optimal frustration for the child. These responses facilitate the child's gradual internalization of psychological structures that are sufficient for the child's own self-soothing and tension reduction activity. The object of growth for the self is to strengthen the self's narcissistic structures as well as the transformation of primary narcissism toward mature narcissism. [I am using primary narcissism to indicate self structures that develop naturally over according to one's particular endowment. I am using mature narcissism to refer to that relationship between the child and the idealized self object that is characterized by a history of transmuting internalization of the functions of the self object and the building of self structure. In other words, there is a history of tolerance for the internalization of functions of the self object to perform those functions for the self.] The discussion of Kohut's method of introspection and empathy will further illuminate the discussion on the psychopathology of the self, its narcissistic endowments in relationship with its self-objects, and the nature of the self and its development.

**Empathy—The Method of Introspection**

Kohut used the method of introspection as a basis to develop self psychology. He defined empathy as "vicarious introspection" which point to the capability of the analyst to

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 64.
cognitively and emotionally attend to the inner world of another person. For Kohut empathic introspection meant the vicarious introspection of the inner world of his clients suffering from disorders from the self. Empathy is inherent in all persons in various degrees and all persons have the ability to relate empathically in relationship with others given their previous experiences. He wrote,

It is our lifelong ability to experience what another person experiences, though usually and appropriately to an attenuated degree. Under normal circumstances, this ability will change in specific ways along an individual variable, but on the whole, predictable developmental road. At the beginning of life, the baby’s empathic perception of his surroundings seems to be tantamount to total suffusion with the emotional state of the other. There is empathic flooding, in other words, as opposed to that attenuated taste of the other’s experiences that characterizes the adult in general and the depth psychologist who employs empathy scientifically in particular. From the beginning of life, therefore,—and the analytical situation is no exception—the desideratum is exposure to attenuated empathy.  

Kohut’s dominant method of data collection and theory construction from psychological data is the method of introspection and empathy. Empathy is used objectively for data collection. It is a value neutral tool “of observation which (a) can lead to correct or incorrect results, (b) can be used in the service of either compassionate, inimical, or dispassionate-neutral purposes, and (c) can be employed either rapidly or outside awareness or slowly and deliberately, with focused conscious attention.”

Empathy exists from the beginning of life. It has a line of development which parallels our psychological capabilities. For Kohut, empathy is the primary tool for data collection in the analytic situation. The therapist observes the patient with appropriate

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39 Kohut, How Does Analysis Cure?, 82.

40 Ibid., 75.
neutrality while providing the patient's need for empathic presence. Appropriate neutrality points to the empathic experience-distant perspective of observation and reflection of data. Empathic presence points to the experience near activity of understanding the patient's inner world. Kohut employed the method of introspection in the treatment process working with patients with a flawed sense of self.

The Promise of the Contextual Dimension of Empathy

Kohut makes two propositions in regard to empathy: (1) Empathy, correctly employed, is an indispensable tool of scientific observation; and (2) empathy constitutes a psychological bond between individuals and groups which diminishes their aggression: and that empathy is an important source of psychological nutriment without which psychological life as we know it could not be sustained. Kohut is concerned with illuminating the potential role empathy can play for science.

... in the form of a brief summary statement ... Yesterday's depth psychology has the obligation of defining its borders as clearly as it could—it had to emphasize that it did not employ the nonscientific methods of a cure through love which characterize so many therapeutic cults. This priority has not ceased, ... but our priorities have changed ... I believe that present-day depth psychology—employing scientific empathy—no longer needs to see the struggle to establish itself as a science as its major task. On the contrary, ... having secured its own position as a science, is no able ... to assist the other sciences, ... in their task of determining a matrix of meaning—empathic science—for their activities.②

Kohut acknowledges the relationship between empathy and socio-cultural influences on the self, and the contribution that the socio-cultural influences make in regard to the development of the psychological structures of the self. Kohut wrote:


②Ibid., 707-708.
that empathy is employed as a tool of observation that will increase the depth and breath of the investigations conducted by a number of traditional scientific disciplines, and its employment as the matrix into which all scientific activities must be embedded if they are not to become increasingly isolated from human life... The analyst is able to learn a great deal that is applicable to the grasp of man’s general behavior... what is needed in this realm is the cooperation of specialists, and thus their mutual enrichment, but not the ascendancy of one branch of the sciences of man over the others.43

Kohut suggests the field of scrutiny for the psychoanalyst has broadened beyond the scrutiny of psychological factors to converge with the scrutiny of social factors.44 Kohut wrote, “I am suggesting, then, that each change in man’s social surroundings confronts him with new adaptational tasks. . .”45 Kohut wrote,

... the analyst’s attitude toward the clinical and technical questions with which our time is confronting him will be erroneous, if he disregards the shift in man’s psychic organization which, as I suggested, has gradually been taking place... if analysis is to remain the leading force in man’s attempt to understand himself, it must respond with new insights when it is confronted with new data, and thus, with the challenge of new tasks.46

Kohut proposed empathy as an enriching norm for appropriating and approaching the investigation of the sciences in the human being’s search for meaning. It is my opinion that this is an essential aspect of Kohut’s contribution for the potential development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry that responds to some African American women clients whose reality is embedded in socio-cultural images.

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43Ibid., 703-705.

44Kohut, The Restoration of the Self, 269.

45Ibid., 279.

46Ibid., 280.
Psychotherapy with Narcissistic Personality Disorders

Kohut outlined steps and set the limits of the therapeutic process of self psychology as a three-step movement, the first two steps of which may be described as defense analysis and the unfolding of the transferences, while the third step—the essential one because it defines the aim and the result of the cure—is the opening of a path of empathy between self and selfobject, specifically, the establishment of empathic in-tuneness between self and selfobject on mature adult levels. This new channel or empathy permanently takes the place of the formerly repressed or split-off archaic narcissistic relationship; it supplants the bondage that had formerly tied the archaic self to the archaic selfobject.\textsuperscript{47}

These steps for the psychological cure of the disordered self are derived from Kohut's formulation of the genesis of self pathology and the genesis and dynamics of psychological development. Self psychology asserts that the nature of self pathology is flawed self with a predisposition of fragmentation, enfeeblement, or distortion. Fundamentally, the genesis of the pathological bondage of the self is caused by chronic nonempathic responses by the parents (exasperated by environmental factors) to the mirroring and idealizing needs of the self resulting in disturbances in both poles of the self.\textsuperscript{48} The therapeutic treatment that is proposed is empathic responsiveness of the therapist. Empathic responsiveness results in a permanent movement of the pathological distorted self from archaic self to more mature narcissism.

The Psychotherapeutic Process

The frame of the treatment process is the context where the selfobject transferences of the client (mirroring and idealizing) emerge, representing the inner world of the client.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., 65-66.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 70.
The therapist’s empathic attunement to the client’s predicament facilitates the emergence of the transferences. The transferences represent the reactivation of the separated, split off archaic self and the self object configurations of the person seeking treatment. Gradually during the course of therapy, the therapist’s inevitable and less than flawless responses to these configurations results in empathic failures which creates the tension of optimal frustration. The client experiences the imperfection of the therapist and begins to appropriate the function of the therapist through a process of transmuting internalization. The therapeutic cure manifests in the client’s capacity to seek appropriate selfobjects.  

Transmuting internalization aids the formation of psychological structure. Kohut explains this process.

When the self psychologist speaks of ‘psychic structure’ he is referring neither to the structures of a mental apparatus nor to structures of any of the constituents of a mental apparatus but to the structure of the self. The structure of the self, in other words, is the theoretical correlate of those attributes of the self which, in their sum total, define this central concept of self psychology. 

Transmuting internalization, as I understand the process, is the therapeutic process by which the client internalizes functions previously performed for the self by the therapist, a self object, and performs those functions for the client’s self. The psychological structures are compensatory structures of the self, which converge in the restructuring of the cohesive self. Three things must occur in treatment process for compensatory structures of the self to form: (a) the therapist must use a posture of empathic response for the collection of clinical date in the context of the therapeutic relationship; (b) the therapist must have a

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49 Ibid., 70-79.

50 Ibid., 99.
theoretical frame which provides concepts and formulations for understanding the clinical practice; and (c) the therapist must attend to the clinical process by movement from understanding the genesis and dynamics of the pathology to explaining her understanding to the client via communication. Köhut notes a qualitative distinctive between the understanding phase and the explaining phase. In the understanding phase the therapist assures the client that she understands the client's predicament, providing selfobject functions. In the explaining phase the therapist retains the selfobject functions and helps the client to feel support as the therapist facilitates, through communication, a more objective perspective for the client. In the explaining phase the client becomes more aware of her own pathological condition.

Central to Köhut's theory is the analysis of the transferences. In the analysis of the transferences he defined the deficits and the assets of the client. Defect analysis points to the genesis and dynamics of self pathology and assets analysis distinguishes these clients from more severe pathological states and indicate the potential for treatment. The transferences that are analyzed are idealizing and mirroring.

The idealizing transferences are reactivations of representations of the archaic states of fixation that occurred during merger between mother and child, and other reactivations of much later development fixations (from late pre-Oedipal through much later development) between the idealizing libido and the idealized object. The person in the latter case endlessly seeks union with an idealized object. Köhut, Analysis of the Self, 29.

51Ibid., 174.

52Kohut, Analysis of the Self, 29.
empathic introspective understanding and becomes a selfobject with whom the client can merge. The therapist communicates an in-depth understanding of the client’s psychological bondage. At the appropriate time the therapist facilitates the working through phase of the transference, helping the client to do so by explanations of the genesis and dynamics of the client’s pathology in regard to relationships during early developmental experiences.

The working through process initiates the movement of the repressed, split off (narcissistic strivings) that the self is invested in, through the process of transmuting internalizations, toward the redistribution of those energies and self awareness:

the redistribution of the narcissistic energies in the personality itself, i.e., (a) to the strengthening and expansion of the basic neutralizing structure of the psyche and thus, secondarily, to increased drive control and increased capacity for deinstinctualization; (b) to the formation of ideals or to their strengthening; and (c) to the acquisition of a number of more highly differentiated psychological attributes which utilize the narcissistic instinctual energies that have become available to the patient.  

These transferences represent the early attempts of the child to hold onto the archaic experience of narcissism by way of merger with the narcissistically invested omnipotent object.

The mirroring transference is the therapeutic reactivation of the developmental fixation of the self where the child attempted to hold onto the original good experience of narcissism by focusing this experience of omnipotence, perfection and power upon itself. There are three mirroring transferences: (a) archaic merger of self with an object which results in a projection of self as grandiose; (b) alter ego (twinship) where the tension arc merges with a selfobject like the self; and (c) a mirror transference where the therapist is

53Tbid., 101.
generally experienced as separate from the patient.\textsuperscript{54} Given the therapeutically empathic environment created by the therapist’s listening, understanding and communicated interpretations by explaining to the client the nature of the self’s bondage, “the patient will gradually reveal the urges and fantasies of the grandiose self and the slow process is thus initiated which leads—by almost imperceptible steps and often without any specific explanations from the side of the analyst—to the integration of the grandiose self into the structure of the reality ego and to an adaptive useful transformation of its energies.”\textsuperscript{55}

Kohut pointed out benefits of therapeutic analysis of narcissistic personality disorders. Primary benefits are: (a) increased capacity for empathy, having internalized previous split-off grandiose and idealized self-images; (b) the emergence of new creative capabilities facilitated by a more cohesive sense of self; and (c) an enhanced capacity for genuine humor and wisdom symbolic of the transformation of the archaic self and object configurations of narcissism into more mature narcissism and object relations proper.\textsuperscript{56}

**Optimal Frustration and Transmuting Internalization**

In self psychology therapeutic treatment, the client experiences cure in the establishment of psychological structure in the context of an introspective-empathic environment. This context inevitably produces optimal frustration.

Optimal frustration is a fundamental concept of the cure process. Optimal frustration occurs when the client can tolerate a step-by-step disappointment or frustration

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., 114.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., 176.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 296-328.
with the object. Disappointment or frustration experienced as tolerable is the second aspect of transmuting internalization. (The third aspect is depersonalization of the internalized parental object.) The concept optimal frustration, as I understand it, manifests disappointment or frustration during the phases of understanding and explaining as the therapist communicates to the client her understanding of the client’s genetic and dynamic predicament. This frustrates the client who seeks understanding of how she is feeling. Kohut wrote, “it is optimal frustration rather than optimal gratification because, through the analyst’s more or less accurate understanding, an empathic bond is established (or re-established) between analyst and patient that substitutes for the de facto fulfillment of the patient’s need.”57 The client’s experience of optimal frustration is essential for the development of psychological structure.

The process of transmuting internalization was referred to and defined previously and refers to the process by which clients begin to internalize specific functions and accrue structures previously missing in their development. It is a three-step movement of the client’s internalization of new psychological structure: First, the channel is open to the client’s psyche for the acquisition of specific psychological structures. This happens in the activation of the transferences. Second, optimal frustration moves the client to the gradual withdrawal from formerly internalized object images, and manifests as withdrawal of the clients narcissistically invested energy in the object. Third, the client depersonalizes the previously internalized object functions, and shifts the focus on whole separate persons and their functions.

57Ibid., 103.
In review, Kohut outlined three phases of psychotherapy: (a) understanding, (b) explaining, and (c) termination.

**Conclusion**

I have reviewed the development of the self psychology of Heinz Kohut in three stages from 1950 to 1977. I defined key concepts for the theory and practice of self psychology. I indicated that the method of empathic introspection is an essential and central tool in psychotherapy practice. Major issues related to the therapeutic process working with persons having narcissistic personality disorders were outlined.

This overview of the significant concepts of Kohut’s self psychology could contribute to a model of pastoral counseling with some African American women clients precisely because Kohut postulated that narcissism is normative development of the self. This is a universal claim of a traditional resource from the majority culture that has promise for the project of this dissertation.

**Implications**

The question of whether self psychology may provide a conceptual resource to the pastoral counselor to respond to the personal, social, contextual, and historical patterns that bear upon the reality of the African American woman client must be approached from conclusions drawn from the previous chapter. The locus for the development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for some African American women clients must consider and examine the human experience of the self of some African American women as a primary source in the light of her historical and socio-cultural and contextual experiences of her self in relations. The conclusions from the previous chapter assume, that given the human
experience of some African American women clients, and given her historical and socio-cultural reality, womanist theological response is the locus for the development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for this population.

In the previous chapter, it was concluded that the womanist theological response emerging among black female theologians, ethicists, biblical scholars, ministers, and laywomen, brings African American women’s experiences back into the discourse of all Christian theology from which it has been previously excluded. The salient themes of relations, loss, gain, faith, hope, celebration, and defiance emerge in womanist theological response as characteristic of black women’s experiences in this culture. One of the primary tasks of womanist theology is to dialog with the church and with other disciplines. In the previous chapter, it was concluded that the pervasive influence of the oppressive structures of race and gender discrimination in this culture impinge upon the African American woman’s well-being and some African American women whom I have treated at GAPC report feeling estranged from self, God, and others.

Womanist theological response has the potential to make visible the experiences of African American women so those African American women will see the need to transform patterns of sexism in the church and in theology. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding African American women’s struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women’s and the family’s freedom and well-being. Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical disabilities, and caste. Womanist theological response provides the vehicle for engaging the disciplines of theology and the behavioral sciences
with themes arising from the experiences of African American women to include her experiences in the development of theory and method.

Self Psychology and Womanist Criteria for a Model of Pastoral Counseling Ministry with Some African American Women Clients

Heinz Kohut developed self psychology theory and method out of a patriarchal paradigm which was concerned with a theory of personality development that responded to questions arising from middle class, middle aged, Caucasian male clients, who were his control population. Kohut postulated that narcissism is a normal line of human development, and a given for each potential client. He further postulated that: (a) the development of the self is facilitated by the quality of relationships between the self and its self objects, and (b) the quality of the self’s relatedness facilitates or hinders the cohesion of the self and the formation of idealized psychic structures. While Kohut’s conceptualization was not concerned with and did not include in his analysis the personality and experiences of African American women clients, this conceptualization of the nature of narcissism has the potential to assist the pastoral counselor in understanding the meaning of health within a contextual framework of relations of the self with other selves.

Self psychology has the potential to provide a theoretical framework that contributes to the development of a theory of personality that will respond to the contextual nature of some African American women clients. According to this theory, the self of the human being structures meaning in the context of a personal, historical, social and cultural context. Self psychology theory therefore has the potential to respond to the personal experiences,
historical, and socio-cultural reality of some African American women clients for the development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for this population.

The self psychology method of empathic introspection illuminates the dynamics and genesis of the development of the self. In the self psychology therapeutic treatment, the client experiences cure in the establishment of psychological structure in the context of an introspective-empathic environment. Self psychology method of empathic introspection provides intervention strategy that responds to the harm sustained by the developing self some African American women clients in a therapeutic empathic environment.

Self psychology theory and method has the potential to provide a theoretical framework for a model of pastoral counseling that considers the personal experiences and the historical and socio-cultural location of some African American women clients that a model of pastoral counseling ministry to this population must consider.

**Self Psychology and a Model of Pastoral Counseling with Some African American Women Clients**

The structure for the development of a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women who present in counseling and report feeling a sense of falling apart, and distant from self, God, and others, and who desire to develop her spirituality, must have goals, principles, and methods for the model. This model must reflect the sustaining and generative love of God, and the norm of Christian grace.

The goal for the model of pastoral counseling for some African American women in counseling is the appropriation of Christian grace. Self psychology must respond to the end of this goal.
Kohut’s Contribution to the Concept of Grace

Kohut does not explicitly address the concept of grace. It is my opinion that the concept of grace is informed by Kohut’s theory of the self. In this section I will construct from Kohut’s clinical-theoretical understanding of the self points at which the concept of grace is informed. There are three dimensions of Kohut’s theory of the self which I will use to interpret this concept: (a) the nature of the self’s psychology; (b) the nature and dynamics of self selfobject relationships; and (c) the process of transmuting internalization.

The predicament of the person suffering from narcissistic disorder of the self is suggestive of what I understand as the condition of the process who has a sense of falling apart and disconnected from the self, God, and others, and who is in need of sistering grace. Kohut’s formulation of the self involves fixation of the self to archaic self and object representations. These representations are split-off and hidden images that cause self bondage. The bondage of the self is attributed to a history of chronic nonempathic responses of the parents toward the child to include environmental influences.

A contribution that Kohut makes in this area is his inclusion of the socio-cultural influences on psychological structures of the self. While Kohut did not explore the socio-cultural images that impinged upon the self’s fixation in his therapeutic approach, it is my opinion that this is an essential aspect of analysis when working with some African American women whose reality is embedded in socio-cultural images as well as personal, historical, and ultimate dimensions.

First, Kohut observed that the self is in bondage and is oppressed by its fixation on archaic self and object images, and the therapeutic process is the context in which freedom
from this bondage may be experienced by the client. Freeing the self from fixations in the
context of its selfobject relationships is what I refer to as the process of grace.

Second, the social nature of the self’s bondage is indicative of what I suggest the
context in which grace is called for. The psychological structure of the self is embedded in
its relationships with selfobjects, and experiences lifelong needs for selfobjects. The self
moves on a continuum from archaic to more mature narcissism. This movement involves
freeing the self from specific distorted self and object images and specifically engaging other
appropriate images, resulting in a more cohesive self. Kohut defines this process as
transmuting internalization. I define this process as the process of grace.

Third, transmuting internalizations, the curative process of Kohut’s theory,
establishes psychological structures of the self. In relationship with the therapeutic process,
the distorted and defected images and attributes of the self are transformed. Kohut’s
description of the curative process in self psychology is both conscious and unconscious
experiences, which transforms the self through the internalization of split-off self and object
images of archaic narcissism, and the movement toward more mature narcissism. This
description informs my definition of the concept of grace.

Finally, it is my opinion that the process of grace is informed by Kohut’s concept of
empathy. Empathy is the cognitive and emotional capacity to experience what another is
experiencing. According to my definition of the concept of grace, it is the capacity of the
individual to experience God’s experience of them as the source and ground of their ultimate
concern in the context of relationships with self, God, and other selves. The self’s
experience of self is embedded in the nature and the quality of the self’s relatedness.
Empathic introspection, redefined as analogous but not identical to the concept of Christian grace in this dissertation, has the potential for serving the end of the goal for the model of pastoral counseling with some African American women clients. Therefore, self psychology has the potential for making a contribution to a model of pastoral counseling with some African American women clients.

A further contribution of self psychology to the development of a model of pastoral counseling with some African American women is the coherent method of the organization and analysis of data, and intervention strategies that promote health. This theory has the potential to organize and analyze the personal experiences of African American women in context and to respond to the results of the analysis with treatment. This contribution of self psychology serves the end of the goals of the appropriation of grace for the client.

In Chapter IV, I will present an evaluative and descriptive understanding of Paul Tillich's theology of the self in relationship to its social relationships and ultimate encounters. The purpose is to illustrate Tillich's theology of how the self responds and develops a sense of self in relationships.
CHAPTER IV

PAUL TILlich’S THEOLOGY OF THE SELF

In this chapter, I present an interpretation of Paul Tillich’s theology with particular concern for his theory of the estrangement of the self and the process of salvation. I believe that Tillich’s theory of the estrangement of the self can contribute to the interpretation of the needs of African American women clients theologically. My purpose is to illustrate Tillich’s theory of how the self responds and develops a sense of cohesion and community in relationships with the self, God, and others; how this relatedness may free the self from the anxiety of existential estrangement; and how the self structures faith and experiences reunion with the ground of being.

The rationale for this chapter is based upon conclusions drawn from Chapter II. One conclusion is that there are no theological pastoral counseling resources visible to the pastoral counselor that include the personal, historical, and socio-cultural experiences of the African American woman in the development of theory. A further conclusion is the claim of womanist theology that there are traditional theological resources that are visible that have the potential to contribute to a theology of pastoral counseling that responds to the patterns and needs of some African American women. Tillich’s theology, developed from the perspective of and in response to the needs of Caucasian males of Western European cultures, is a traditional theological resource. The purpose of this chapter is to make visible
to the pastoral counselor a theological resource that has the potential to contribute to a theology of pastoral counseling that responds to the needs and patterns of some African American women clients, using Tillich's theology.

The relevancy for including Tillich's theory of how the self structures and restructures in faith development for some African American women clients is Tillich's assumption that: (a) theology uses eschatological symbols to interpret answers to the questions implied in the human situation and to understand God's relation to the self and the self's world; (b) theology must begin with an analysis of the human condition. Theology in the meaning-making project of the self is shifted to the meaning for the human situation for God.

Paul Tillich's theological construction of the nature of being and the means of salvation through faith are traditional theological resources that have the potential to contribute to a pastoral theology that responds to the patterns and needs of African American women. I am aware that Tillich developed these theological resources with respect to the personal, social, and ultimate concerns and needs of the majority culture. Tillich's theological anthropology was a conceptualization in response to the reality of middle and upper class Western European male Caucasians of his era. The personal, historical, and socio-cultural reality of the African American women were not variables in Tillich's analysis of what it means to be a human being in relationship with self, God, and others.

The appeal of Tillich's theological anthropology for this dissertation is his perspective that his conceptualization of being, God, and salvation represents a norm of
experiences for the human predicament. I understand this to mean that all populations of human beings share experiences of meaning that are normative for what Tillich describes as the human predicament. Tillich’s theological anthropology assumes that the human being structures meaning in the context of relationships with self, God, and other selves in personal, socio-cultural, historical and ultimate contexts. Tillich’s theological anthropology assumes that estrangement of the self is a normative human experience. The promise of Tillich’s theological anthropology is that it provides a philosophical-ethical frame, described in the light of the Spiritual Presence that has the potential to contribute to a theology that responds to the contextual nature of some African American women’s experiences in relationships.

My purpose is to illustrate Tillich’s theory of how the self responds and develops a sense of cohesion and community in relationships with others as well as how the responses free the self of estrangement and are reconciling. This chapter describes: (a) the relational nature of the self; (b) the triadic nature of the self in various dimensions of relatedness; and (c) how the self appropriates and structures faith in relationship to its past, present, and future reality. I am describing my understanding of Tillich’s theory of the interrelated nature of the self’s response to personal, socio-cultural, historical, and ultimate encounters and how these responses affect the nature and character of the self’s participation in the activity of grace.

The Basic Ontological Structure

It is Paul Tillich’s ultimate claim that “God is being itself.” It is therefore important to understand what Tillich conceptualizes as being. Tillich asserts that the core of
philosophy is the ontological question, and that the *a priori* question is prior (*a priori*) to all other questions. Thought must begin with being, never behind being. Ontology, a particular theory about the nature of being and the kind of existence that is possible, asserts that there are concepts less universal than being, and more universal than the concepts that designate a particular realm of being. These ontological concepts are called principles, categories, or ultimate concern. Tillich’s analysis of the concepts forms the core of his philosophy. The concepts are *prior (a priori)* to experience and are necessary conditions for experience itself. The concepts are present whenever something is experienced and are products of a critical analysis of experience.

There are four levels of ontological concepts: (1) the basic ontological structure; (2) the “elements” constituting the structure; (3) the characteristics of being which are the conditions for existence, or existential being; and (4) the categories of being and knowing. These concepts are described in the following section in the order in which they are listed.

In Tillich’s basic ontological structure, the ontological question of being presupposes an asking subject and an object about which the question is asked. The ontological question presupposes the subject/object structure of being where a self-world structure is the basic articulation of being. Being in human being encountering the world is the basic structure of being and precedes all other structures.

Tillich discusses the nature of being by developing a philosophical frame for conceptualizing God as the ground of being, and the self, estranged from the essential nature expressed as reunion with the ground of being.
Tillich’s philosophical frame assumes the basic ontological structure. His basic ontological structure presupposes the ontological question of being. The ontological question of being, “What is being?”, presupposes an asking subject and an object about which the question is asked. It presupposes the subject object structure of being. This in turn presupposes a self-world structure as the basic articulation of being. Being in human being is the self encountering the world as the basic structure of being. For Tillich this basic structure precedes all other structures and is necessary for understanding Tillich’s articulation of the self.

Human being experiences the self as having a world to which there is belonging. It is from the analysis of this polar relationship between the human being and the world that the basic ontological structure is derived. The human being seeks within the self the principles which constitute the universe since the self is estranged from nature and needs to understand the meaning of the self’s behavior. “Man is unable to answer the ontological question himself because he experiences directly and immediately the structure of being and its elements.”¹ Being is revealed in the conditions necessary for knowing. “The truth of all ontological concepts is their power of expressing that makes the subject-object structure possible. They constitute this structure.”²

Being a self consists of the experience of both subject and object. Separateness and objectivity characterize being as subject. A sense that one is intimately engaged in or a part

²Ibid.
of a world characterizes being as object. Subject and object determine one another. "The mistake of all theories which explain the behavior of a being in terms of environment alone is that they fail to explain the special character of the environment in terms of the special character of the being which has such an environment. Self and environment determine each other."³

The human being is an ego-self that means that the human being possesses a self consciousness. This ego-self transcends the spacial and temporal environment. The world of the human being is an organized structure. The organization of the structure reflects the self. The self world polarity includes: (a) the temporal and spacial environment in which the human being lives, (b) the universal norms and ideas that the human being employs to interpret the world, and (c) human being as differentiated from the world to the extent that the world may be looked upon as an organized whole.⁴

Within the self world polarity are the derivative polarities of: (1) objective and subjective reason and (2) logical object and subject. Pure objects are conditioned by the scheme of knowing. Human being is not merely an object, and is never bound completely to an environment. Human being transcends environment

He always transcends it by grasping and shaping it according to universal norms and ideas. . . . This is the reason why ontology cannot begin with things and try to derive the structure of reality from them. That which is completely conditioned, which has not selfhood and subjectivity, cannot explain self and subject. . . . It is just as impossible to derive the subject from the object. . . . This trick of deductive idealism is the precise

³Ibid., 170.

⁴Ibid., 170, 173-174.
counterpart of the trick of reductive naturalism. . . . The basic ontological structure cannot be derived. It must be accepted.\textsuperscript{5}

This analysis of the basic ontological structure assumes that the epistemological “subject-object distinction” is ultimate for knowledge and for being. This basic structure is prior to human being and prior to nature. The basic ontological structure is Tillich’s condition of the ontological question, setting the philosophical frame and context in which the self experiences the self in relationships. Three pairs of ontological elements constitute the basic ontological structure in which the human beings self experiences relationship with self, God, and others selves. Tillich asserts that the ontological concepts must be analyzed. In this analysis the “self having a world to which it belongs—this highly dialectical structure—logically and experientially precedes all structures. There are four levels of ontological analysis. Its analysis should be the first step in every ontological task. The second level of ontological analysis deals with the elements which constitute the basic structure of being.\textsuperscript{6} Three pairs of elements constitute the basic ontological structure. The third level of ontological analysis has to do with the difference between existential and essential being. The fourth level deals with “basic forms of thought and being.”

In this section I have described my understanding of Tillich’s theory of the basic ontological structure. This analysis assumes that the epistemological “subject/object distinction” is ultimate for knowledge and for being. This basic ontological structure is God

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 164-165.
as being itself, and the ground of being. I will now describe the elements of the basic ontological structure and the relational nature of human being’s self.

The Elements of the Basic Ontological Structure

"The second level of ontological analysis deals with the elements that constitute the basic structure of being. They share the polar character of the basic structure, and it is just their polarity that makes them principles by preventing them from becoming highest generic concepts. One can imagine a realm of nature beside or outside the realm of history, but there is no realm of dynamics without form or of individuality without universality." 7 There are three pairs of ontological elements or polarities: (1) individuality and universality; (2) dynamics and forms; and (3) freedom and destiny. These polarities of elements are first found in the experience of the self-world, and then discovered in a general way in interactions within being. The first element in each polarity expresses “self relatedness of being” or the power to be something for itself. The second element of the polarity expresses the “belongingness of being” as part of the universe of being. 8 I understand that the polarity individually, dynamics, and freedom have to do with the relational nature of the human beings self. I understand that the polarity universality, form, and destiny are related to the environment in which the self structures meaning.

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7Ibid., 165.

8Ibid.
Individuality and Particularity

To be a self is to be an individual. Individuality is “implied and constitutive of every self, which means that at least in an analogous way it is implied and constituted in every being.”9 To be a self and to be an individual may be conceptualized as inseparable. However, in human being individuality is not absolute or complete. Individuality gains meaning only in its polar relationship with participation. Human being participates in the universe through the rational structure of mind and reality. When individualization reaches the perfect form called “person,” participation reaches the perfect form called “communion.”

“Without individualization nothing would exist to be related. Without participation the category of relation would have no basis in reality.”10 In the course of a critical analysis of experience, individuation and participation are prior (a priori) in that experience occurs within them. For example, there is a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the community in which the individual relates. An individual cannot experience self except in relation to other selves, which is a structural characteristic of being. “Individualization and participation are interdependent on all levels of being.”11

Individuals, while they may not be the perfect form “person,” are separate, and as such, participate in the universal structure. The self that participates has form. The being that participates has form for being because being something means having form. My understanding of the something of “form” of individuation and participation is that the

9Ibid., 175.

10Ibid., 177.

11Ibid.
necessary condition of the experience of self in historical, socio-cultural, and ultimate context is located within community with self, God, and other selves. Thus the individual participates in the universal structure. Tillich understood this something to be dynamics.

Dynamics and Form

Being something means having form. "Being is inseparable from the logic of being, the structure which makes it what it is and gives reason the power of grasping and shaping it."12 Every form forms something.

Dynamics cannot be thought of as something that is; nor can it be thought of as something that is not. It is the "me on," the potentiality of being which is nonbeing in contrast to things that have form, and the power of being in contrast to pure nonbeing. This highly dialectical concept is not an invention of the philosophers. It underlies most mythologies and is indicated in the chaos, the tohu-va-bohu, the night, the emptiness, which precedes creation. It appears in metaphysical speculations as Urggrund (Bohme), will (Schopenhauer), will to power (Nietzsche), the unconscious (Hartman, Freud), elan vital (Bergson), strife (Scheler, Jung). None of these concepts is to be taken conceptually. Each of them points symbolically to that which cannot be named.13

Dynamics is potential being. Each of these concepts points symbolically to what cannot be named. "If it could be named properly, it would be a form beside other beings instead of an ontological element in polar contrasts with the element of pure form."14

Dynamics and form appear in the human being as vitality and intentionality. Vitality is the power which keeps a living being alive and growing. Vitality, in the full sense of the word, is human because man has intentionality [which is its polar opposite].15 Dynamics

12Ibid., 178.
13Ibid., 178-179.
14Ibid., 179-180.
15Ibid., 179-180.
reaches out beyond nature only in man. This is his vitality and, therefore, man alone has vitality in the full sense.\textsuperscript{16} When vitality becomes human it operates in terms of objective structures. "Man is able to create a world beyond the given world. . . ."\textsuperscript{17} Vitality keeps a living being alive and growing. Human nature changes in history but the structural characteristic that underlies all the changes is "being one who has a history." "This structure is the subject of an ontological and theological doctrine of man. Historical man is a descendant of beings who had not history, or perhaps there will be beings who are descendants of historical man who have no history. But neither animals nor supermen are the objects of a doctrine of man."\textsuperscript{18}

Intentionality means "being related to meaningful structures, living in universals, grasping and shaping reality, living in tension with (and toward) something objectively valid."\textsuperscript{19}

Vitality and intentionality are interdependent, as are the other polar elements. Human being may grow, change, and transform nature and self through technical and spiritual realms. Human being cannot change the structures of dynamics and form which makes intentionality and history possible.

The dynamic character of being implies the tendency of everything to transcend itself and to create new forms. At the same time everything tends to conserve its own form as the basis of its self-transcendence. It tends to unite identity and difference, rest and

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 180.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 181-182.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 180.
movement, conservation and change . . . therefore, it is impossible to speak of being without also speaking of becoming. . . . The growth of an individual is the most obvious example of self-transcendence based on self conservation.\textsuperscript{20}

Tillich elaborates further,

Self-transcendence and self-preservation are experienced immediately by man in man himself. Just as the self on the subhuman level is imperfect and in correlation with an environment, while on the human level the self is perfect and in correlation with a world, so self-transcendence on the subhuman level is limited only by the structure which makes man what he is—a complete self with a world. . . . He can transcend himself in all directions just because of this basis . . . man is able to create a new world of technical tools and a world of cultural forms. In both cases something new comes into being through man’s grasping and shaping activity.\textsuperscript{21}

Using that which is given of nature, the human being creates technical forms that transcend nature. Validity and meaning are derived through the creation of cultural forms. Human being is creative and thereby transforms the self and is self-transcending. Human being is tool, bearer, and product of the transforming activity in self-transcendence. This self-transcendence is indefinite, while biological self-transcendence reaches its limit in human being, “. . . for man has freedom and freedom cannot be trespassed biologically.”\textsuperscript{22}

Freedom and Destiny

The basic ontological structure and its elements reach fulfillment and a turning point in the polarity freedom and destiny. Freedom is an element in the human being’s structure. Every part and function, which constitutes human being as a personal self, participates in the human being’s freedom.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 181.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., 182.
Freedom in polarity with destiny is the structural element that makes existence possible because it transcends the essential necessity of being without destroying it. . . . Freedom is not the freedom of a function (the will) but of man, that is, of that being who is not a thing but a complete self and a rational person . . . one should speak of freedom of man, indicating that every part and every function which constitutes man a personal self participates in his freedom.\(^{23}\)

Freedom is experienced as deliberation, decision, and responsibility. Deliberation points to the act of weighing motives. The person/individual who deliberates is always above the motives being weighed. "To say that the stronger motive always prevails is an empty tautology, since the test by which a motive is proved strong is simply that it prevails."\(^{24}\)

When a person's deliberation results in a reaction, the reaction is called a decision. Decisions close possibilities. Responsibility points to the obligation of the self who has freedom to respond if there are questions about the decision.\(^{25}\) The self is responsible as its acts are determined by the centered totality of the person's being or self.

This refers to body structure, strifes, and spiritual character. It includes the communities to which I belong, the past un-remembered and remembered, the environments which has shaped me, the world which has made an impact on me. It refers to all my former decisions . . . it is myself as given, formed by nature, history, and myself. My destiny is the basis of my freedom; my freedom participates in shaping my destiny. . . . Only he who has freedom has destiny.\(^{26}\)

\(^{23}\)Ibid., 182-183.

\(^{24}\)Ibid., 184.

\(^{25}\)Ibid.

\(^{26}\)Ibid., 184-185.
Destiny is the basis for freedom. For Tillich, destiny is "the self that is given, and the self that is formed by nature, history, and the self. Freedom and destiny distinguish the human being from all other levels of existence and arises within community.

Since freedom and destiny constitute an ontological polarity, everything that participates in being must participate in this polarity. But man, who has a complete self and a world is the only being who is free in the sense of deliberation, decision, and responsibility. Therefore, freedom and destiny can be applied to subhuman nature only by way of analogy; this parallels the situation with respect to the basic ontological structure and the other ontological polarities. . . . 27

Destiny is not the opposite of freedom but points rather to its conditions and limits.

Only he who has freedom has destiny. Things have no destiny because they have no freedom. God has no destiny because God is freedom. The word destiny points to something that is going to happen to someone; it has an eschatological connotation. This makes it qualified to stand in polarity with freedom . . . one has the possibility of accepting his fate or of revolting against it. Strictly speaking, this means that only he who has this alternative has a fate. And to have this alternative means to be free. 28

Every being participates in the polarity of freedom and destiny.

In this section I have presented my understanding of Tillich's theory of the elements of the basic ontological structure. The following structure will describe Tillich's theory of the characteristics of being.

The Characteristics of Being

The third level of ontological concepts expresses the characteristics of being and finitude. "The question of being is produced by the 'shock of nonbeing.' Only man can ask

27 ibid., 185.

28 ibid.
the ontological question because he alone is able to look beyond the limits of his own being and of every other being. . . ."29

Characteristics of being are conditions of existence, and the difference being "existential" being and "essential" being. Freedom is unity with finitude. Finite freedom is the turning point from being to existence.30 Finite is the central concept of Tillich's analysis because finitude drives the human being to the question of God.

This section presents a descriptive analysis of Tillich's theory of being and finitude.

Being and Nonbeing

Tillich responds to the problem of nonbeing:

Man must be separate from his being in a way that enables him to look at it as something strange and questionable. And such a separation is actual because man participates not only in being but also in nonbeing . . . if being and nothingness are placed in absolute contrast, nonbeing is excluded from being in every respect; everything is excluded except of nonbeing in being. It is not only by chance that historically the recent discovery on the ontological question has been guided by pre-Socratic philosophy and that systematically there has been an overwhelming emphasis on the problem of nonbeing.31

The problem of freedom is usually cast in terms of mechanistic determinism over against indeterminism. Tillich argues that neither theory approaches the way the human being grasps his own ontological structure. Both theories presuppose a "will" which possesses freedom. For Tillich the freedom of a thing is a contradiction in terms.32

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29Ibid., 186.
30Ibid., 165.
31Ibid., 187.
32Ibid., 188.
Freedom must be approached not as a quality of the will but as an element in the human being’s ontological structure, not as a function of the human being. This means that all parts of the function of the human being participate in freedom. So then nonbeing, an experience of the reality of human being, participates in being.

Excluding nonbeing cannot solve the problem. Tillich concludes that the dialectical problem of nonbeing is inescapable. It is a problem of finitude. Finitude involves being and nonbeing. “Man’s finitude, or creatureliness, is unintelligible without the concept of dialectical nonbeing.”33 “Finitude is experienced on the human level; nonbeing is experienced as the threat to being.”34

The Finite and the Infinite

Finitude is when being is limited by nonbeing. Finitude is the not yet and the no more of being.35 Everything that participates in the power of being also participates in nonbeing. The basic ontological structure and the elements constituting structure all imply finitude. “To be something is not to be something else. To be here and now in the process of becoming is not to be there and then. To be something is to be finite.”36 In order to experience finitude, the human being must look at self as potential infinity. Grasping life as moving toward death, the human being transcends temporal immediacy. The power of transcendence makes the human being aware of finitude and at the same time brings about

33Ibid., 188.
34Ibid., 190.
35Ibid., 189.
36Ibid., 190.
awareness the human being’s belongingness to being itself. The latter shows up in the fact that the human being has a longing for being.

Infinity shares a different relationship with finitude than the other polar elements in their relatedness. Infinitude is defined by the dynamics of free self transcendence of finite being. “Infinity is a directing concept, not a constituting concept. It directs the mind to experience its own unlimited potentialities, but it does not establish the existence of an infinite being.”37 Finitude is the ontological basis of human anxiety. Anxiety is as important as finitude. Anxiety is distinguished from fear, which is directed toward finite objects. Anxiety cannot be removed as it is in the structure of finitude, which cannot be changed. Anxiety is ontological and structural. Fear is psychological. Tillich regards anxiety as directed toward nothingness. Anxiety cannot be removed and can be used to understand something about what it means to be human being.

The Categories of Being and Nonbeing

The fourth level of ontological concepts consists of four categories that represent “the form in which the mind grasps and shapes reality.”38 They are logical and ontological and are present in everything. “They appear implicitly in every thought concerning God and the world, man and nature. They are omnipresent, even in the realm from which they are excluded by definitions, that is, in the realm of the unconditional.”39

37Tbid.
38Tbid., 192.
39Tbid., 191.
Tillich analyzes four main categories in the light of human finitude. The categories are time, space, causality, and substance. Regarded externally, these categories express the union of being and nonbeing. Regarded internally, they express the union of anxiety and courage. Courage for Tillich is a self-affirmation in spite of that which tends to hinder the self from affirming itself.  

Time

Time is the central category of finitude. Time unites an affirmative and a negative element. The philosophers who emphasize the negative element point to the movement of time from a past that is no more, toward a present which is nothing more than the moving boundary line between past and present. Those philosophers who emphasize the positive element in time “have pointed to the creative character of the temporal process, to its directness and irreversibility, to the new produced within it.” Time is real and creative, linking past and present and at the same time moving all things toward disintegration and obliteration.

The corresponding polarity to time is internal and is between anxiety and courage. The fact that the human being is temporal is grounded in the fact that human being has to die. The anxiety associated with temporality is present at all times. This anxiety is structural in nature and is not the consequence of sin. Anxiety, as a consequence of a sense

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42Ibid.
of sin, can be corrected, but anxiety that is structural in being or structural by virtue of finitude is ineradicable. This anxiety of finitude is balanced by affirming courage. "Without this courage man [human being] would surrender to the annihilating character of time; he would resign from having a present."

Space

The present implies space. Time creates the present through its union with space. Space is a category of finitude and is subject to contradictory valuation. Space unites being and nonbeing, anxiety and courage. To be means to have space. On the positive side, space means that every being strives for a place for itself. "This means above all, a physical location—the body, a place of soil, a home, a city, a country, a world. It also means a social 'space'—a vocation, a sphere of influence, a group, a historical period, a place in remembrance and anticipation, a place within a structure of value and meaning."44

Not to have a place is not to be. The continual striving for space is an ontological necessity. On the negative side, no place is one's own. "No finite being can rely on space, for not only must it face losing this or that space because it is a 'pilgrim on earth' but eventually it must face losing every place it had or might have."45 This awareness of this loss of space means anxiety of finitude. This awareness is balanced by the knowledge of the here and now, or by courage, which affirms the here and now. Everything affirms the space

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43Ibid., 194.

44Ibid.

which it has within the universe. . . . It accepts its ontological insecurity and reaches a security in acceptance.\textsuperscript{46}

Causality

The positive interpretation of causality references the power from which things proceed—the power which can produce and maintain realities despite the resistance of nonbeing. The negative interpretation notes that finite things do not possess their own power of coming into being. “The question ‘Where from?’ is universal . . . . But it cannot be answered, for every answer, even statement, about the cause of something is open to the answer to the entire series. For this God must ask himself, ‘Where have I come from?’”\textsuperscript{47} Causality and contingent being is analogous. Contingency which “throws man into existence” can push him out of it. The anxiety of this situation is about the human being’s lack of self sufficiency, which is possessed by God alone. (God is being itself and is therefore sufficient.) Courage, which balances this category, moves the human being toward self-reliance in the face of the inescapable fact of contingency and dependence.\textsuperscript{48}

Substance

The category, substance, in relation to human being, has to do with self-identity. It references that which is static and self-contained. Beyond its expression it is nothing. “The problem of substance is not avoided by philosophers of finitude or process, because questions about that which is in process cannot be silenced. The replacement of static

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., 195.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 196-197.
notions by dynamic ones does not remove the question of that which makes change possible by not changing itself." All change threatens one's being. Radical change such as from life to death threatens the loss of self-identity. Courage meet anxiety by affirming the self in the reality that finitude is significant in spite of the fact that substance may be lost.

All four categories of Tillich's theory of being and nonbeing express the union of being and nonbeing in everything finite. The ontological analysis, however, cannot answer the question of how courage is possible in the face of ineradicable anxiety. Revelation and the existential decision, which enters into faith in God alone, answer this question.

The ontological argument points to the ontological notion of the structure of finitude. Tillich argues that the marks of the existence of human being are separation, self-contradiction, and estrangement. The human being is aware of that from which there is a feeling of separation. There is an awareness of what ought to be. "Man knows that he is finite, that he is excluded from infinity which nevertheless belongs to him. He is aware of his actual finitude."  

God As Being and the Ground of Being

Tillich, in his argument for the existence of God, affirms that God exists in the inquiry of God's existence and in the denial of God's existence. God is the ultimate concern and can neither receive nor need proof. God encounters the human being in the world of the human being and is presupposed in each encounter. God is the power of being in all the varied participation in the world in which the human being is grasped by an ultimate

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49 Ibid., 197.

50 Ibid., 205.
concern. God is the source of all power. The power of thought is rooted in the power of being, and yet the ground of power of being from which thought is derived is inaccessible. To doubt, to feel, to think, to know, to exist affirms God's existence. "That which concerns us ultimately determines our being or nonbeing. Man is ultimately concerned about his being and meaning and that which determines his ultimate destiny beyond all preliminary necessities and accidents."51 In this regard, being references the whole of human reality, the structure, meaning, and the aim of existence. Tillich's use of the unconditional is a philosophical symbol for the ultimate concern—God concerns the human being ultimately and unconditionally. The self encountering the world is the basic ontological structure of being experiences anxiety because of the predicament of existential estrangement from the ground of being.

The following section describes my understanding of Tillich's theory of the human predicament. The state of the human predicament of the self is the state of existential estrangement.52 The self in the state of existential estrangement is self-destructive. The self, the self's world, and the self's experience of existence is existential estrangement, estranged from God, the source and the ground of being. It is necessary to give a description of the existential estrangement and its self-destructive implications.

51Ibid., 14.

The Human Predicament of Estrangement

This section explicates my understanding of Tillich’s theory of the human predicament of existential estrangement manifests in the theory of self-destruction and the doctrine of evil. Tillich’s system for describing the manifestation of existential estrangement is his theory of: (1) estrangement as sin; (2) the marks of estrangement; (3) self-destruction and the doctrine of evil. The theories are discussed in the order in which they appear.

Existential Estrangement As Sin

Estrangement is not a biblical term, but is implied by the biblical myth of the fall as a symbol for the human situation universally. “Man as he exists is not what he essentially is and ought to be. He is estranged from his true being.”53 It is necessary to give a description of the existential estrangement and its self-destructive implications.

The profundity of the term ‘estrangement’ lies in the implication that one belongs essentially to that from which one is estranged. Man is not a stranger to his true being, for he belongs to it. He is judged by it and cannot be completely separated, even if he is hostile to it. Man’s hostility proves indisputably that he belongs to him. Where there is the possibility of hatred, there and there alone is the possibility of love.54

The human being is estranged from God is theological fact and act. The fact and the act of the experience of estrangement manifest in human existence as guilty human being.

Sin is a universal fact before it becomes an individual act . . . sin as an individual act actualizes the universal fact of estrangement. As an individual act, sin is a matter of freedom, responsibility, and personal guilt. But this freedom is imbedded in the universal destiny of estrangement in such a way that in every free act the destiny of estrangement is involved and, vice versa, that the destiny of estrangement is actualized by all free acts. Therefore, it is impossible to separate sin as fact from sin as act. They are interwoven, and their unity is an immediate experience of everyone who feels

53Ibid., 55.

54Ibid., 45.
himself to be guilty. Even if one takes full responsibility for an act of estrangement—as one should—one is aware that this act is dependent on one’s whole being, including free acts of the past and the destiny which is one’s special, as well as mankind’s universal destiny.55

Estrangement is implied in “symbols of the expulsion from paradise, the hostility between man and nature, in the deadly hostility of brother against brother, in the estrangement of nation against nation through the confusion of languages, and in the continuous complaints of the prophets against their kinds and people who turn to alien gods.”56

In the various descriptions of the predicament of the human being in the Bible, estrangement is implied as sin. Sin is a turning away from God. Tillich redefined sin as analogous to the way in which he uses the term estrangement, and marks the actual predicament of the self’s situation universally as normative for the experience of the self. Tillich’s use of the term “estrangement” implies a reinterpretation of sin from a religious perspective.

Estrangement is implied in Paul’s statement that man perverted the image of God into that of idols, in his classical description of “man against himself,” in his vision of man’s hostility against man as combined with his distorted desires. In all these interpretations of man’s predicament, estrangement is implicitly asserted. Therefore, it is certainly not un-biblical to use the term ‘estrangement’ in describing man’s existential situation.57

Existential estrangement is the fact of the human being’s existence and sin is the act of the personality of the self turning away from God, the ground of being, manifest in distorted and destructive relationships, personally, socio-culturally, historically, and

55Ibid., 56.

56Ibid., 45.

57Ibid., 46.
ultimately in the attempt to actualize the self or to be the self’s own ground and power of being. In turning toward self in this way, the self loses essential unity with the ground of being, self, and others.\textsuperscript{58} The self is estranged essentially and existentially. Sin is the act of the self’s existence manifest in the marks of estrangement.

The Marks of Existential Estrangement

The marks of estrangement as sin are unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence. In his discussion of the Augustinian and the Reformers’ doctrine of Christian grace as the answer for sin, Tillich wrote, “The first mark of estrangement—is unbelief—includes unlove. Sin is a matter of our relation to God and not ecclesiastical, moral, or social authorities. Sin is a religious concept, not in the sense that it is used in a religious context, but in the sense that it points to man’s relation to God in terms of estrangement and possible reunion.”\textsuperscript{59}

The first mark of existential estrangement is unbelief, experienced as un-faith in God, manifests as the personality of the self turning away from the ground of being. This disruption of unity makes the self aware of the disunity of self and that to which the self belongs. This disunity is experienced as ambiguity, leading to the quest for self salvation, or turning toward the self as ground of being.\textsuperscript{60} In unbelief of un-faith, the self “removes his center from the divine center.”

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., 47.

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 49.

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 79-86.
The second mark of existential estrangement is hubris. Hubris is the self's tendency of turning toward oneself as the center of one's self and one's world.\textsuperscript{61} Hubris elevates the self to the status of source and ground of being. Hubris "is most distinctly expressed in the serpent's promise to Eve that eating from the tree of knowledge will make man equal with God."\textsuperscript{62} Hubris, the second mark of sin is the self making the self the center of the self and of the world, making the self divine. Hubris is sin in that it is the other side of unbelief. It is a "spiritual sin."\textsuperscript{63} This spirituality includes the self's whole life, the totality of the self's personality. The main symptom of hubris or the self's spiritual sin is that the self does not acknowledge the self's own finitude.\textsuperscript{64}

The third mark of sin is concupiscence. Concupiscence is the classical name for "the unlimited desire to draw the whole of reality into one's self."\textsuperscript{65} Concupiscence refers to all the relations of the self to the self and the self's world. The answer to the question why does the self tend to turn toward the center of the self is that this turning toward self "places the self in the position of drawing the whole world into himself."\textsuperscript{66} The self attempts self-realization through self-evaluation as ground of being. Self elevation does not return the

\textsuperscript{61}Ibid., 49-50.

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., 50.

\textsuperscript{63}Ibid., 51.

\textsuperscript{64}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., 52.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 51-52.
self to the essential unity for which it longs, but is the temptation for the self to make the self existentially the self’s center and world.

Estrangement represents the fact of the distorted and destructive existence of the human situation universally and is the normative experience of the self in relation to self, God, and other selves. Sin, as an act, is distorted and destructive existence in which the total personality of the self turns away from the ground of being, away from God. The mark of estrangement as sin manifests as unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence.

**Existential Self-Destruction and the State of Evil**

The self is conscious of the self with the self’s world, “in existential estrangement, unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence. Each expression of the self’s estranged state contradicts the self’s essential being, and the self’s potency for goodness.”

Self contradiction is a consequence of estrangement and necessarily drives the self toward self-destruction. Destruction has structures. “It aims at chaos; but as long as chaos is not attained, destruction must follow the structures of wholeness; and if chaos is attained, both structure and destruction have vanished.”

The basic polarity of finite being is self and world. Within this polarity the self has a completely centered self and a structured universe to which the self belongs. The self has an environment and transcends that environment with every spoken word. The self has freedom to make the self world into an object that the self beholds or to make the self into an object upon which the self gazes. In this situation the self may experience self-loss and world-loss. This is the basic “structure of

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67 Ibid., 59-60.

68 Ibid., 60.
destruction” and the analysis of this structure is the first step to understand what is described as “evil.”

Evil may be used in a larger and a narrower sense. In the larger sense it is “one evil alongside other evils.” It represents “everything negative and includes both destruction and estrangement.” It is the “cause of self destruction and an element of self destruction.” In “classical language sin is the cause of evil and evil itself.” In the narrower sense of evil, it is the “consequence of the state of sin and estrangement.” Tillich distinguished the doctrine of evil from the doctrine of sin. Evil follows the doctrine of sin. Evil is the “structure of self destruction which is implicit in the nature of universal estrangement.”

“Self-loss as the first and basic mark of evil is the loss of one’s determining center; it is the disintegration of the centered self by disruptive drive which cannot be brought into unity . . . they split the person. Man’s centered self may break up, and, with the loss of self, man, loses his world.” The experience of the self in self loss and world loss is manifest in “moral conflicts and in psychopathological disruptions, independently, or interdependently.” There is a “falling to pieces” experience of self and the self’s world. The self is powerless and the self feels powerless in the awareness of the self’s empty self. The possibility of self loss and world loss is always present in the self’s “as fully centered.” The fully centered self is form, and this form only is actualized in its unity with its content. The form of centeredness gives the self what it needs to be what it is. “Under the control of hubris and concupiscence, the self can approach the state of disintegration. The attempt of the finite

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69Ibid.

70Ibid., 61.

71Ibid.
self to become the center of everything gradually has the effect of its ceasing to be the center of anything.”

The loss of the self means that the self relies upon and is dependent upon the limited environment. The environment is just a part of the self world. The loss of the self world subjects the self to the “bondage of an environment, namely, the result of a creative encounter with his world represented by a part of it. Only in estrangement can [the self] be described as a mere object of environmental impact.”72 Self loss and world loss are interdependent in the state of estrangement. Loss of one’s world occurs when one loses one’s centeredness. The disunity of centeredness in the state of estrangement is experienced as ambiguity. Ambiguity manifest in conflicts in the ontological polarities.

Conflicts in the Ontological Polarities in the State of Estrangement

“The interdependence of self loss and world loss in the state of estrangement manifests in the interdependent loss of the polar elements of being. The polar elements referred to previously in this chapter are: (1) freedom and destiny, (2) dynamics and form, and (3) individualization and participation. Conflicts occur when the polar elements separate in the state of existential estrangement.

The Separation of Freedom from Destiny

The first interdependent polarity is the separation of freedom from destiny. In essential being freedom and destiny “lie within each other, distinct but not separated, in tension but not in conflict.” Their source and the source of their polar unity is the ground of being. When freedom is aroused, it begins a process by which it separates from destiny.

72Ibid., 62.
to which it belongs. "In the moment of aroused freedom a process starts in which freedom
separates itself from destiny to which it belongs. . . . Under the control of hubris and
concupiscence, freedom ceases to relate itself to the objects provided by destiny. . . . The
indications coming from one's destiny remain unnoticed or are disregarded."73

Freedom is distorted into arbitrariness and destiny is distorted into mechanical
necessity. The dialectics of this situation has been described as existentialist, supported by
depth psychology, in terms of the restlessness, emptiness, and meaninglessness related to
it. The trend that is revealed in this state of estrangement is the structure of destruction that
is played out in the tendency for the self to use freedom to lose destiny.74

The Separation of Dynamics from Form

The second interdependent polarity is the separation of dynamics from form. Dynamics and form are united in the essential character of the self, and describes the
existential predicament of the self. "In essential being there are forms of self transcendence of form. Their unity with the dynamics of being is never disrupted."75 Under the control of hubris and concupiscence, the existential disruption of dynamics and form become evident in "driving" the self "in all directions without any definite aim or content." The self's
dynamics are distorted into a formless urge for self transcendence. Dynamics become an
aim in itself, sacrificing creativity. Form without dynamics is equally destructive.
Abstracted from dynamics, form manifests in oppressive and suppressive relations, without

73Ibid., 63.

74Ibid.

75Ibid., 64.
creativity. The separation of dynamics and form manifests as emptiness, chaos, and loss of creativity. The self becomes subject to law.

The Separation of Individualization from Participation

The third interdependent polarity is the separation of individualization from participation. "The two poles are interdependent. The more individualized a being is the more it is able to participate . . . . The centered self participates in the world through "perception, imagination, and action."76 In the state of estrangement the self is shut within the self and is shut off from participation. "The act of knowing is derived of any participation of the total subject in the total object." In the state of estrangement the self is subjected to the power of objects and becomes an object alongside other objects. The objectification of the self is a general problem and danger of existential estrangement common to the human situation. The self as mere object is manifestation of the structures of destruction, or the basic sources of evil.

Finitude and Estrangement

Separation from the source and ground of being leaves the self in a state of natural finitude. The biblical myth of the "fall" in Genesis left the self that had sinned in a state of estrangement from God, and with a finite nature that has to die. "Sin does not produce death but gives to death the power which is conquered only in participation in the eternal."77 Left with the awareness that the self has to die, finitude is experienced as anxiety about nonbeing. "Under the conditions of estrangement, anxiety has a different character, brought

76Ibid., 65.

77Ibid., 66-67.
on by the element of guilt. [Guilt transforms the anxiety of death.] The loss of one’s potential eternity is experienced as something for which one is responsible in spite of its universal tragic actuality.” 78 Under the conditions of estrangement, the anxiety about death is more than the threat of nonbeing. Death becomes an evil, a structure of destruction. The structures of destruction are based on the structures of finitude. “The categorical nature of finitude, including time, space, causality, and substance is valid as structure in the whole of creation... But the function of the categories of finitude is changed under the conditions of existence.” 79 In the categories of finitude, the unity of being and nonbeing manifest in all finite beings and produce anxiety. Where the experience of being over nonbeing is predominant, the categories may be affirmed by courage. “In the state of estrangement the relation to the ultimate power of being is lost. In that state, the categories control existence and produce a double reaction toward them—resistance and despair.” 80

Under the conditions of estrangement the category of time is experienced as “mere transitoriness without actual presence.” The resistance of the self to accept transitoriness and self’s attempt to transform it into a lasting presence makes time a structure of destruction.

When space is experienced under the conditions of estrangement, it is experienced as “spacial contingency, i.e., without a necessary place to which man belongs.” The self tries to resist this situation and is “defeated and thrown into the despair of ultimate

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78 Ibid., 67.
79 Ibid., 68.
80 Ibid.
uprootedness.” In these categories and in other categories the tendency for the self is to be aware of the self’s potential infinity. “The conflicts in the ontological polarities and the transformation of the categories of finitude under the conditions of estrangement have consequences for man in all directions. Two . . . examples are suffering and loneliness.”81

Suffering concerns the self. Loneliness concerns the self in relation to other selves. Suffering is an element of finitude. In the state of dreaming innocence, suffering is transformed into blessedness. Under the conditions of existence, the self is cut off from blessedness, and suffering for the self becomes a structure of destruction—an evil. Suffering can be meaningful when it calls for protection and healing for the self who is in pain. Suffering can show the limits and potentialities of the self who suffers based upon the objective character of the self who is suffering.

One of the main causes of suffering is aloneness of the self; the self’s resistance to loneliness manifests in the self’s desire for union with other selves; and, the self’s hostility when the quest for union is met with rejection. “Being alone in essential finitude is an expression of man’s complete centeredness and could be called ‘solitude’. . . . In solitude man experiences the dimension of the ultimate, the true basis for communion for those who are alone. In existential estrangement man is cut off from the dimensions of the ultimate and is left alone—in loneliness. This loneliness, however, is intolerable. It drives man to a type of participation in which he surrenders his lonely self to the collective.”82

81Ibid., 70.

82Ibid., 71.
The self surrenders to the spirit of the collective and does not experience acceptance. The self continues to seek acceptance by the other. The other cannot accept the self because the other is also unable to have solitude, and unable to have communion. This is experienced as rejection. Rejection manifests in hostility against the other and self hostility. Hostility is a structure of destruction—an evil. “Destruction of others and self destruction are interdependent in the dialectics of loneliness.”

Finitude includes doubt and meaninglessness. The situation of essential doubt makes it possible for the self to “analyze and control reality to the extent that he is willing to use it honestly and sacrificially.” Doubt appears in feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and indefiniteness in every aspect of the self to the self and to the self’s world. In the state of estrangement, insecurity, uncertainty, and doubt become absolute and drive the self toward despair about the possibility of being a self with a world. Despair manifests in destructive defenses in the self’s patterns of resistance to the situation of loneliness. The patterns of resistance to loneliness throw the self into restlessness, emptiness, cynicism, and the experience of meaninglessness. Meaninglessness means that the self is deprived of meaning. Meaninglessness is a structure of destruction—an evil.

The “structures of destruction” are not the only mark of existence. They are counterbalanced by structures of healing and reunion of the estranged. The self longs for reunion with its essential nature but is unable to break through or overcome estrangement

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83Ibid., 72.
84Ibid., 73.
85Ibid., 75.
from self, God, and others. "... no act within the context of existential estrangement can overcome existential estrangement. . . ." The disunity of the self in the state of estrangement experiences life as ambiguous and longs for unambiguous life.

In this section I have described my understanding of Tillich's theory of the state of human existence as the state of existential estrangement. I have discussed existential estrangement as: (1) universal fact and sinful act, (2) existential self-destruction and the state of evil, and (3) the state of finitude. The following section will explore the conditions for the reunion of the estranged.

The Conditions for the Reunion of the Estranged

This section describes my understanding of Tillich's theory of the conditions for the reunion of the human predicament of existential estrangement. Tillich's system for describing the conditions for reunion is found in religion. This section describes Tillich's theory of: (a) New Being, (b) faith, (c) the doctrine of atonement, and (d) salvation.

The self starts the quest of reunion with the ground of being in religion where the self receives the answer for its predicament. Religion is symbol and is not identical to the answer for which the self seeks. There are three main religious symbols for unambiguous life: Spirit of God, Kingdom of God, and Eternal Life. All three symbols are "symbolic expressions of the answer revelation gives to the quest for the unambiguous life . . . the three symbols express different directions of meaning within the same idea of unambiguous life . . . the symbol 'Spiritual Presence' uses the dimension of spirit, bearer of which is man, but in order to be present in the human spirit, the Divine Spirit must be present in all

86Ibid., 78.
dimensions which are actual in man, and this means, in the universe."\textsuperscript{87} The Spirit of God is the presence of the Divine Life within creaturely life. The Divine Spirit is "God present" the spirit of God is not a separated being. One can therefore speak of "Spiritual Presence" in order to give the symbol its full meaning. Tillich asserts that "there is no pure Spiritual Presence where there is no humanity and justice."

In Jesus, the "divine spirit" was present without distortion. In Jesus as the Christ, the New Being appeared as the past and future criterion of all Spiritual experiences. The divine spirit possessed his spirit or . . . God was in him. This makes him the Christ, the decisive embodiment of the New Being for historical mankind.\textsuperscript{88}

Tillich proposes New Being as the correction or reunion of the estranged existence of the human being. The human being must receive reunion from God. Only New Being breaks through estrangement. The biblical symbol for Christ is bearer of New Being. "It is the eternal relation of God to man that is manifest in the Christ . . . . The expectation of the Messiah as the bearer of the New Being presupposes that 'God loves the universe' even though in the appearance of Christ he actualizes this love for historical man alone:"\textsuperscript{89}

New Being in Jesus as the Christ is symbol of the reunion of the estranged. Tillich wrote, "Love as the striving for the reunion of the separated is the opposite of estrangement.


\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., 144.

\textsuperscript{89}Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology}, vol. 2, 96.
In faith and love, sin is conquered because estrangement is overcome by reunion.\textsuperscript{90} Love responds to the concrete human situation of estrangement.

That which is negated by New Being is the bondage to existential estrangement and that which is affirmed is New Being, created by the Spiritual Presence.\textsuperscript{91} [New Being is the process of essential being under the impact of existence, conquering the gap between essence and existence.] New Being means that the Spiritual Presence cannot be produced but given.\textsuperscript{92} New Being and salvation are two ontological theological symbols of Spiritual Presence that correspond to estrangement.

Spiritual Presence . . . elevates the person into the transcendent unity of the divine life and in so doing it reunites the estranged existence of the person with his essence . . . . Love unites the unconditional character of the formalized moral imperative with the conditional character of the ethical content. Love is unconditional in its essence, conditional in its existence . . . . Love is unambiguous not as law, but as grace . . . . Theologically speaking, Spirit, love and grace are one in the same reality in different aspects. Spirit is creative power; love is its creation; grace is the effective presence of love in man.\textsuperscript{93}

Tillich characterizes New Being as faith. Faith is the reunion of the estranged with the ground of being. This faith occurs within the context of the Spiritual Presence and is a process. "Faith is the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence and opened to the transcendent unity of unambiguous life. In relation to the Christological assertion, one can say faith is the state of being grasped by the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus as the

\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., 47.


\textsuperscript{92}Ibid., 211.

\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., 273-274.
Christ. In this definition of faith, the formal and universal concept of faith has become material and particular: it is Christian.\textsuperscript{94}

Faith has three elements. The “first element of faith is its receptive character, its mere passivity in relation to the divine Spirit. The second element of faith is its paradoxical character, its courageous standing in the Spiritual Presence. The third element characterizes faith as anticipatory, its quality as hope for the fulfilling creativity of the divine Spirit.”\textsuperscript{95}

Faith is the manifestation of the work of the divine Spirit’s activity of salvation. New Being applied to Jesus as the Christ points to the power in him to conquer existential estrangement or, negatively put, the power to resist estrangement. The power of New Being implies the potential for human participation in New Being and points to the fact that this power is not an individual act of a human being but a gift of God. “In this sense the concept of the New Being re-establishes the meaning of grace.”\textsuperscript{96} Grace serves a connecting function in existence between subject and object. Grace is a gift of God. Under the conditions of existence, Grace reunites the estranged.\textsuperscript{97} “Existential estrangement is rooted in the existential estrangement or gap of the self and world which, in the cognitive function, is the separation of subject and object.”\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{94}Ibid., 131.

\textsuperscript{95}Ibid., 133-134.

\textsuperscript{96}Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology}, vol. 2, 57.

\textsuperscript{97}Ibid., 79.

The gap lies between the knowing subject and the object to be known, and between the expressing subject and the object to be expressed.\textsuperscript{99} In the function of praxis, the gap lies between existing human subject and the object for which the human strives—a state of essential humanity, and the gap between the existing social order and the object toward which it strives—a state of universal justice. [Praxis is the whole of cultural acts of centered personalities who are members of social groups, acting upon each other and themselves. Praxis in this sense is self creation of life in the personal, communal realm. It includes the acts of persons on themselves and on other persons, on the groups to which they belong and through them on groups, and indirectly on mankind as a whole.]\textsuperscript{100} This practical gap between subject and object has the same consequence as the theoretical gap; the subject and object scheme is not only the epistemological but also the ethical problem.\textsuperscript{101} A person who participates in a culture’s movement, growth and possible destruction is culturally creative. Everyone is subject to the ambiguities of culture both subjectively and objectively. Everyone is inseparable from historical destiny.\textsuperscript{102} Every human self has the potential to experience the reunion of the estranged is normative.

\textsuperscript{99}Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{100}Ibid., 65-66.
\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{102}Ibid.
Faith: The Process of Reunion

Rejection of the negative wholly is called repentance, and acceptance of the affirmative wholly is faith. Faith is a receiving act and this act is a gift of grace. Repentance is a decision and points toward the momentary act of cutting off other possibilities. It is a process that manifests in an ecstatic moment. This activity constitutes New Being. [If the Christian message is understood as the message of the “New Being,” an answer is given to the question implied in our present situation and in every human situation. This New Being is manifested in “Jesus as the Christ.”] New Being is reunion for the human predicament of existential estrangement.

Tillich suggests that love and justice are related ontological concepts that illumine the conditions of the reunion of the estranged. Justice is a part of love and is dependent on love. Justice is an activity of love. This section discusses my understanding of Tillich’s conditions for the self’s reunion of the estranged.

Divine Love

The ontological nature of divine love is expressed in the tendency of every life process to unite the trend toward separation with the trend toward reunion. Such a tendency is based on the polarity of individualization and participation. Love is absent when there is no individualization, and love can be fully realized only where there is a full

\[^{103}\text{Ibid., 224.}\]

\[^{104}\text{Ibid., 220.}\]
individualization in the individual. "The individual longs to return to the unity to which he belongs, in which he participates by his ontological nature."\textsuperscript{105}

To say that God is love is to apply the experience of separation and reunion to the divine life. God is not subject to ontological elements, and therefore God is not love. God as love must be spoken of symbolically. God as love means that the divine love has the character of love but beyond the distinction between potentiality and actuality.\textsuperscript{106}

In an effort to clarify divine love, Tillich mentions four types of love. They all have the common quality of desire. (1) Libido is the movement of the needy toward that which fulfills the need. (2) Philia is movement of the equal toward union with that which is equal. (3) Eros is the movement of that which is lower in power and meaning to that which is higher. (4) Agape is a desire to fulfill the desire of the other being. Agape is independent of contingent characteristics, and transcends the other types of love. Agape affirms the other unconditionally.\textsuperscript{107}

Agape suffers and forgives. It seeks the personal fulfillment of the other. Agape is the only basis for the assertion that God is love. "God works toward the fulfillment of every creature and toward the bringing together into the unity of his life all who are separated and disrupted."\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{105}Ibid., 279.
\textsuperscript{106}Ibid., 280.
\textsuperscript{107}Ibid., 136-138.
\textsuperscript{108}Ibid.
Divine Justice

Justice is an activity of love and depends on love. It has no independent ontological standing. It is the protesting activities of that which violates love. When an individual violates love, justice is the power against that violation. Justice is not the flip side of love, but is its inner meaning. The ontological character of love solves the problem of the relation of love and retributive justice. Tillich finds the final expression of the unity of love and justice in the symbol of justification. Justification points to the divine act in which love conquers the immanent consequences of the violation of justice. This divine love in relation to the unjust creature is grace.  

Tillich characterizes the basic ontological structure of human being as existential estranged being. The answer for existential estranged human being’s self is divine justice or making just what is unjust, making acceptable what is not acceptable. Divine love in relation to the unjust creature is grace. “The term grace qualifies all relations between God and man in such a way that they are freely inaugurated by God and in no way dependent on anything the creature does or desires.” Tillich distinguishes two forms of grace: “the grace which characterizes God’s threefold creativity and the grace which characterizes God’s saving activity.”

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310Ibid.
311Ibid.
312Ibid.
The first form of grace provides participation to every individual being. The second form of grace is paradoxical—it gives fulfillment to that which is separated from the source of fulfillment, and it accepts that which is unacceptable. There is a third form of grace that mediates between the previous two forms and unites elements of both, namely God's providential grace. Mediating grace belongs to and is derived from creative grace and from saving grace. "On the one hand, it belongs to creative grace and, on the other hand to saving grace, since the purpose of God's directing or providential creativity is fulfillment of the creature in spite of resistance." The classical term for this grace is gratia praeveniens ("prevenient grace"). This grace "prepares for the acceptance of saving grace through the processes of nature and history."

Salvation

The universal significance of Jesus as the Christ may be expressed as means of salvation. He is called Savior, Mediator, and Redeemer. Tillich distinguishes salvation from "ultimate negativity and from that which leads to ultimate negativity. Ultimate negativity is called condemnation or eternal death, the loss of the telos of one's being, the exclusion from the universal unity of the kingdom of God and the exclusion from eternal life.

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113Ibid.
114Ibid.
115Ibid.
Salvation is rooted in this understanding which Tillich expresses as a question of “to be or not to be.”

Tillich refers to the original meaning of salvation (from salvus or “healed”) as adequate to interpret salvation as healing. It corresponds to the state of estrangement as the main characteristic of existence. “Healing means reuniting that which is estranged, giving a center to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself.” New Being has grown from this interpretation of salvation as “healing.” New Being in Jesus as the Christ is essential being under the conditions of existence, conquering the gap between essence and existence.

“Salvation is reclaiming from the old and transferring into the New Being. Salvation through Christ is related to healing which occurs throughout history . . . . The history of salvation has at its center the event of Jesus as the Christ . . . . Revelation is the ecstatic manifestation of the Ground of being in events, persons, and things.”

**New Being and Human Being**

The doctrine of atonement describes what affect New Being has on existential estrangement. Two things occur in this definition, the atoning activity, and what happens to the individual grasped by the atoning affect. Atonement is always a divine and a human act. “The message of Christianity is that God, who is eternally reconciled, wants human

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117 Ibid.

118 Ibid., 166.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.
beings to be reconciled to God. God reveals God’s self to us and reconciles us to God’s self through Jesus as the Christ-Mediator. God is always the one who acts, and the “Mediator” is the one through whom God acts.”

There are several principles of atonement: (1) the atoning processes are created by God alone; (2) there are no conflicts between God and God’s reconciling love and God’s retributive justice; (3) the divine removal of guilt and punishment is not an act of overlooking the reality and depth of existential estrangement; and (4) God’s atoning activity must be understood as God’s participation in existential estrangement and its self-destructive consequences; (5) in New Being the divine participation in existential estrangement becomes manifest; (6) through participation in New Being, which is the being of Jesus as the Christ, human beings also participate in the manifestation of the atoning act of God. Now to turn to Tillich’s threefold conceptualization of the character of salvation in the light of participation and on the basis of the doctrine of atonement.

The threefold character of salvation in which the effect of the divine atoning act upon the self is expressed is: (1) participation (Regeneration); (2) acceptance (Justification); and (3) transformation (Sanctification). Salvation is described in the order given.

\[121\] Ibid., 170.

\[122\] Ibid., 175-176.

\[123\] Ibid., 176.
Salvation as Regeneration

The individual must participate with Jesus as the Christ in order to experience the salvation power of being grasped by the New Being. The classical terms for this state are “New Birth,” “Regeneration,” “being a new creature.”

‘Regeneration’ is the state of things universally. . . . The message of conversion is, first, the message of a new reality to which one is asked to turn; in the light of it, one is to move away from the old reality, the state of existential estrangement in which one has lived . . . the state of having been drawn into a new reality manifest in Jesus the Christ. Faith, which accepts Jesus as the Christ, is the basis for participation.

Regeneration precedes justification in the way in which Tillich uses it here because it is defined as “participation” in New Being, in its objective power, however fragmentary this may be. Regeneration does not presuppose faith. Tillich develops his conceptualization of faith as the courage to be.

“Faith is the state of being grasped by the power of being itself. The courage to be is an expression of faith and what ‘faith’ means must be understood though the courage to be . . . . We have defined courage as the self affirmation of being in spite of nonbeing. The power of this self affirmation is the power of being which is effective in every act of courage. Faith is the experience of this power.”

Everything participates in faith. “Being itself (God) transcends every finite being infinitely, and transcends man unconditionally. Faith bridges this infinite gap by accepting the fact that in spite of it, the power of being is present, that he who is separated is accepted.

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124Ibid., 177.

125Ibid., 177.

126Tillich, The Courage to Be, 172.
Faith accepts ‘in spite of’; and out of the ‘in spite of’ of faith, the ‘in spite of’ of courage is born. . . . Faith is existential acceptance of something transcending ordinary experience. Faith . . . is a state. It is the state of being grasped by the power of being.”¹²⁷

The self gains the courage to be by accepting acceptance. Courage participates in the self-affirmation of being itself. Courage “participates in the power that prevails against nonbeing. He who receives this power in an act of mystical or personal absolute faith is aware of the courage of his courage to be . . . the courage to be is the key to being itself.”¹²⁸

Tillich elaborates on an example of self-affirmation in spite of the anxiety of guilt and condemnation. “In the communion of healing, for example, the psychoanalytic situation, the patient participates in the healing power of the helper by whom he is accepted although he feels himself unacceptable. The healer, in this relationship does not stand for himself as an individual but represents the objective power of acceptance and self-affirmation. The objective power works through the healer in the patient. It must be embodied in a person who can realize guilt, who can judge, and who can accept in spite of judgment.”¹²⁹

The self that accepts acceptance in the awareness of being unacceptable receives grace to accept acceptance. The experience of the self as historical is made available to the self by way of cognition. “The impact of the spiritual presence is also manifest in the method of theonomic cognition. Within the structure of self-object separation,

¹²⁷Ibid., 178-181.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid., 165-166.
observation and conclusion are the way in which the subject tries to grasp the object, remaining always strange to it and never certain of success."\textsuperscript{130}

Salvation as Justification

"Justification presupposes faith, which is the state of being grasped by the divine presence. It is the immediate consequence of the doctrine of atonement and is at the heart and center of salvation."\textsuperscript{131} It is a subjective and objective event. It is objective in the sense that God accepts as not estranged those who are estranged from God by guilt and the act by which God takes them into the unity with God which is manifested in the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

Justification literally means making just—making man what he essentially is and from which he is estranged.\textsuperscript{132} The individual has no merit that induces God's acceptance or enables God's acceptance. The individual must accept this acceptance by God in order to realize the state of unity between God and the individual.

Salvation as Transformation

Regeneration and justification describe the reunion of what is estranged. Regeneration is actual reunion. Justification is accepting that the unacceptable is acceptable. Sanctification may be understood as being received into the community of the "sancti," into the community of those grasped by the power of New Being.\textsuperscript{133} Sanctification is that

\textsuperscript{130}Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. 3, 256.

\textsuperscript{131}Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. 2, 178.

\textsuperscript{132}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., 179.
process by which the New Being transforms personality and community, inside and outside the Church through the sanctifying work of the divine Spirit, who is the actuality of New Being. ¹³⁴

In conclusion, Tillich’s theory of how the self structures salvation is precisely the experience of faith when the self experiences a serious ultimate concern, and is grasped by the power of being. This event of being grasped by the power of being, or New Being, is an encounter of the self with an event or image which changes the meaning of the self’s history and faith relationships. This event of New Being marks a turn toward continuous interpretation of faith patterns. The self who reflects on the meaning of its history and meaning in history does so through New Being which brings with it the power of other images for meaning.

Tillich describes the threefold character of salvation in the light of the principle of participation and on the basis of the doctrine of atonement, and the effect it has upon the self that interprets its history and faith commitments: (1) Regeneration points to the element that the saving power of Jesus as the Christ is dependent upon the participation of the self in New Being by faith. Regeneration is a new interpretation of reality that the self is asked to turn toward. (2) Justification carries with it the element of “in spite of” into the process of salvation. Justification is the activity of God alone who accepts as acceptable the self who is aware of its unacceptability. (3) Transformation by New Being (sanctification) is the process of being received into the community of New Being. It transforms personality and community both inside and outside the church.

¹³⁴Ibid., 180.
The encounter of the self with salvation is facilitated by the activity of God in the historical event of Jesus as the Christ. The symbol of Christ is at once one of faith, one of faithful response, and one of reunion in relationships. It is the symbol of Christ that enables the self to discern the nature of its estranged condition, its personal and socio-cultural, and ultimate dependency, and the reconciling activity of God upon the self.

Tillich's perspective on the self illustrates the self's estrangement as being triadically embedded. The self is estranged in terms of the self's personal, socio-cultural, and ultimate conditions of estranged relatedness. The manifestation of estranged self is divided and distorted self images. The self is unable to save the self from the condition of estrangement because the self cannot change its center of valuing and meaning. Change is possible by faith through Jesus as the Christ or New Being which changes the center of valuing and meaning.

The self suffers from idolatrous images of the self given to it by the historical and socio-cultural and ultimate symbols which interfere with the self's response for unity and meaning. The estrangement of the self is seen in the defensive and anxious patterns found in the history of the self's relationships, and interpretations of relationships with self, God, and other selves.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented my interpretation of Tillich's theory of the nature of being; the elements of the basic nature of being; the characteristics of being; and the human predicament or existential reality, conceptualized as the condition of estrangement from the ground of being. I have presented Tillich's argument of God as ground of being
and being itself and the activity of God in regard to the terms of reunion of estranged human being’s self from its ground of being by the process of atonement in salvation.

Tillich’s emphasis of the salvation of God through the event of Jesus as the Christ or New Being has relevance for my work with some African American women. They report their self experience as a dynamic feeling of being divided from self, God, and others, and relate that experience as the absence of Christian grace in community with self and other selves. Further, they report that they are able to appropriate Christian grace in the counseling relationship. I believe my clients’ experiences of Christian grace in the counseling relationship are analogous to, but not the same as, Tillich’s theory of the process of faith as described in the previous section.

African American women with whom I have worked have traditionally interpreted their history in the light of the saving activity of God in particular events in their history. Tillich’s theory of the relevance of the activity of God, and some African American women’s interpretation of their own experiences of the relevance of the activity of God, are similar.

The answer to the question of whether traditional theology sources provide a conceptual resource to the pastoral counselor to respond to the construction of a model of pastoral counseling ministry that attends to the pastoral experiences and the historical and socio-cultural needs of African American women clients who present in therapy with a profound sense of estrangement from self, others, and God, and who are concerned with their spirituality, is yes!

The locus for the development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for African American women clients must consider and examine her human experience as primary
source in the light of her historical and socio-cultural location. Tillich’s theology, because of its universal appeal to the human being’s experience as normative, is the theological component that provides for the inclusion of the African American woman’s experiences of her self in the theological conversation through the locus of womanist theological critique. The local of womanist theological response includes the African American woman’s experiences in relationships in terms of her personal and external history in America. Self-understanding and self-definition, based upon personal history, focuses upon reflecting on memories of what has happened and uncovering meaning. Self-understanding is based upon the external historical distorted images of the self, especially in the light of the socio-cultural and historical nature of the African American woman’s experiences in this country.

Paul Tillich’s conceptualizations are theological resources that were developed with respect to the personal, historical, social, cultural, and ultimate concerns and needs of the majority culture. Tillich’s theological anthropology was conceptualized in response to the reality of middle and upper middle class European male Caucasians of his era. The personal, historical, and socio-cultural reality of the African American woman in context was not a variable in Tillich’s analysis of what it means to be a human being in relationships with the self, God, and others. The appeal of Tillich’s theological anthropology for this dissertation is his universal perspective that his conceptualization of being, God, and salvation represents a norm of experiences for the human predicament. When conceptualized, the Caucasian male experience was the norm for the analysis of the human predicament.

The promise of Tillich’s theological anthropology is that it provides a framework that contributes to a theological anthropology that responds to the contextual nature of
some African American women clients. This theological anthropology assumes that the self-structures meaning in the context of relationships with the self, God, and other selves in the context of personal, socio-cultural, and historical contexts of relationships. This theological anthropology assumes that theology must start with an analysis of the human condition. The locus of womanist theological response provides the ethical critique to this theological anthropology framework with promise of the potential to make visible the experiences of African American women in Tillich’s theological conversation and thereby, the traditional theological conversation.

**Implications for a Theology of Pastoral Counseling with Some African American Women**

I propose that the process by which African American women clients structure meaning—a cohesive self—is adequately defined by Tillich’s theory of Divine love (referred to hereafter as grace). The problem addressed is the tendency of some African American women clients to develop a divided, distorted, and self-destructive sense of self stemming from their internalization of self and self object images in the context of flawed and distorted socio-cultural and ultimate relationships. Integral to African American women is the distorted and flawed sexual and racial images of themselves and their communities. This condition manifests itself in defensive responses and anxiety in relationships with self and others.

The model of pastoral theology derived from this interpretation is based upon the following: (1) the social nature of the self’s structuring of meaning and value; (2) the interpersonal experience of the self in response to faith and faith’s role in interpreting and restructuring meaning; (3) the role of God in the process of reunion; and (4) the generic
aspect to the dynamics of the self's condition of faith in triadic relationships. Tillich's theology of the processes by which the self structures and restructures is important for my understanding and use of how grace is redefined as normative for restructuring in the life of some African American women's reality.

The norm of pastoral counseling in this dissertation is threefold: (1) the sources of the self's healing patterns in pastoral counseling; (2) the nature of the pastoral counseling relationship; and (3) the processes of grace. Significant to this model is the structure and restructuring of the self. The principles that underlie the model serve as the guiding parameters of my theory of pastoral counseling and will define the nature of the stages that are to be described in the following chapter. Therefore, pastoral counseling is described as a ministry of grace to some African American women clients in the context of a pastoral counseling relationship wherein the revelation of God is experienced.

In Chapter V, I construct a method of practical correlation in a movement toward a model of pastoral counseling for this population.
CHAPTER V

TOWARD A METHOD OF PRACTICAL CORRELATION

In Chapters III and IV, I delved deeply into the language of Paul Tillich and the psychological concepts of Heinz Kohut. Their language was helpful for reflecting upon the experiences that African American women bring to me in counseling. Some of Tillich’s concepts help me to form the experiences of estrangement and disconnection that my clients feel and some of Kohut’s concepts help me to talk about what happens in the pastoral relationship. However, not all of what Tillich and Kohut say is helpful to me. They were not directly addressing the needs of African American women. Their reference group was primarily White and male, yet some of their concepts transcend race and gender.

In this chapter, I move toward the construction of a method of practical correlation. Practical correlation draws upon the interdisciplinary dialogue between womanist pastoral counseling, the Tillichian concept of grace, and the Kohutian concept of empathy. The goal of the interdisciplinary dialogue is to form practical strategies of intervention for an African American woman pastoral counselor with African American women clients who feel disconnected from themselves, God, and others. This interdisciplinary dialogue is based on several distinct movements.

The first movement is the statement of theological norms that express criteria for the interdisciplinary dialogue. In order to accomplish the first movement I must borrow
concepts from Tillich and Kohut. The language of Tillich and Kohut is abstract and sometimes confusing; therefore, part of my task is to put their language into everyday language so that my clients can understand what I am saying. Tillich uses terms like estrangement and alienation. His concepts had deep philosophical roots. The language of disconnection and cut off is more helpful. Kohut uses terms like empathy and internalization. More suitable language is being able to see through the reality of the other, and taking in the experience of the other. Borrowing begins with establishing a norm or standard.

Borrowing begins with establishing a norm from which to evaluate the ideas that I am borrowing. The method of borrowing is a practical theological method in this dissertation, and is based on interdependence, sistering, and an analysis of race, gender, and class.

The second movement is the selection of key themes from womanist theology and my experience as an African American woman pastoral counselor. The most common understanding of womanist, represented by African American women who are in the church and in theological education, is that she is a woman who is committed to an integrated, interdisciplinary, and ecumenical analysis of race, gender, and class. Womanist uncovers the witnesses to love and justice in the midst of oppression in society. Womanist insists that all forms of theological discourse be open for reconsideration and critique. In my experience, I use the womanist theme of the analysis of race, gender, and class to select key normative themes of disconnection, grace, and reconnection.
The third movement is the practical correlation of womanist themes that I select from my experience with the theological and theoretical concepts that I select. The fourth movement is to draw implications for a model of pastoral counseling with my clients.

My norms come from my experiences as a pastoral counselor working with African American women within a Christian context. From my experience I choose key normative themes which help me to select concepts I need from Tillich and Kohut. Womanist theology also helps me to select these themes. These themes are the significance of an interpersonal connection with God, self, and others (McCrary’s idea of interdependence) as a basis for one’s own self-worth and the role of sister-to-sister (Holllies) in fostering self-worth. The themes of interpersonal connection contribute toward a sense of wholeness in mind, body, and spirit.

I construct the method of practical correlation in response to the finding of this dissertation that there are no theological pastoral counseling resources visible to the pastoral counselor that include the personal, historical, and socio-cultural experiences of the African American woman. This is a further response to the assertion that there are resources that are available from the majority culture to construct a theology of pastoral counseling that are adequate to respond to the spiritual patterns and needs of African American women. I propose the process by which some African American women clients experience healing is adequately defined by the concept of grace.

The concept of the self in this chapter is the self conscious and reflective awareness of the client in the context of the pastoral counseling relationship. The self refers to the
center or capability for valuing and meaning, interpretation, and appropriation in the context of the pastoral counseling relationship.

Restatement of the Problem

The problem that is addressed in this dissertation is the tendency for some African American women clients to experience their reality as cutoff and disconnected. This feeling of being disconnected affects their feelings of self-worth. It is my feeling that the sources of some African American women's experiences of themselves are embedded in the context of socio-cultural relationships with her self, God, and others. Integral to the problem of some African American women is the distorted, flawed, and harmful sexual and racial images, and social location given to them in their community. This condition manifests in defensive responses and anxiety in relationships with themselves, God, and others.

Although both theology and psychology inform the proposed method of practical correlation, the normative perspective of pastoral counseling is theological. To define the proposed model as pastoral counseling is to define myself to be theologically grounded. Further, this model is theologically grounded because my orientation in ministry is that of accountability to the Church in Jesus Christ. I am a clinical-theologian and my calling and commitment require that I critically and constructively attend to the care of souls in the context of my faith commitment to the Church.

The norm of pastoral counseling in this dissertation is threefold: (1) the sources of the client's healing patterns in pastoral counseling; (2) the nature of the pastoral counseling relationship; and (3) the processes of grace in the pastoral counseling relationship. These norms underlie this model and serve as guiding parameters.
I am defining pastoral counseling as the ministry of grace to some African American women in the context of a pastoral counseling relationship wherein the revelation of God is experienced. Pastoral counseling proceeds in the context of a caring relationship between a pastoral counselor and a client wherein the mediums of reason, imagination, and revelation are employed.

My proposed practical correlation is my attempt to make meaningful the theological and theoretical concepts I select as they are brought to bear on the African American woman’s question, “What is meaning regarding my own experience?” My proposed construction, however, is not intended to replace other models of how clients restructure meaning.

**The Womanist Analysis**

In Chapter I, womanist theological approach was defined as the commitment to an interdisciplinary and ecumenical analysis of race, gender, and class. The locus for the development of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for African American women must consider and examine her human experience of reality as a primary source in the light of her historical and socio-cultural location. This includes African American women’s experiences in relationships in terms of her personal and external history in America. Self-understanding and self-definition, based on personal history, focus on reflecting on memories of what has happened and uncovering meaning. Self-understanding is based on the external historical distorted images of herself, especially in the light of the analysis of race, gender, and class in America.
Womanist analysis proposes at least two important principles for a method of practical correlation. (1) The first principle is based on the interdisciplinary and ecumenical analysis of race, gender, and class. This principle insists that the experiences of African American women be primary sources in the development of a model of pastoral counseling that responds to her patterns and needs. (2) The second principle is based on my experience and womanist themes that emerged from the analysis of race, gender, and class in Chapter II of this dissertation. The womanist themes that emerged in the analysis of race, gender, and class critique and challenge African American religious communities and the traditional academic discourse.

In Chapter II, the womanist analysis uncovered the pattern of socio-cultural themes of embedded estrangement and disconnection that some African American women experience in relationships with themselves, God, and others. The patterns are the consequence of their historical and socio-cultural location and arise from the personal contextual experiences of race, gender, and class for this population. These images produce distorted images of the self in relationships and contribute to low self-worth. I find that my clients who experience themselves as cutoff in relations seek spiritual restoration and renewal as a way of relocating themselves relations.

In my experience of working with clients, I find that the Kohutian concept of empathy and the Tillichian concept of grace, as I understand and am using these terms for this dissertation, are analogous to, but not the same as, what my clients experience as Christian grace in the pastoral counseling relationship.
The Tillichian Concept of Grace and Womanist Analysis

Tillich conceptualized a theological anthropology in which he accounted for the human condition of sin and the human potential of reunion or salvation. In his system he used normative terms such as estrangement, alienation, and grace. These terms and the systems he constructed using them are outlined in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

When Tillich conceptualized his theological anthropology, the Caucasian male of western culture was normative experience of what it meant to be a human being. Womanist theology has since emerged and considers one of its primary tasks as entering the conversation with the church and other disciplines for the purpose of including the experiences of African American women in the formulation of theory. The promise of Tillich’s theological anthropology is that it provides a philosophical framework that contributes to a theological anthropology that has the potential to respond to the contextual nature of some African American women clients. Tillich’s concept of grace transcends gender, race, and class because of his premise that his construction of the answer to the human problem of sin in regard to faith is normative human potential for salvation/grace.

Tillich’s theological understanding of grace as an instance of Divine love is important to me in the construction of a pastoral theology of grace that is adequate for providing pastoral counseling with some African American women clients. It is my experience that what my clients speak of as grace in therapy is analogous to Tillich’s description of the structure of the potential of the normative human experience of an instance of grace. I believe the instances of grace in my pastoral counseling experiences are indicative of moments of salvation wherein the self restructures meaning and value.
In my proposed model of pastoral counseling, the client develops a sense of self-connection in pastoral counseling as the pastoral counselor mediates Christian grace. The transforming function of the mediator represents God's grace in the client's history and socio-cultural interactions. The pastoral counselor's function provides caring interpretation of the client in concert with the client's conversation with divine revelation. The pastoral counselor's activity of facilitating healing is dependent upon the response of the client to grace.

The principles for a proposed model of pastoral counseling using the norm of grace are constructed from my understanding and experience of the nature of grace for some African American women clients in conversation with the Tillichian concept of grace. The Tillichian concept of grace implies principles for pastoral counseling process. These principles describe: (1) the nature of the pastoral counselor's function; (2) the empathic response of the pastoral counseling relationship; (3) the process of the pastoral counseling engagement; (4) the goal of grace; and (5) the goal of the pastoral counseling experience.

The first principle is the nature of the pastoral counselor's function. The pastoral counselor's function must be grounded in a theological framework that is interdisciplinary and ecumenical. The framework must permit an integrated analysis of race, gender, and class. Also in this framework, existential estrangement means the condition of the self after the biblical myth of the fall. According to various descriptions in the Bible, this condition is implied as sin. The state of sin can only be overcome by an act of God. The implications of the fall for pastoral counseling are twofold: (1) the counselor responds to the client in a manner that appreciates the sense in which the client is individually and collectively
estranged from herself, God, and others. There must, therefore, be an interpretive analysis of participatory relationships in her history to uncover meaning for healing. (2) The counseling relationship facilitates the potential for healing, mediating grace by encouraging continuous engagement with the client about her concerns.

The second principle of the pastoral counseling relationship is the pastoral counselor’s response to the African American woman client. The attitude of the pastoral counselor is important. This principle presupposes that the pastoral counselor approaches the client from within a framework that is interdisciplinary and ecumenical in orientation. Norms are analyzed in the light of race, gender, and class. The client guides the pastoral counselor to her experience of what her reality is like. Empathy conveys a sense of self-worth to the client. This principle points to the responsive nature of the pastoral counselor.

The third principle of the pastoral counseling process is characterized by faith. The pastoral counselor must initiate a relationship of integrity and trust in the client through verbal communication and images. It is essential that the pastoral counselor show faith in the client when working with African American women who have been historically distrusted and have been objects of disloyalty in the socio-cultural community. It is my experience that African American women enter the pastoral counseling relationship feeling anxious that their story will not be heard or appreciated by a pastoral counselor who is not interested in their depth. The pastoral counselor adds the dimension of an alternative social and historical context of trusting the client to plot her own course as she risks being believed and known in the pastoral counseling relationship. In this principle both pastoral counselor and client must risk vulnerability.
The fourth principle of the pastoral counseling process is the goal of grace experienced in the pastoral counseling context and mediated by the pastoral counselor. Grace is the atoning activity of God that functions to reconnect the client to herself, God, and others. The client interprets herself in terms of her past, present, and future relatedness in the light of grace. This is an unconscious and conscious process. The client is not necessarily aware that the pastoral counselor is mediating grace. She may experience grace as increased sense of self-worth. She may feel affirmed and valued and connecting herself with the pastoral counselor. The client gains increasing capacity for faith in herself, God, and others in her multidimensional context. In terms of womanist themes, the correction of distorted and flawed images contributing to low self-worth is introduced by the re-interpretation of those themes.

The fifth principle is the goal of pastoral counseling. The goal of the pastoral counseling process is for the client to experience healing in the context of being given ultimate and proximate value. This activity involves: (a) acknowledging one’s finitude; (b) affirming one’s self in relation to God’s affirmation; (c) awareness of one’s condition in life; and (d) movement toward self-understanding. The individual re-connects with the resources of history—past, present, and future and transforms these dimensions into new meaning.

In this section, I engaged a theological and womanist dialogue showing how the Tillichian concept of grace correlates to womanist themes that are selected for this dissertation. I further defined principles of pastoral counseling in dialogue with womanist analysis. In the next section I will engage a theoretical dialogue between the Kohutian
concept of empathy and womanist themes toward the construction of my proposed model of pastoral counseling ministry.

The Kohutian Concept of Empathy and Womanist Analysis

When Kohut conceptualized his theory of the self, a specific population of the Caucasian male of western culture represented normative human development and experience. Womanist theology has since emerged with the primary task of including the experiences of African American women in the formation of theory. Kohut’s theory suggests that narcissistic development is normative development among human beings. This premise lends itself to the analysis of race, gender, and class. The promise of Kohut’s psychological development theory is its potential to contribute to a psychological response to the contextual nature of some African American women clients. My purpose is to formulate psychological foundations for the pastoral counseling model I propose to develop in this dissertation. Kohut did not construct a theory or a theology of pastoral counseling. Further, he did not construct a theology of grace. Kohut’s theory and method are explicated in Chapter II.

Kohut described empathy as facilitating the restructuring process of the self. He defines an in-depth analysis of how the self in relationships with its self objects structures from archaic self and object configurations to mature narcissism in ideal human development.

I am convinced by my experience that Kohut’s psychological description of empathy as normative for the lifelong development of the self, and the emphasis on its clinical use is analogous to the experience my clients report as their need for grace in the pastoral
counseling process. I now correlate Kohut’s description of empathy with my understanding and experience of the principles of pastoral counseling outlined in the previous section. Kohut’s contribution to a model of pastoral counseling is a theory of psychological development, a method of analysis, and an intervention modality.

There are five principles of pastoral counseling: (1) the nature and dynamics of the pastoral counseling relationship; (2) the role of the pastoral counselor; (3) the process and agency of change in the self of the client; (4) the goal of grace; and (5) the goal of the pastoral counseling process. These principles serve as underlying theological and psychological foundations.

The first principle points to the need for a theological, psychological, and ethical framework that is adequate for formulating and illustrating the nature and dynamics of the predicament of the self. Kohut explicates his understanding of the state of the self as narcissistic development with the instance of pathology when development is not ideal. [Narcissistic personality disorder is explicated in Chapter III.] Some of my clients report feeling estranged, disconnected, and cutoff from themselves, God, and others. Their goal is to have a sense of themselves in relationships. I believe what they experience is analogous to, but not the same as, the theoretical and developmental experience of fragile self. In my experiences of supervision at Georgia Association of Pastoral Care (GAPC) these clients are characterized as suffering from narcissistic personality disorder.

My work with some African American women clients indicates an awareness of a profound sense of estrangement and disconnection which characterizes their experiences of themselves in relationships with God, self, and others. The pastoral counselor must seek to
help some African American women keep these dimensions of her experiences of herself by encouraging continuous dialogue with the client about her concerns.

Kohut characterizes the continuous engagement of the client as the empathic attunement of the therapist with the client’s experiences. In my experience this means re-establishing the meaning of grace in relationship in the pastoral counseling context. Empathic attunement indicates the attitude of the pastoral counselor toward the client. Through empathic attunement the pastoral counselor communicates to the client that she is not limited to the condition of fragility and disconnection, but has the potential of the healing relationship that moves toward mature narcissism.

In my experience of counseling African American women, what I describe as empathic intervention has been experienced by my clients as “like grace.” This grace manifests in feelings of self-worth. The client senses the pastoral counselor’s value of her and begins to interpret meaning from that sense of being valued.

The second principle is that the pastoral counseling relationship is essentially one of faith and value. The pastoral counselor and the client enter into a relationship that is characterized by trustful participation. The client values the capacities of the pastoral counselor; the pastoral counselor values the capacities and potentialities of the client. The value of the relationship manifests as the pastoral counselor engages the client in regard to the client’s capacities and potentialities. The experience is facilitated by the pastoral counselor’s use of herself in the interest of the client.

African American women with whom I have worked, historically, engage in pastoral relationships characterized by trust derived from trusting and valuing the counselor’s valuing
of her own self. One implication of the counselor and client relationship characterized by faith and value is that the counseling relationship is a person-to-person encounter. The pastoral counseling relationship symbolizes the potential for the self to participate in the reality of God.

The role of the pastoral counselor in the light of faith and empathy is to attend to the faith activity in the pastoral counseling relationship. Kohut describes empathy as a vicarious introspection of the inner world of his clients suffering from disorders of the self. Kohut employed empathy in the method of clinical data collection. The pastoral counseling relationship using empathy attends to the faith activity of the relationship.

The pastoral counseling relationship accepts and understands the client’s suffering. The client uses the pastoral counseling relationship to reflect on the self in terms of the sense of feeling fragile and disconnected from herself, God, and others. In my work with African American women clients, I have found that this reflection on the self’s experience of faith provides images for how the self is related to self, God, and others. In the African American woman’s heritage, the reality of faith activity, grounded in the belief in God, is related to all aspects of the self and reality and that God participates in all aspects of the self and reality. (The pastoral counselor who is an African American woman and is astute of this tradition can offer a relationship that engenders the emergence of such images of faith. This kind of counseling relationship where the gender and socio-cultural values are similar may provide a consistency of self-experiencing for the client.)

It is my pastoral counseling experience that the faith value realization is normative for the pastoral counseling relationship. It is participatory in that it is a person-to-person
encounter. It is a conscious process in pastoral counseling from the perspective of the counselor who participates in the life of the client and who symbolizes what is ultimate in the life of the client. God is encountered by an experience of faith and faith is manifest in activities of self-affirmation and self-worth.

The third principle of pastoral counseling is that the primary activity of the pastoral counselor is to evoke in the counseling process the principle resources of the client. The counselor has the ability to understand and feel into the development of the client. The pastoral counselor assists the client in interpreting meaning out of the client’s reflective self-experience, socio-cultural context, and established patterns of interpreting meaning.

In my clinical work with some African American women clients, I find that there is a poverty of experience in regard to articulating patterns of meaning which make a clear connection between personal, socio-cultural, and ultimate concerns. This sense of not being fully conscious of the connections between the various aspects of her self-experience, I believe, stems from what Kohut refers to as pathological development due to chronic lack of empathy, experienced as separated and fragile sense of self in the face of personal, socio-cultural interactions. My clients’ sense of God is the unifying factor for them. Pastoral counseling offers these clients a personal, socio-cultural resource where they may strengthen themselves and understand their faith in the context of a valuing relationship. This means that the pastoral counselor helps to create an atmosphere of trust where the client may freely and confidentially reflect upon her self experiences in relationship to interactions, ever increasing her awareness of her experiences of her self. The goal is derived from Kohut’s concept of narcissistic personality disorder manifest as fragile self. The client is encouraged
to reflect upon her sense of separation from herself and others. The pastoral counseling relationship becomes the mediating space in the facilitation of the reflective process of the client by helping the client to become aware of and responsive to the triadic interactions upon the client. The pastoral counselor assists the client in the process of reflection upon her personal, socio-cultural, and contextual relationships.

Kohut’s theory of how the self restructures points out the benefits of therapeutic analysis of narcissistic personality disorders for the self as: (a) increased capacity for empathy; (b) the emergence of new creative capabilities; and (c) an enhanced capacity for genuine humor.

The fourth principle of pastoral counseling is that grace is totally the initiative of and dependent upon God. In my experience with some of my clients the sense of disconnection, separation, and the longing for healing in relationships are embedded in relationship with God. The complex interrelatedness of the self’s interactions with God have implications for pastoral counseling ministry.

The fifth principle of a model of pastoral counseling is the goal of the pastoral counseling process. The goal of pastoral counseling process is for the client to experience healing in the context of being given ultimate and proximate value. In the context of the pastoral counseling relationship the client reconnects with the resources of history—past, present, and future—and transforms these dimensions into new meaning. This principle relates to Kohut’s assumption that restructuring of the self occurs in conscious and unconscious relationships. The self becomes aware of, acknowledges, and interprets meaning in the midst of its socio-cultural milieu.
In summary, I constructed a method of practical correlation. The method of practical correlation is the interdisciplinary dialogue between womanist pastoral counseling, the Tillichian concept of grace, and the Kohutian concept of empathy. This interdisciplinary dialogue takes place based on distinct movements. The first movement is the statement of theological norms that state the criteria for the dialogue. The second movement is the selection of key terms from womanist theology and my experience. The third movement is the correlation of womanist themes that I have selected from my experience with Kohutian and Tillichian concepts. The fourth movement of a method of practical correlation is to draw implications for what a method of practical correlation would mean for a model of pastoral counseling ministry with some African American women clients in Chapter VI.

An implication of the method of practical correlation is that the frame for a model of pastoral counseling ministry is based on my proposed theory of grace. A further implication for model building is the client’s response to grace in the pastoral counseling process.

The Implication for a Pastoral Counseling Theory of Grace

I propose that in the pastoral counseling context the self restructures meaning and value by the means of grace. The activity of grace is and manifests in three ways: (1) The self may continue to structure meaning as disconnected from self, God, and others. This condition simply means, like looking in a glass dimly, that the looker sees a distorted reflection or symbol of the self with idolatrous self-experience. Idolatrous refers to distorted and flawed self images from the multidimensional experiences in culture. The distortion of the self-experience manifests in a life lived in defensive and idolatrous flight from self, God,
and others, and is the result of original sin. (2) The self may provide a method of change whereby the self receives grace from God. The assumption is that the healer’s activity is representative, mediating the power of self-acceptance, self-affirmation, and self-worth. The self that accepts grace, mediated by the pastoral counselor in images and communications of understanding, value, and self-worthy in conscious and unconscious awareness, receives grace. (3) In the light of this understanding of the healer’s activity, the pastoral counseling relationship becomes the context wherein the self heals and reconnects in relationships, and is enabled to experience meaning in the presence of the pastoral counselor who represents grace. Healing occurs in the context of the pastoral counseling relationship as the self-experiences meaning by accepting, understanding, value, and self-worth. The counselor represents Christ and the counseling relationship represents grace.

The Implication for the Client’s Response to a Pastoral Counseling Theory of Grace

My understanding of the impact of the self’s experience of grace leads me to propose that four things take place in the self with the aid of revelation in the pastoral counseling relationship: (1) the experience of the self as historical is made available to the self by way of cognition; (2) the recognition of the self’s past and present—images, events, affirmations, injuries—are brought into conscious awareness; (3) the self accepts understanding, value, and self-worth; and (4) the reconnection of the self in relationships is made possible.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I proposed the construction of a method of practical correlation. The method of practical correlation is the interdisciplinary dialogue between womanist pastoral counseling, the Tillichian concept of grace, and the Kohutian concept of empathy
as a basis for constructing a method of practical correlation. I correlated Tillichian and Kohutian concepts with womanist themes. My rationale for this construction was to demonstrate the adequacy of Tillichian and Kohutian concepts to contribute toward the construction of a model of pastoral counseling among some African American women clients.

I have drawn implications from the method of practical correlation that contributes to a model of pastoral counseling ministry for this dissertation project. I proposed a pastoral counseling theory of grace, and the clients’ response to the pastoral counseling theory of grace.

In Chapter VI, I construct and illustrate a theology of pastoral counseling with some African American women using the method of practical correlation.
CHAPTER VI

A THEOLOGY FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING
WITH SOME AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

In this chapter, I describe, interpret, and evaluate my proposed model of pastoral counseling with some African American women. I use the method of practical correlation in this chapter. In Chapter V, I introduced the method of practical correlation. The method of practical correlation is the interdisciplinary conversation between womanist pastoral counseling, the Tillichian concept of grace, and the Kohutian concept of empathy. The method of practical correlation is the first movement toward the construction of a model of pastoral counseling with African American women. This movement makes visible to the pastoral counselor a resource for the construction of a model of pastoral counseling with this population.

In this chapter, I introduce the construction of the model of pastoral counseling with some African American women. I propose that the processes by which some African American women clients restructure meaning be adequately defined by the pastoral counseling theory of grace. Whenever I mention the concept of the self in this chapter, I am referring to the self-conscious and reflective awareness of the client in the context of pastoral counseling. The self refers to the center of the individual's valuing and meaning-making activity of interpretation and appropriation.
The problem that is addressed in this model is the tendency of some African American women to develop a disconnected, estranged, divided, distorted, and destructive sense of self stemming from their internalization of images that are flawed and emerge from distorted human and divine relationships. The sources of estrangement or disconnection are located in the absence of adequate relationships with significant others and the larger society.

Integral to the problems of African American women clients is the distorted and flawed sexual and racial images of themselves and their community. This condition manifests itself in defensive responses and anxiety in relationship with others.

The model I demonstrate in this chapter is both theologically and psychologically grounded, and presents a pastoral counseling approach that responds to the various dimensions of the self. The theological perspective is informed by Paul Tillich’s philosophical-theological understanding of the nature of the self and the courage to be. Tillich describes: (1) the genesis and the dynamics of the self and the self’s predicament; (2) the sources of the self’s healing patterns in relationship with God; and (3) the normative human potential for salvation/grace. I believe that Tillich’s theology of the processes by which the self structures and restructures informs my theological use of the concept of grace.

The psychological perspective of this model is based on the self psychology of Heinz Kohut. Kohut’s theory is adequate for this model for the following reasons: (1) he defines the dynamic aspects of the self’s psychological fixation and restoration; (2) he describes the nature of the self’s bondage and restoration in relationship with significant others; (3) he
designs a theory of psychoanalysis which accounts for the relationship between internal psychological structures and the socio-cultural milieu of the self; (4) he describes the basic needs of the self (mirroring and idealizing) which I understand are integral to some African American women’s experiences; and (5) his process of empathy (transmuting internalization) is integral to my use of the concept of grace.

While Tillich’s and Kohut’s conceptualizations of the self represent diverse orientations of the self, I will use their perspectives to alternately describe and interpret the dynamic processes by which the self structures a coherent self theologically and psychologically. Tillich describes how the self structures triadically from a state of idolatry to a state of faith. Kohut defines an in-depth analysis of how the self in relationship with its self objects, restructures from archaic self and object configurations to mature narcissism.

Although both theology and psychology inform this model, the normative perspective of pastoral counseling is theological. To define the model as pastoral counseling is to define myself as theologically grounded. Further, this model is theologically grounded because my orientation in ministry is that of accountability to the Church in Jesus Christ. I am a clinical-theologian and my calling and commitment require that I critically and constructively attend to the care of souls in the context of my faith commitment to the Church.

The norm of pastoral counseling in this dissertation is threefold: (1) the sources of the self’s healing patterns in pastoral counseling; (2) the nature of the pastoral counseling relationship; and (3) the processes of grace. These norms are formulated in regard to my understanding of God’s activity in the history of the self. Significant to this model is the
structure and restructure of being in the self. The principles that underlie this model will serve as guiding parameters of my theory of pastoral counseling and will define the nature of the stages that are to be described later.

Pastoral counseling, therefore, is defined as the ministry of grace to some African American women clients in the context of caring relationships wherein the revelation of God is experienced. Pastoral counseling proceeds in the context of an empathic responsive relationship between a pastoral counselor and a client wherein the mediums of reason, imagination, and revelation are employed. The goal of pastoral counseling in this model is to assist some African American women clients to restructure meaning and cohesion as they move from the state of self estrangement and disconnection to faith, or from disconnected fragile self to a more mature and adequate relationship with self, God, and other selves. The self in pastoral counseling structures meaning and cohesion through the processes of grace.

My construction is an attempt to make meaningful the theological and theoretical concepts I have listed as they are brought to bear on the African American women’s experiences in answering the question, "What is meaning in regard to her experiences of herself?" My construction of a model is not intended to replace other models of how the self structures meaning.

I will do three things in this chapter toward developing a model of pastoral counseling that responds to the population of this dissertation. First, I will define four principles of pastoral counseling. Second, I will propose three stages of the pastoral counseling process. Third, I will describe the method of pastoral reflection. Womanist
theology helps me to select the spiritual themes that are significant for an interpersonal connection with God, self, and others in the meaning-making process.

**Principles of the Model of Pastoral Counseling**

The basic assumption and thesis of this model is that the self restructures a sense of meaning in the pastoral counseling relationship as the pastoral counselor mediates the grace of God. The transforming image of the mediator represents the gracious initiative of God in the self’s history and socio-cultural interactions. The function of the pastoral counselor is the empathic interpretation of the genetic and dynamic conditions of the self in concert with the self’s conversation with divine revelation. The pastoral counselor’s activity of facilitation of healing is dependent upon the response of the client to God’s gracious activity.

The principles of this model are constructed from my understanding of the nature of grace for some African American women clients in the light of Tillich’s and Kohut’s work. These principles describe: (1) the nature of the pastoral counselor’s function; (2) the empathic responsive nature of the pastoral counseling relationship; (3) the processes of the pastoral counseling engagement; and (4) the goal of the pastoral counseling experience. I believe these goals are interrelated in nature and in actual function.

**The Pastoral Counselor’s Function**

The first principle of this model is the nature of the pastoral counselor’s function. The pastoral counselor’s function must be grounded in a theological ethical framework that is adequate for formulating and illustrating the experiences of African American women. In my work, issues of spirituality are important for understanding the sense of estrangement,
and the sense of reunion in relationships with self, God, and others. This first principle implies that the counselor must respond to the African American woman in a manner that appreciates her sense of being individually and collectively estranged from her self, God, and others. The counselor offers the potential for healing from estranged relations. This principle further implies that the counseling relationship facilitates grace in the restructuring activity of the client in a relationship that is understanding and caring where interpretations of the client’s relationship patterns occur.

The Empathic Response

The first principle of the pastoral counseling relationship is the pastoral counselor’s empathic response to the client’s self. The pastoral counselor accepts, affirms, and seeks to understand the client from the perspective of the client’s self-experience of her inner world. The purpose of this principle is to highlight the importance of the pastoral counselor’s response in regard to the client establishing a meaningful and valuing relationship. This principle presupposes that the pastoral counselor approaches the client with a formulated theory of the self and is responding to the self of the client from within that framework. This principle is very important in my work with some African American women clients who have a defected self. The objective use of African American women in culture based upon their gender and race, and their historical struggle with oppression as a result of gender and race, inside and outside the church, predisposes them to protect themselves from further harm. Empathic attunement conveys to African American women clients the valuing of the pastoral counselor.
Tillich’s and Kohut’s theories of the self are helpful in my understanding of this principle. In this regard, Tillich suggests that the self is anxious and responds in relationships with others as estranged due to distorted images that the self has been given. This means that the pastoral counselor responds with faith toward the client. This faith response by the pastoral counselor accepts, affirms, and seeks to understand the client from the perspective of the client’s experience. Kohut contributes to this principle from his perspective that the defensive and resistant actions of the self in therapy are the self’s attempts to defend itself against further psychological harm because of a history of harm in relationships. The attitude of the therapist is essential to the therapeutic process. The therapist’s response to the self of the client is empathy.

The pastoral counselor accomplishes two things in the empathic response to the client. First, the counselor becomes attuned to the depth experiences of the client and attempts to discern the activity of God’s power in the inner world of the client. During counseling with African American women clients, the pastoral counselor accepts the client and immerses herself in the ambiguities of the African American woman’s self experiences at a depth of internal awareness and understanding. Second, the pastoral counselor listens to the patterns and structures of the client’s self to understand the client’s self of meaning and value. This requires discipline and integrity on the part of the pastoral counselor that permits the rich texture of the experience of the client to emerge in the context of the pastoral counseling relationship.

Further, the principle of empathic response is derived from Tillich’s and Kohut’s attempt to construct meaningful theories of the self to satisfy their observations. Using
Tillich's construction, I discern four elements of the self's responsiveness that are important for this principle: (1) response, (2) interpretation, (3) personal accountability, and (4) social accountability in relations. Applying these elements to this first principle of the pastoral counseling process suggests to me something of the responsive nature of the pastoral counselor's self.

Second, the pastoral counselor needs to interpret the socio-cultural and historical dimension of the client's experience in order to discern the nature of the client's question. This is a womanist principle. The pastoral counselor attends to the contextual analysis of the African American woman's experience of reality. The pastoral counselor seeks to experience with the client's reality, and based upon that experience seeks to identify, analyze, and correlate issues in order to conceptualize the client and assist the client in making her experience coherent. This is related to how Tillich understands the objective power of God which interprets the self's experience. The pastoral counselor, acting as healer in this regard, is able to provide this interpretive function because she has undergone an experience of being grasped in an in-depth counseling experience herself. Her self has been helped in the interpretive process in regard to her center of value and meaning. She is, therefore, available to help the client to interpret meaning and value.

Third, the element of the pastoral counselor's empathic response is that the counselor and client must form an accountable and personal relationship. The counselor particularly must have some anticipation of the responses of the client to her issues and experiences. The counselor, in having come to terms with her own sense of estrangement from self, God, and other selves, discerns the distorted images, affirmations, and changes
the client presents and responds appropriately. The element of accountability suggests that
the counselor have an adequate theory of the self in relationship to its historical patterns of
interaction in seeking to address the responsive needs of the self.

Finally, the personal accountability of the pastoral counselor and the client models
to the social accountability of the client to the socio-cultural context of the community
where she lives. Some African American women need to be aware of their responses and
interactions with the cultural issues of gender and race which impinges upon them. This is
a womanist concept. Applied to pastoral counseling this indicates that the pastoral
counselor needs to form continual networks with other pastoral counselors who are engaged
in conversation with similar issues and experiences of African American women.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Kohut’s emphasis on the side of empathy in the
healing process of persons with disorders of the self informs my first principle of pastoral
counseling. According to Kohut, it is the therapist’s empathic attitude of mirroring and
idealizing toward the self of the client which facilitates the client’s ability to experience
cognitively and experientially the self’s internal world. Empathy helps the therapist convey
understanding and acceptance to the client at a depth of communication. The spoken
communication of the therapist is the medium through which understanding and acceptance
is communicated to the client.

It is my opinion and experience that the responsive nature of the pastoral counselor
as described in this principle is dynamically related to how I conceptualize the process of
grace to operate among some African American women clients in counseling. The
womanist descriptions of the historical, social and cultural oppression, particularly as a
consequence of gender, race, and class, insists that the pastoral counselor respond to African American women, considering the contexts which contributes to her condition. My model proposes that the responses of the pastoral counselor are to be grounded in a theological and a psychological perspective of the nature and dynamics of the self's predicament of some African American women clients.

In summary, the first principle of the pastoral counseling process is that the pastoral counselor engages the client with an attitude of empathic responding. Empathic responding conveys understanding and acceptance of the client's self. This principle requires the pastoral counselor to have an adequate theory from which to work, to have an empathic attitude, and to have a compelling and warm presence. This principle also insists upon the pastoral counseling activity to respond to the analysis of the contextual issues of gender, race, and class.

The Faith Relationship: The Pastoral Counseling Engagement

The second principle of the pastoral counseling process is characterized by a faith relationship wherein the pastoral counselor and the client take significant risks of trust. This principle requires that the counselor initiates a relationship of integrity and trust in the client in verbal communication and images. The pastoral counselor communicates a sense of belief and interest in the self of the client. Tillich describes the healer's ability to stand for acceptance and in so doing helps the patient participate in the healing power.

The premise that the pastoral counselor needs to show faith (defined in the previous section) in the client is essential for working with African American women clients who have been historically distrusted and have been objects of disloyalty in the socio-cultural
community. It is my experience working with African American women clients that they enter the pastoral counseling relationship feeling anxious that their story will not be heard or understood by a pastoral counselor who is not interested in their depth. Further, they are often anxious and conflicted regarding their own socio-cultural location. Therefore, the pastoral counselor must provide an alternative experience for the client, trusting in her and encouraging her to plot the course for understanding of her self as she risks being believed and known in the pastoral counseling process. Both counselor and client must risk vulnerability in the client’s meaning-making project of the self.

Correlating my understanding of Tillich’s theology with Tillich’s discussion of how faith is manifested, I suggest that the pastoral counselor provide the client a social and historical context in which the serious questions of the client’s experiences are encountered by God’s grace. That encounter evokes the faith. The client is able to accept acceptance in sprit of the sense of not being acceptable, and thereby, taking the courage to be herself. As the pastoral counselor engages the self in the discovery of knowing the self and believing the self, the pastoral counselor attends to three aspects of the self’s faith relationship.

First, the pastoral counselor explores interactions of the client with other persons in order to discern how the client came to know herself in relationships with other selves. Relationships with significant others and images contribute significantly to the self’s meaning and value project.

The second aspect of the self’s faith relationship is the nature and dynamics of the relationship of the counselor and the client. The counselor discerns the nature of the client’s
trust or distrust in the relationship. The client’s trust results in the client’s sense of increased freedom to trust and to believe and to hold onto what the self knows of her self.

The third aspect of the client’s faith is the client’s relationship to the wider community. The counselor seeks to understand and analyze the images and symbols that the client has internalized from her social environment. This is important because the stories and analogies given to her from the larger community directly inform the client’s sense of her self.

The implication of the psychoanalytic perspective of Kohut for this second principle is to be found in his discussion of the concept of narcissism, the countertransference of the analyst, and the nature of the reflective self. The relationship between the client’s self and the self of the pastoral counselor is faith in regard to psychological distancing or merging activity.

Initially, the pastoral counselor may experience uneasiness with the client when the client seeks to meet her significant relationship needs with the counselor. This sense of uneasiness may suggest the counselor’s distrust of the client. The distrust of the client may indicate the counselor’s own defensive patterns in relationships. The counselor’s relationship needs may make it difficult for the counselor to tolerate a situation in which she is reduced to the role of attending to the self worth needs of the client. This state of distrust may interfere with the establishment and maintenance of the mirroring and idealizing transferences of the client or what I refer to as the establishment and maintenance of a relationship of faith.
Second, the mirroring and idealizing transferences in the counseling relationship between the counselor and the client points to a relationship of trust and belief in each other. These transferences evoke the healing of the self of the client through the process of transmuting internalization. This premise, applied to pastoral counseling, requires that the counselor have an adequate theoretical understanding of the conditions the self brings to the counseling setting.

Third, the pastoral counselor must have self-awareness, an understanding of the conditions the client brings to the counseling setting, and anticipate her own narcissistic needs which will be present in the counseling setting. The counselor’s self-awareness is essential to tolerate the client’s use of her as an extension of the client’s inner world and at once to experience the client as a separate person.

In conclusion, the second principle of the pastoral counseling process involves the counselor and the client’s self engaging in a relationship of faith where each is vulnerable to one another. The responsibility of the pastoral counselor is to develop a relationship with the client that communicates a sense of belief and a trust in the client’s self. This communication fosters a self-belief and self-trust in the client. This requires that the pastoral counselor have an adequate theoretical understanding of the conditions the client brings to the counseling setting. Further, the pastoral counselor must be aware of her own narcissistic needs and tendencies in order to tolerate the narcissistic needs of the client.

The faith relationship between the counselor and the client creates an environment for the client to begin healing through the process of grace. The faith relationship also involves the analysis of how race and gender impact self-formation.
The Process of Grace: The Goal of the Pastoral Counseling Experience

The third and most important principle of the pastoral counseling process is based on the assertion that the self structures meaning and cohesion through the process of grace. In Chapters III and IV, I drew implications from Tillich's and Kohut's theories of the self for the concept of grace. In this section, I expand the previous discussions of the concept of grace in the light of the theories of Tillich and Kohut. I now formulate a comprehensive understanding of the process of grace for this model of pastoral counseling.

The process of grace bestows a sense of reunion or reconnection with self, God, and other selves as opposed to a sense of estrangement and disconnection in the self's multidimensional contexts. Theologically, grace refers to the atoning activity of God's Spirit in Jesus Christ. As this activity of God is brought to bear in the pastoral counseling relationship, the client interprets her self in terms of past, present, and future relatedness. This means that the client's personal center of meaning and value is re-established in relation to Christian grace. Grace re-establishes and maintains the identity of the self, and moves the self toward the activity of restructuring in multidimensional contexts. This means that the client reinterprets her participation in history and uncovers the new understanding of that history in regard to relationships with self, God, and other selves. The pastoral counselor facilitates this process by being responsive, interpreting the client's self genetically and dynamically in regard to relationships.

The self experiencing the process of grace begins to use wisdom to discern images, thereby conquering distortions of existence and discovering new images for the self within the context of pastoral counseling relationships. This means that the self experiences
freedom and new meaning and value in relationships with self, God, and other selves to whom the client experiences significant relatedness. In this process the client becomes more aware of the self’s condition and movement.

Further, grace refers to how the self in pastoral counseling experiences the self as affirmed and valued by the pastoral counselor. A significant consequence of this sense of being affirmed and valued is that the self of the client aligns with the counselor. The client, in turn, aligns the self with other significant relationships and experiences the self reunited in community and with a sense of relatedness with self, God, and other selves. Theologically, the self’s experience of grace is derived from the sense of the experience of union with God. The self gains capacity for faith in self, God, and other selves. Theologically, this process is the client’s experience of the pastoral counselor’s empathic response and the grace activity of God in relationship with the self’s history, its socio-cultural and ultimate contexts.

From a psychological perspective, grace refers to the self’s activity of transforming the self’s archaic images of the self and objects in the meaning-making project. These images are re-enacted in the pastoral counseling relationship in what Kohut refers to as mirroring and idealizing transferences. The transferences suggest the self’s attempt to free itself from these aspects of the self’s experience. According to Kohut, this process involves the mobilization of the self’s strivings for its mirroring and idealizing needs that have been split off and interrupted by defective self-object relationships.

My understanding of grace is related to the self’s internalization of the aspects of the functions of the self-object relationship within the pastoral counseling relationship. Kohut
describes the process of internalization that illustrates what is meant here in three movements: (1) The client withdraws some of her investment in the function of the pastoral counselor as a basis of her self-empathy and self-worth. The client begins to increasingly function as a resource of her own self-worth. (2) The client gradually internalizes images and attributes of the pastoral counselor. (3) The client forms psychic structure which begins to perform the functions of empathy and self-worth for her own self that were previously performed by the pastoral counselor.

Important for this model of pastoral counseling is the understanding that the process of grace is an unconscious experience of the self that occasionally may be a conscious experience through the counselor’s interpretations. I believe that the process of grace is parallel to God’s gracious activity on the internal world of the client. This assumption is evident in Tillich’s theology when he discusses the Spiritual Presence and the ambiguities of personal self-integration.

It is Tillich’s position that the existential estrangement self cannot deliver the self from its condition. It is the initiative and activity of God that makes reunion possible in spite of the human condition. This correlates the self’s activity of grace as analogous to the manifestation of God’s initiative in the process of grace. There are two implications for the pastoral counseling process.

First, grace is a divine activity of God grounded in the historical event of Jesus Christ. Jesus’ suffering reveals the atoning activity of God toward humankind in history and confirms the divine participation of the self in reunion. The self, having interpreted that God’s activity on the self is one of grace, accepts the freedom of reunion with God.
God's participation in the pastoral counseling process means that the pastoral counseling experience is both an objective and subjective encounter for the client. Objectively, the client experiences the gracious activity of God who initiates participation of the self to free the self from the self's idolatrous nature in personal and systemic context. Subjectively, the client accepts God, in faith, and this acceptance includes relationships with self, God, and other selves.

Second, grace is a divine activity wherein the condition of being is experienced as new. God is experienced as Ground of being and the Source of reunion with being. As the self experiences God's activity, it begins to restructure, giving way to a sense of moving toward wholeness, and away from fragmentary meanings. The self reinterprets its strivings for freedom and begins to make sense of the dimensions of the self-experience. Subjectively, grace refers to what God does and to how the self responds in unifying the self with God.

In pastoral counseling this means that the process of grace occurs in the gap or space where transcendent God and immanent self meet and engage in relationships of reunion. The pastoral counselor is the mediator of God's activity of grace and helps the client participate in the process by being empathically responsive to the needs of the client. The client takes in and internalizes bits and pieces of previously hidden and split off images of her self as these are activated in the counseling relationship, and restructures psychic attributes that unify the self.

To summarize, the self in pastoral counseling structures through the process of grace. Grace refers to the freedom of the self in regard to personal, internal, interpersonal
and socio-cultural dimensions of life to acquire a new sense of unity with the self, God, and other selves in response to God's reconciling activity. This activity of the self is initiated by activity of God, mediated through the pastoral counseling relationship.

The Concept of Value: Accepting Acceptance

The fourth principle of the pastoral counseling process is that the self experiences healing in the context of being given ultimate and proximate value. This means that through the context of the pastoral counseling relationship the client's self is affirmed and responds with a sense of self-worth that is derived from God who is the ultimate center of value. The pastoral counselor facilitates this experience through the nature and dynamics of the counselor's response to the client.

This concept, explored in Tillich, is simply accepting that one is accepted. This process of accepting acceptance in spite of being unacceptable involves a process of accepting the divine value that God has put upon the self. This activity involves: (a) acknowledging one's finitude and dependency in relationships; (b) affirming the self in relation to the divine affirmation; (c) an awareness of one's condition in life; and (d) a movement of the self to self-understanding. The self re-engages with the resources of history, socio-cultural past, present and future and transforms these dimensions into new meaning.

Kohut's characterization of the role of empathy forms a psychological perspective to this discussion in regard to the nature of the self's experience of value in pastoral counseling. Empathy, the cognitive and emotional capacity to vicariously experience the inner world of another, in understood to be a "value neutral" method of observation.
According to the theory, the analyst engages the client by communicating a theoretical grasp of what the client is feeling. In the explaining phase the analyst and client engage in a more mature empathic bond which permits the client to experience a more in-depth sense of being valued.

The self's experience of empathy and sense of being valued is essential for the structuring of meaning and psychological cohesion throughout life. Tillich and Kohut emphasize this need in different ways but with analogous outcomes in previous discussions.

It follows, therefore, from the aforementioned considerations that the capacity of the pastoral counselor to employ empathy in the pastoral counseling process will represent the convergence of the pastoral counselor’s childhood experiences and ongoing commitment to being trained and supervised. The pastoral counselor’s training and supervision enables her to broaden the scope of her empathic awareness of the client’s psychological, socio-cultural and theological alienation. This is particularly significant when counseling some African American women clients whose pathological issues, especially in regard to her socio-cultural location, do not dynamically inform the models of care generally used by pastoral counselors.

Further, the pastoral counselor whose scope of empathy has been broadened to attend to particular harm rendered some African American women by attending to the socio-cultural location and images of the self is able to respond with understanding and able to convey that understanding in communication. When some African American women clients express their idealizing needs in regard to merging with the African American community and their grandiose images of themselves in relationship to their experiences of oppression,
the pastoral counselor responds from a mirroring and idealizing attitude. The pastoral counselor's acceptance of the client mobilizes mirroring and idealizing images and issues rather than a rejection of them. Gradually, the client experiences a sense of being valued rather than a sense of not valued, accepted rather than rejected, known rather than unknown.

In summary, the fourth principle of my pastoral counseling model is that the pastoral counselor responds to the self in an attitude of valuing and empathy. Valuing and empathy enable the client to experience a sense of self-value and affirmation which, in turn, mobilizes archaic self-destructive images of self and object. This means that the pastoral counselor must have experienced her self within the context of a childhood that provided sufficient empathy and valuing experiences that were communicated. The pastoral counselor must have undergone an experience of in-depth counseling for her own self. Further, the pastoral counselor must commit herself to training and supervising in the interest of helping the client thereby broadening the scope of empathy for the client.

The experience of value and empathy available in the pastoral counseling relationship helps some African American women clients in the process of grace. The self of the client in pastoral counseling becomes free from idolatrous oppression—archaic self and object images which impinge upon the self's ability to respond and interpret with a cohesive sense of self. Withdrawal from these harmful and destructive images frees the self to internalize more congenial images which reunite and reconnect the self's activities and interactions.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I described and clinically discussed my model of pastoral counseling. My model is based upon the concept of grace. My model is a theological and psychological theory that is adequate for informing an ethical perspective of the self. Tillich’s theology of the self, and Kohut’s psychological understanding of the self inform my model. My rationale is related to my identity as an African American woman pastoral counselor and related to my representative role in the African American community of faith and to the needs of some African American women who I have counseled.

The purpose of this model is to provide a resource whereby the pastoral counselor may approach the predicament of some African American women clients who they observe manifesting both defensive and compensatory structures in the counseling process. The assumption is that the condition of some African American women clients entering the counseling process is a sense of estrangement and disconnection. They experience social oppression of gender, race, and class. This oppression manifests in internalization of distorted and defected images of themselves in relationships with self, God, and others.

I defined four principles for my model: (1) the nature of the pastoral counselor’s function; (2) the empathic response; (3) the pastoral counseling engagement; and (4) the goal of pastoral counseling. I defined these principles which inform my model. These principles are derived from Tillich’s principles, but I use Kohut’s concepts in the clinical discussion. My model is grounded in these principles as I define the predicament of the self of some African American women in pastoral counseling, the empathic response of the counselor, the nature of the self’s activity of faith in the pastoral counseling relationship, the
process by which meaning and value are restructured, and the activity of God in the
mediating presence of the pastoral counselor. I indicated that the self restructures, using the
mediums of reason, imagination, and revelation within the context of the pastoral counseling
relationship.

In the light of the discussion of this fourth principle, I will now discuss the method
of reflection used by the pastoral counselor for this model.

The Method of Reflection

The method of reflection in this model refers to the self gaining awareness and
insight about the self's subjective activity of faith. The focus of this method is the
understanding of the nature and structure of the self's activity of faith. This method attends
to the internal world of the self with its objects. I derive the implication for a pastoral
counseling method of reflection by applying the method of practical correlation.

Having been unsuccessful in locating meaning for herself in the genetic family, the
church, among psychologists and counselors concerning her serious inquiry about the state
of her self, some African American women have the potential to be grasped by the power
of God in an empathic and valuing relationship with the pastoral counselor who
communicates and facilitates her experiences.

This method of reflection engages the self in conversation with its objects of faith
in regard to the self's trusting and nontrusting interactions. This is a method of ongoing
reflection on the self's subjective experiences in the meaning-making project which leads to
ever-increasing critical self-awareness.
Having constructed a contextual model of pastoral counseling with African American women, and having discussed the nature and dynamics of the method of reflection for my model, I now turn to the following chapter. In Chapter VII, I demonstrate my model using clinical case materials from my practicum experience at GAPC.
CHAPTER VII

THE DEMONSTRATION OF MY MODEL OF PASTORAL COUNSELING WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

In Chapter VI, I described, interpreted, and evaluated my proposed model of pastoral counseling with some African American women. I used the method of practical correlation to construct a contextual model of pastoral counseling with African American women. My model is based on a pastoral counseling theory of grace that was constructed in Chapter V. My model is a theological and a psychological theory that is adequate for informing an ethical perspective of the self. My model provides a resource whereby the pastoral counselor may approach counseling with African American women clients. The assumption of my model is that treatment of the condition of estrangement and disconnection for this population must include an analysis of the social oppression of gender, race, and class. I introduce two new aspects of my model: the stages of pastoral counseling and the processes of salvation. These two precise movements undergird this model of pastoral counseling.

In this chapter, I demonstrate my model of pastoral counseling with some African American clients using my clinical case experience at GAPC. My purpose is to demonstrate the stages and processes by which some African American women restructure meaning and healing in the pastoral counseling relationship.
The Stages of Pastoral Counseling

There are three stages of the pastoral counseling process. These stages represent my experience counseling some African American women clients and the movements I discern as informed by my understanding and use of the theories of Tillich and Kohut. My purpose is to demonstrate the processes and stages by which the self structures meaning and healing in pastoral counseling.

The three stages are: (1) the discernment stage; (2) the interpretation stage; and (3) the reconciliation stage. I will describe these stages; I am aware that the movements are interrelated, interdependent, and inseparable. The assumption of these stages is that the primary condition of the self entering pastoral counseling is one of estrangement and disconnection from self, God, and other selves. A further assumption is that the self experiences healing through the process of grace, using the mediums of reason, imagination, and revelation. While the pastoral counselor is essential to the healing process, the agency of healing is the activity of God manifested in the pastoral counseling context and embodied in the person of the pastoral counselor. The pastoral counselor’s primary role in the pastoral counseling relationship with the African American woman client is empathic response, understanding and interpreting of the client’s experiencing, and mediating the grace of God in and through the revelation of the event of Jesus as the Christ.

The method of this chapter is as follows: (1) I will define each stage of the pastoral counseling process and describe the nature and dynamics of how the self structures meaning, both theologically and psychologically, in the pastoral counseling context. (2) I will use clinical material counseling some African American women. (3) I will critically construct
and assess these stages of pastoral counseling for ministry with some African American women clients. My focus on this population is related to my understanding of an absence of adequate theoretical rationale for counseling African American women that considers the destructive issues (gender and race images in the socio-cultural context). These issues are generally not addressed by previous models of pastoral counseling, and are essential for an in-depth understanding and vulnerability to her self experiencing.

The first movement is the discernment stage. The discernment stage has two phases: (1) estrangement analysis, and (2) the social context of the self’s estrangement. The second movement of the counseling process involves the assessment of three ongoing interpretive dimensions: (1) the pastoral counselor interprets the dynamic and genetic experiences of the client’s experience of her inner world as the self manifests these experiences in the transference; (2) the client’s experience of “optimal frustration” and self acceptance; and (3) working through wherein the client internalizes or takes in “bits” of the self worth functions of the pastoral counselor’s attitude. In this model the pastoral counselor immerses herself in the experiences of the client in order to help facilitate restructuring of the client’s personal and historical material, as well as the restructuring of oppressive experiences, manifest in estranged relations, due to her socio-cultural location. This is the dimension of reconnection and reunion. In the stage of reconnection and reunion the client has the potential to experience the stage of mature faith and full participation in God’s life and in God’s community.
Presentation of the Cases

Some African American women clients who suffer from narcissistic personality disorders have, in addition to Kohut’s description of the nature and dynamics of these disorders, a torn or split sense of self. The self is often torn between internal images that often conflict with how one actually experiences oneself in community. As a result, African American women have two internal aspects of themselves, a subjective self and an objective self, and they are often separated from conscious awareness. The subjective self and the objective self are not only contradictory, but they represent defective and idolatrous images internalized from their family of origin, significant others, and their socio-cultural and historical contexts. Below are three cases that help to demonstrate the model. I will begin with the estrangement analysis of each of the selected cases.

Estrangement Analysis

Clinical Case #1

J is a forty-five year old African America female. She is a native of Atlanta, Georgia where she has resided all her life. She lives alone in her home. She initiated therapy after attending a workshop at her church on the topic of heterosexual relationships where she learned of pastoral counseling. I provided the pastoral counselor perspective on the panel discussion for that workshop. After the panel discussion, J informed me that she was aware that she needed to sit with me in counseling. Our relationship, initiated by her, began.

J is the third of five siblings and the second female. Her birth story is that she was a “spare” daughter. The spare daughter functions as parental mediator and caregiver for parents in her family system as they approach old age.
J's relationship with her seventy-six year old mother is intensely close and joyless. While close, she feels left out of her mother’s life and out of life in general. When she was three and a half years old, she remembers sensing that her parents were confining her to the home while her brothers were able to play outside with other children. During those times, she remembers her mother’s emotional absence when she turned to her mother for comfort, warmth, support, or even an explanation about why her life seemed so apart from other children in the home and in the community. When her mother did respond, she felt the response never seemed to help her understand her own experience. It was as if her mother’s attempts to clarify J’s experiences further exasperated J’s feelings of being apart. One clear memory is that J’s mother would give her food rather than the attention she craved. J remembers that her mother used food to cope with the harshness with which J’s father treated the household, drowning her feelings in food. J’s mother recently attended a pastoral counseling session with J, and in her report of the relationship between her and J was the confirmation of J’s experience of the relationship. J’s mother pointed out that when J was very young, J’s mother felt she was involved in a harsh emotional relationship with J’s father, and used most of her energy in the maintenance of her marriage.

J reports a close and sad relationship with her eighty-year old father. Her father chronically censored all her acquaintances, depriving her of opportunities to develop relationships beyond the family of origin and extended families. Her father was unresponsive to her attempts to gain his affection and approval. During adolescence, her libidinal sexual drive became manifest as a consequence of faulty structures of self, which could not regulate tension and tame affects. J’s mother defied J’s father, encouraging J to
act our sexually as a teen. (The mother was probably acting out of her defected structure of the self.) J became pregnant, was forced by her father to marry, and was divorced within a year after the child was born. J's parents assisted her in raising the child at the family of origin home where J was living. J's father recently attended a pastoral counseling session with J. J's father came to counseling at J's insistence after telling him how she had experienced him as a child and as a young woman. J's father described his self-experience as feeling burdened, unhappy, harsh, and unfeeling toward others all his life. He reported that he kept people away from him and life had not helped him to be any different. (The father seemed to have acted out of a defected sense of self.)

When J was five, J's sister L, who was seven, died of pneumonia. Their relationship had been "very close, happy, and human." By human J meant that she always knew what to expect of her sister who always played with her. Her sister was a favorite child of both parents. The loss of her sister was experienced as the loss of something very special, the loss of a best friend, and loss of caring relatedness. J reported the death of L left her lonely, empty, feeling cut off from someone special, and sad. This profound sense of aloneness never went away.

Relationships with her brothers were distant while growing up. She experienced them as strangers. There are few memories of interacting with them, and no happy memory of interacting with them.

Relationships with extended family females are close and comfortable. J's relationship with her daughter is close and conflictual. Her daughter became special to the grandparents who felt she was a replacement for L, J's sister who died at an early age.
J has a history of difficult interaction with others, particularly with men. Her romanticism and idealism led to teen pregnancy, her bid to flee estrangement and to flee toward freedom ended in a difficult marriage, and increased the centers of conflict and tension.

In consultation and supervision, J was seen to be suffering from narcissistic personality disorder. A narcissistic personality disorder consists of the defect in the structure of the self. The defects in this case are the result of the chronic nonresponse of the parents to the client’s needs for mirroring and idealizing activity. In J’s developmental process, prior to establishing a firm sense of self, the maternal object was empathically absent, thwarting ambitions.

J was unable to tolerate and manage the anxiety she was feeling as she sought the paternal idealizing object and healthy admiration for the idealizing object, thwarting development of goals. She was deprived of what she needed to develop an adequate structure of the self. The paternal failures were chronic. Because of chronic idealizing failure, transmuting internalization, or the activity of transforming internalized images, did not occur sufficiently for J to begin to perform some of the functions that the parental objects performed for her, such as mirroring, soothing, management of tension, and developing goals and ambitions which would have emerged out of her good feelings about herself, gained from paternal approval. J’s narcissism, or failure to have sufficient internalized love, indicates depression, lack of self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, and a distorted image of herself. These characteristics point to a split where the grandiose self, or the inflated self, remains unintegrated with the reality ego.
J came to counseling because of a sense of being estranged or disconnected from self, God, and others. She had a successful career, church affiliation, and no hope of helping herself. My impression of her was that she had done everything she was aware she could do, including prior pastoral counseling which seemed to have compounded her difficulty. In the consultation process at GAPC, I was encouraged to provide a therapeutic frame where J could re-enact past relationships, affects, in response to empathy.

I approached the pastoral counseling process with J with a posture of acceptance and understanding and a desire to know of her historical, socio-cultural and ultimate experiences. J reported that she felt better during each pastoral counseling session. The problem she recognized was that the feeling was only experienced during the counseling hour.

From the point of view of estrangement analysis, J is suffering from what Kohut defines as a distorted and fragile sense of self with a vertical split (mirroring and idealizing). J uses the counseling session, demanding my attention and affirmation, resistant of any interruption. I will discuss the estrangement analysis of J later in this chapter.

Clinical Case #2

B is a forty-two year old African American woman. She is a native of Atlanta, Georgia. B is an elementary school teacher and is concerned about her career. She is divorced, single head of household, and the parent of a twenty-year old son. B’s presenting issues upon initiation of therapy were self-esteem, anger, self-identity, and authority issues.

B is the second of five siblings, and a twin. Her twin is a male. Important is the fact that she does not share a male parent with any of her siblings aside from her twin. Further,
she experiences shame about herself, doubts around the issue of having been raised in a housing development, and her family having been recipients of welfare throughout her youth. She also experiences strained family of origin relationships.

B understands that her mother experienced rejection by her family of origin members when her mother, F, became pregnant by a married man. B’s mother did not share a male parent with her siblings. A very dark-complexioned Black man parented B’s mother. Fair-complexioned skin color was an important issue for B’s family. B’s mother, the only dark-complexioned member of her nuclear family, was labeled the black sheep of her family of origin.

There was a powerful family myth about race that emphasized skin color and gender regarding the message concerning procreation. The myth is captured in these quotes: “It is better to be born a mosquito in a white neighborhood than to be Black,” and “If you are born with dark skin, make yourself useful by parenting a child with someone who is white.” B understood that her mother spent her life trying to satisfy her family of origin rules. Further, she saw herself in her mother as she ceased to idealize her mother and began to understand and come to terms with her family issues that grew out of her mother’s emotional rejection of her.

B characterizes her relationship with her mother as conflictual and painful. B remembers early experiences of being left out and ignored and sensing that she was disconnected, different, and separated from other persons. She described her mother as a dutiful mother who never had personal time for B.
B’s relationship with an older sister D has always been close and good. By close and good she remembers the relationship as nurturing and her sister as a role model. While D’s complexion is light-skinned, D always accepted B.

The relationship with her twin brother was always close. He was dark-skinned but was well liked by B’s mother. B’s relationship with a younger sister with very fair complexion has always been conflictual and painful. There was a younger brother who was fifteen years B’s junior. She was very fond of him. He was tragically killed at an early age as a consequence of the hazards of his profession. He was a sheriff.

B had a close and loving relationship with a stepfather who moved in with the family during her puberty. There was also an uncle who was from her mother’s family of origin who was important. She admired him because he owned his own business and knew how to get things done.

This client experienced empathic failure in the family of origin environment and failed to receive the support she required for developing a firm sense of self. She was concerned about what she experienced as rejection by the larger society in regard to her race and her skin color. B understands that she has been attempting to live up to the strong independent African American woman image given her, an image of one who does not buckle under the pressures of the oppression of race and gender. Her resources resisting gender and race oppression failed her and she came “limping” to therapy for help in combating gender and race issues, especially in her work relationships.
B looks older than her 42 years. She has a childlike voice and is slightly overweight. She is manipulative and disconnected from her reality, with a fantasy of getting the love she missed from her mother, and solving her feelings of estrangement in relationships.

The consultation and supervision of this case suggested that a large part of her self-understanding had been formed in pain and in a sense of being apart or disconnected and different. The initial diagnosis was borderline personality disorder with developmental arrest at the stage of separation-individuation. This means that the client did not achieve a cohesive sense of self structurally during early development. The diagnosis is a tool for knowing how to develop and implement treatment for the client.

After eleven sessions, B was nonresponsive to the initial treatment modality. Subsequently, the diagnosis was changed to indicate narcissistic personality disorder. She gradually began to respond to the empathic communication of the counseling process.

Clinical Case #3

S is a sixty-three year old African American female. She is a native of Georgia. S is a divorced head of household. S is a private practice nurse. S came to therapy to discuss spiritual concerns. The spiritual concerns began when she reflected upon the state of her health after experiencing heart surgery.

She had attended sessions with two male counselors prior to being referred to me. She reported feeling great discomfort after seeing them. Her explanation was that they seemed not to want to know her story.

S is the second oldest of seven siblings. The oldest child, a male, died several years ago with cancer. The fifth sibling, a sister, died of breast cancer a decade ago. Her mother
is alive and lives in the family of origin home in rural Georgia. Her father died of a stroke several years ago. She was married at the age of twenty and divorced her husband after twenty years, mainly because of his alcoholism and infidelity. She is the parent of three children.

Her relationship with her parents was good during the developmental years. She was very close to her mother, and she adored her father. Her family life changed when she was a teenager; her parents were divorced. Her father moved out of the family home and left the state. Communication with him ceased until she was an adult.

Her relationships with her siblings were close and congenial. There was some conflict with her older brother who took on some of the parenting role after the divorce of her parents. There was some competitiveness with a sister who is two years her junior.

Through the years, S had developed a very close and satisfying relationship with people in her church and in her community. After a health crisis, she began to sense that these relationships, particularly with her male partner, was a camouflage for the empty and separated feeling she had known, but had denied since her early years.

S wondered who God really was and discovered she did not know, nor did she seem to know much about her own self. Work, community, and church had failed to provide her with the sense of meaning she longed for. She did not have a sense of self, and she came to therapy to come to terms with her reality in the light of God.

In consultation and supervision, S seemed to be experiencing an adjustment disorder with depressed mood. (Adjustment disorder is a reaction or pattern of reaction to an identifiable psychosocial stressor that occurs within three months of the onset of the
S seemed to have internalized negative aspects of her mother and father at a young age. S had very little conflict in social relationships. Subsequently, S was diagnosed with dependent personality disorder. As more data emerged in the therapy sessions, her diagnosis was eventually changed to narcissistic personality disorder. The primary need of the client was for acceptance, affirmation, and understanding in the pastoral counseling relationship.

The Discernment Stage

I will now discuss the discernment movement of my first stage of the pastoral counseling process of grace. In the previous three clinical cases described, each client has been diagnosed with a narcissistic personality disorder. The primary need of the client in the first stage of counseling is acceptance, affirmation, understanding, and attention to the self and the client’s experiences historically, socio-culturally and ultimately. There are two issues that emerge when exploring the self in pastoral counseling. They are the exploration of the inner world of the client, which involves estrangement analysis, as well as the social analysis of the self’s estrangement.

The condition of the self which emerges is that of estrangement as a consequence of internal distorted and archaic images of the self and the self’s relationships. Persons feel estranged or disconnected from self, God, and others. In the first clinical case, J felt set apart in her family of origin and in her community. Her responses to others continuously re-enacted her childhood feeling of being set apart. Her condition can be described as a condition disconnection or of estrangement as I understand Tillich’s terminology.
Kohut’s understanding of the nature of the mirroring transference is informative for J’s concerns at this stage. Exhibitionist and grandiose manifestations that are symbolic of split-off archaic mirroring need characterize the transference. In my work with J, she idealized me as a role model of what it means to be an African American woman. She gradually began to value her own self-experiences as contributing to her sense of meaning. As she began to note and appreciate her own self-experiencing, her grandiose feelings about being affirmed by me emerged. She exhibited what Kohut refers to as the need for mirroring.

In the second clinical case, B demonstrated what Kohut defines as the idealizing transference. Her father was absent and unknown. As an idealizing imago at home, B had felt divided about her father’s absence and insecure about what she sensed his absence meant regarding her. She attempted to meet her idealizing needs by merging with me in order to sense a feeling of ordered purposefulness.

The activation of the mirroring and idealizing transferences for J, B, and S respectively, represent the precursors of the need to experience grace. As their transferences mobilized, each client began to be aware of split-off dimensions of themselves, known as idolatrous archaic images. As their awareness of these images increased, they reported a gradual awareness of God’s presence in the pastoral counseling process. As this awareness of God began to be stronger, they began to sense that deliverance from these internalized images and a sense of reunion or reconnection in relations was possible. In addition, as all three began to understand their social location, race, gender, and class had close dimensions to their experience of estrangement and disconnection. Let me
demonstrate the connection between sensing God’s activity and hope of deliverance from estrangement.

During her forty-fourth session of counseling, J commented that when she came to counseling she was aware that she was like someone who had been asleep all her life. J was aware that in counseling she had a sense of being awake. She likened her counseling sessions to the Christian hymn, “Amazing Grace,” particularly the stanza that reads, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I’m found, was blind but now I see.” She encountered God’s grace in pastoral counseling. Her goal became being awake beyond the pastoral counseling context.

In her first stage of pastoral counseling, estrangement analysis, the process of grace is experienced in two phases: the discernment of faith phase and the social nature of estrangement of the self phase. These phases are interrelated, interdependent, and occur concurrently.

The Discernment of Faith

The first phase to emerge in my experience of the clients’ mobilization of their respective transferences is manifestation of the activity of grace, moving them toward faith. Their hope and trust in me symbolized in the transferences made it possible for them to be apprehended by God’s grace. This was made possible by the pastoral counselor’s empathic and gracious responses.

The counselor, listening and attending to the experiences of the client, discerns that the hope and the trust of the client are the manifestation of their faith. When J reported that she sensed God in her therapy session as grace, I discerned her hope and trust as a
manifestation of her faith. This faith is the manifestation of the activity of the power of God in the client.

In the clinical case, J's faith began to emerge in response to my mirroring acceptance of her and led to affirming her self despite her past. I understand that this concept of accepting and affirming faith is related to what I understand Tillich means by the courage to be. J commented that the counseling process had become the one place where she was sighted and felt like herself with another person. J went on to explain that her goal was to feel the acceptance of God that she experienced in the room with me during the remainder of the week. She felt that the pastoral counseling context was the place where she could share all of her triumphs, fears, and learn to be "human" in a safe environment.

B's merger with me for idealizing demonstrates that her activity of faith had been distorted by the idolatrous images that she inherited from her family of origin and contextual relationships. It was important to her that I was a professional African American woman, like herself, and that meant she consciously used me as a "role model." She trusted that I was invested in her and would "teach" her how to know herself in relationship to others. B's trust in me demonstrates her faith activity. B sought me in faith for mirroring acceptance in the formulation of her eternal and ultimate concerns, and in regard to her broken relationships.

S's merger with me for idealizing manifests in her use of me as a symbol to show her the way to God. Her path to God has been distorted by idolatrous images. Her faith activity within the pastoral counseling context led her to begin to experience a solid sense
of self emerging despite her past experiences. These examples demonstrate the power of God in these clients’ experiences of self and are evidence of the process of grace.

I believe that the pastoral counselor’s inquiry into the faith of the client is what makes the counseling process pastoral. This inquiry enables the counselor to discern the truth for the client and in so doing point to the client’s center of value and meaning. This inquiry leads the client to the possibility of experiencing God’s grace and to the emergence of a new sense of self. Pastoral counseling framed in this way leads to salvation.

While each client has the potential to participate in the process of grace, there are limits. The attitude of the client may block the process of grace. The client must be open to God’s activity for the new self to emerge. An open attitude is an opportunity of faith which necessarily leads to the manifestation of the second stage of the pastoral counseling process of grace. The second stage is the analysis of the social nature of the self’s estrangement.

The Social Nature of the Self’s Estrangement

The second phase of the first stage of the pastoral counseling process is the self’s experience of estrangement. Estrangement is understood to be social as well as personal. Discernment (coming to know self in relation to other selves) and faith (trusting in another) are activities which are carried on in the context of significant others. The pastoral counselor begins to discern a correlation between the estrangement of the self and its relation to other selves. This observation is based on the approach that the client participates with the helper in the pastoral counseling relationship. The helper is the pastoral
counselor. The helper accepts and affirms the client and this acceptance and affirmation represents God’s acceptance through the helper.

This phase evidences that the nature of the content and process of the self’s faith and narcissistic activities are social. In order to approach the dimension of the self of some African American women clients, the attitude and approach must be characterized by empathic introspection.

In my work with B, she began to become aware of how her relationships in her family of origin and significant others were related to her distorted personal, professional, and social relationships which were characterized by conflicting and idolatrous images. B explored ways in which her self-definition was informed by the distorted messages she was given in her environment during her development. When she discussed her sense of the limitations placed upon her in society she understood these limitations as a consequence of her gender and race in her family of origin and in a society where her voice was extinguished. B described this voicelessness as having deprived her of the development of skills to learn how “to be human” toward herself. She said she did not know her own self.

In this phase of counseling, J used the language of the biblical narrative to gain a perspective on her self by reflecting on what she understood as ultimate for self meaning. She began to respond to a sense of feeling left out and set apart from the Christian tradition that she idealized. She began to reflect upon aspects of her faith that contributed to her sense of disconnection in community.

S, in this phase also expressed her self through her Christian tradition, and more particularly her faith activities. She gained an understanding that her activities of faith were
related to her sense of being dutiful in relationships. S pulled heavily upon the biblical scriptures and gospel symbols for the meaning she longed for in her God who was the “source of her supply and the strength of her life.” I will describe each case later.

In summary, I have stated that the first stage of my pastoral counseling process of grace is that of “discernment.” There are two movements in this stage—“estrangement analysis” and “the social nature of the self’s estrangement.” The client is normally unaware of the power of God to heal her in this stage. The activity of discernment is the work of the pastoral counselor and can be introduced into the counseling process. The major focus of this stage is attending to the client’s sense of disconnection and estrangement, both theologically and psychologically, with an attitude of understanding, and the counselor’s posture of listening to the client’s self experience.

The length of time spent in this stage is dependent upon the capabilities of the client. I believe Kohut would assert that the response to this question is related to the psychological assets the client brings to the counseling relationship that would inform the defensive construction of the self. I surmise that for Tillich, this stage would be related to the courage to participate or the “courage to be” in the moment of the self being grasped by ultimate dimensions. The self that responds by way of self awareness and insight of the self’s predicament to the questions “What’s going on?” and “What shall I do?” experiences the self as potentially related to self, God, and others.

The first stage of my pastoral counseling process of grace model is one in which the client has the opportunity to restructure meaning in two ways: (1) the self may continue to structure meaning as disconnected and estranged from self, God, and other selves; and (2)
the self may receive grace. Grace manifests as self-empathy, the “courage to be,” or faith. If the latter opportunity is the case, the client accepts that she is accepted by the counselor in spite of her feeling of unacceptability, and reunion and reconnection is made possible.

**The Process of Interpretation**

The second stage of my model of pastoral counseling involves generative interpretation. By generative interpretation, I am referring to the pastoral counselor’s introduction of the client to her self. When the client takes hold of these new images introduced by the pastoral counselor, new meaning and self-valuing take place. The self begins to find new ways to preserve and express the self. An in-depth awareness about the sense of self-preservation reveals the nature of the state of awareness of the world of the self. The new self is a regenerated self, made possible by grace. The emergence of the new self is a moment of revelation where alternative self-images rooted in God take over the self.

Three things happen in this stage: (1) The self-world is illuminated as divided or split into good and bad images of meaning and value. (2) The self experiences powerlessness and hopelessness within the socio-cultural and spiritual contexts because of distorted perception and interpretation given the self. (3) The self accepts acceptance in the context of the pastoral counseling relationship and process.

The role of the pastoral counselor during the second stage involves helping the client interpret the interpersonal and ultimate predicament that she is embedded in historically and socio-culturally. The pastoral counseling mediates the atoning work of Jesus, freeing the self from the estrangement of its self-destructive behavior. The client moves from self-
judgment to self-acceptance; the self is experienced in context and defensive behavior takes
a new meaning; and there is a hoped for good outcome for the client.

The second stage of the pastoral counseling process of grace is also informed by the
therapeutic phases of explaining and working through. This involves therapeutic
interpretations of genetic and dynamic understandings of the inner world of the client. To
do this the pastoral counselor needs (a) an adequate theory of the nature of relationships of
the self to its selfobjects which helps the therapist to discern the self’s experiences; and (b)
to provide accurate empathic interpretation of the client’s interrelatedness to his/her
selfobjects.

Such empathic interpretations of the pastoral counselor facilitate the client’s
movement from (a) archaic self-fixation on distorted object images to a gradual decrease of
the intensity of the fixation; and (b) the intensity of the use of the therapist as an object to
a more mature selfobject relationship with the therapist. At this point the client gains some
self-objectivity, self-understanding, and self-acceptance within the context of the pastoral
counseling relationship and process. This process is analogous to my theological
understanding of how the self emerges from existential estrangement.

This second stage of my pastoral counseling process involves ongoing interpretive
movements: (1) The pastoral counselor interprets the dynamic and genetic experiences of
the client which manifests in the transfersences. (2) The self’s experience of optimal
frustration, and self-acceptance. (3) Working through where the client internalizes functions
previously provided by the pastoral counselor manifesting in the counseling process as self-
interpretation of genetic and dynamic aspects of the self-selfobject relationships.
The second stage of my pastoral counseling process addresses the concerns I bring to my dissertation in regard to some African American women clients. I am assured that helping some African American women whom I have counseled to reason and imagine the experience of themselves in terms of their past, personal, and socio-cultural history in this society and in relationships have been essential for their respective meaning making. Issues of ambiguity brought on by the socio-cultural and historical oppression of race and gender psychologically, socially, and theologically have emerged with each African American woman client I have counseled.

I now discuss the second stage of pastoral counseling process of grace. I use clinical cases of B and J presented in the introduction and previously in this chapter of the dissertation.

In the second stage the client is enabled to become the agent of her self based on relatedness. Turning away from self-destructive behavior and moving toward interactions and relationships of faith characterize the self-relationship.

In my clinical case with B, my interpretations focused around the relationship of her grandiosity or unrealistic expectations in work relationships as she responded to what she experienced as the racial slights in her work space and her grandiose and unrealistic expectations in personal and social relationships. The interpretations focused on her mirroring and idealizing needs, with emphasis on mirroring needs. I helped her to get in touch with the images given her in family myths about skin color; the social role of women often manifested in self-hatred; and the distorted images of the role of a male partner. I helped her to understand her feeling of isolation in the context of the relationship with her
mother during development, and how she had split off that awareness from consciousness as a way of surviving the pain of estrangement or feeling cut off. Further, we explored her grandiose and unrealistic fantasies in her past and present relationships with others. In theological and psychological terms, I explained that her grandiose and unrealistic fantasies were representations of her self and other images which were to be accepted, affirmed, and valued to correct for B’s harmful experiences of her self brought on by these images.

J suffered from her parents’ chronic empathic failures. Neither parent provided the emotional support that she needed. Each parent related to J during her early development from the perspective of the distorted and flawed images of self given to them that resulted in their own narcissistic strivings. I explained to J and helped her understand that her sense of fragile and disconnected self were shaped by the context in which she developed. I explained to J that she had related to others in the same way as she felt in relationships with significant others in childhood. Her sense of powerlessness, which she experienced primarily in her family and community, and her sense of insignificance which she felt in regard to interracial interactions at work, both indicated that she received her sense of value and meaning through idealizing others. I explained to her how she had merged with her faith tradition in regard to Christianity and that some of the images of that tradition were idolatrous distortions which undercut her sense of value and meaning. For example, J’s Christian tradition taught her that honoring and respecting her parents meant continuing the relationship patterns she had inherited. One such pattern was a shame pattern inherited from her father. The shame manifested in J’s relationships as a sense of not being cared for and valued, and not sensing self-worth with a potential partner. She was therefore involved in
secret and adulterous relationships. As these images of her self emerged in the counseling process, J was able to interpret and understand her history and the images she inherited. She began to recognize the ability to appropriate new images for her self. As she was able to appropriate these interpretation, and others, she began to recognize her grandiose and unrealistic need to protect herself from the shame of having gotten pregnant out of wedlock, and divorced by the age of twenty. She understood that her feelings of shame kept her from relationships that could foster her self-worth. She also recognized that she had suppressed these needs as a way of protecting her self from further harm or injury to the self. My goal with J was to liberate her from the theological and psychological disconnected, estranged, defected, and distorted images that oppressed her and kept her in bondage.

This stage of interpretation by the pastoral counseling relationship is the restructuring activity of the self, toward the phase of salvation. I call this event justification in the divine activity of atonement. In the context of the pastoral counseling relationship, the client’s past images of her self are restructured in response to the revelatory and mediating activity of God through and in the person of the pastoral counselor. This stage represents a movement, grounded in revelation, from an experience-near subjective self-experience to an objective interpretation of experience. The self’s external history and personal and internal history become the medium through which the self’s subjective experiences are made contextual in the pastoral counseling process. In this process the client experiences the transformation and change.

In the relationships with B and J, the evidence of their transformation took on some similarities: (1) There was a gradual awareness of the pastoral counselor as a separate
person; (2) There was a reduction in the level of anxiety induced by ambiguity as interpretations were appropriated; (3) There were the clients' activities of interpreting the experiences of themselves in relationships historically, socially and ultimately; (4) The clients risked responsibility for self-relationships; and (5) The clients accepted themselves and began to work through historical and social relationships and interactions.

The anxiety and the frustration of the second stage indicate the client's sense of vulnerability. The vulnerability manifests itself in the tension of the self as it comes to terms with its ultimate dependency in relationships with others. This dependency makes the self subject to the reality of rejection and deception. This dependency is experienced as the limitations of finiteness, which were previously masked by grandiosity and unrealistic expectations.

In summary, the second stage of pastoral counseling process of grace is defined as interpretation. The self begins to interpret and anticipate self-destructive behavior. This is manifested in the movement toward self-acceptance (the appropriation of new meaning of historical, socio-cultural, and ultimate relationships) facilitated by the pastoral counselor's accurate empathic interpretations of the self's experiences in relationships as transferences emerge in the context of the pastoral counseling process of grace. This is made possible by the activity of atonement in the self who accepts the pastoral counselor's appearance of her, in spite of her feeling of unacceptability, and who makes a decision to turn toward God. Psychologically, this is the phase where therapeutic interpretations of genetic and dynamic understandings of the self's inner world of division is explained to the self and as these explanations are internalized, they are worked through. The role of the pastoral counselor
involves movement of the self, through empathic interpretations, toward self-acceptance, self-affirmation, and self-empathy; and toward the ongoing appropriation of new meaning; and to the self’s activity of interpreting the self’s experiences in relationships.

Reconnection and Reunion

The third stage of my pastoral counseling model refers to the self’s activity of reconnection and reunion with the self’s history, socio-cultural, and theological relatedness, through interpretation and internalization of more appropriate self-images in the context of the pastoral counseling relationship. Theologically, this involves a movement from faith patterns and interactions based upon distorted images, toward faith patterns and interactions based upon and grounded in Jesus Christ. As a result, the self is characterized as reunited and reconnected as opposed to the self characterized as disconnected and estranged. Psychologically, this involves movement from an archaic narcissistic experience of self to a more mature narcissism characterized by healthier self-object relationships.

Reconnection and reunion reflect upon the nature of the self’s faith activities as the activity of God in Christ. God initiates reconnection and reunion with the self. This unity is manifested in the ongoing process of sanctification in the history of the self—past, present, and future. Sanctification is manifested in the transformation of personality and community both inside and outside the Church.

What this suggests to me clinically is that the interpretive process of pastoral counseling must seek to engage all dimensions of the client’s experience. This means that the pastoral counselor must assist the client to interpret the effects of persons, symbols, images of affirmation, socio-cultural history, and ultimate patterns of meaning. This is
especially important working with some African American women clients to describe the peculiarities of their socio-cultural location in this society.

This stage is characterized by the self-awareness of God. The client begins to interpret her history of relationships beyond the pastoral counseling relationship—past, present, and future—through the medium of salvation rather than through the medium of disconnection and estrangement. Further, the client experiences herself as dynamically related to self, God, and others rather than a sense of estrangement and disconnection.

Reconnection and reunion are possible as a consequence of the activity of the pastoral counselor and the liberating effect of the second stage. These are revelatory moments that function to enable the client's sense of self-worth. The predominant image of God in the third stage is Mediator. The pastoral counselor embodies the mediating power of God through grace.

Moreover, the self is triadically related in the pastoral counseling context. This means that the pastoral counselor must attend to the therapeutic relationship with the client as well as to the relationships between the client and the community or reference groups to which the client seeks accountability. For counseling some African American women clients, this means that her personal history and the history of her socio-cultural location are important data for counseling. Attendance to these needs of the client requires helping the client to be responsive to the actions of the reference group's history that is interconnected and impinges upon her history. The client finds new definitions and restructures in relationships in the context of other selves.
The task of the pastoral counselor in this stage is to facilitate the appropriation and integration of the client's ongoing self-understanding, self-interpretation, self-appropriation, self-affirmation, and self-acceptance, of more appropriate object images in the context of relationships with her self and others. This reunion is not a once for all event, but is ongoing. Important for this final stage of the self's movement toward reunion and reconnection is that the self-movement at this point is in the context of the self's relatedness to other selves. Tillich refers to the helper through whom the activity of the power of God is embodied. Kohut understands that nuclear, more mature narcissistic self restructures in the therapeutic relationship. Tillich understands reunion occurs in transformed relationships in the self's personal and social community, manifested in being received in the community of New Being. Kohut understands this stage facilitates the self in its interpreting activity to develop more appropriate self and object images in relationships.

In this stage the client in the pastoral counseling relationship has an increasing sense of both the condition of the self and the answers implied in the situation. The self responds in the following ways to its situation: (1) increasing self-awareness; (2) increasing preservation of freedom manifested in accountable relationships; (3) increasing self-relatedness; and (4) increasing transcendence manifested in an attitude of devotion of God. Theologically, grace moves the self toward spiritual maturity.

My discussion of the nature of this third stage of pastoral counseling is relevant for my work with some African American women. In the introduction, I mentioned that the concept of grace was important for the clients with whom I have worked as they make sense of their predicament. I have sought to demonstrate how grace as represented in these
women's lives is integral to change in the context of the pastoral counseling relationship. Images given to them during development are integral to their defected and distorted self. The process of reconnection and reunion represents the manner in which these persons experience reunion and reconnection of their estranged and disconnected self-images.

I will demonstrate aspects of this stage in a discussion of S. S began to experience autonomy in her counseling process with the counselor. When the counselor failed to answer S's questions about herself, S gradually developed a sense of hope based on the realization that she did have access to her own answers for her disconnected and estranged relations beyond the counseling session.

Eighteen months into her pastoral counseling process, S experienced several personal concerns that interrupted some of our sessions. Initially, the schedule changes angered S. Later in the counseling process S reported that she found herself asking herself what would be the answer to her concerns if she were in the pastoral counseling context with me. In that situation she also had a concern and wondered what I would say or do given the situation. She found an answer in her internal dialogue with the pastoral counselor (me). Later, S decided that she could decrease her frequency of counseling sessions, feeling a personal freedom from needing me, and began to withdraw her dependence on me for self-worth. Finally, S decided to find a church that satisfied her need to be in a community of Christian faith. She decided that her relationship with her current church was idolatrous and was based on images of faith that were distorted and were not helpful to her any longer. She moved toward a more accountable faith, based on more appropriate images, and based
on relatedness. S had moved toward reconnection, reunion, mature narcissism, and spiritual maturity encountered in God.

Psychologically, S developed compensatory structures of the self that incorporated the split-off images of self and objects. Her mirroring and idealizing needs, no longer split-off, were now sought in relationships that were generative rather than estranged. She had a fuller appreciation for herself within the context of community and in self-acceptance and self-affirmation. Her spiritual concerns were made concrete through the ongoing process of objective self-interpretation of her self-relatedness with social accountability. She was now fully involved in her meaning-making project, deciding upon her meaning and value with decreasing use of my agency.

Finally, S initiated termination of the pastoral counseling process. During several sessions she processed her desire to go on, having received the healing she longed for. As she terminated, she referred her daughter to me saying, “I don’t want her to wait this long to feel this connected and to be on her own, to be free.” “Pastor,” she said, “you see I raised her to be just like me and she is wondering what has happened to me.”

Finally, the defensive and the compensatory poles manifest in the transferences in counseling. (The psychological concept of poles are delineated in Chapter III.) Both poles were treated using the self psychology approach developed by Kohut. From a psychological perspective, Kohut’s theory and the integration of the defensive and compensatory structures is suggestive of what I refer to as grace. Grace, as I am using it, means that the defensive and compensatory structures of the self have been integrated internally and become functional in the self. This process is contingent upon the empathic interpretive
responses of the therapist. The process of grace is present to the self under the conditions of revelation, and is a process made possible by the presence of the healer who embodies the Mediator of the activity of the revelation of God.

It is my argument that among some African American women clients, the defensive and compensatory structures are related. The socio-cultural location of some African American women clients is exasperated by gender, race, and class oppression in this society, in addition to their relationships with parents and significant others in the development of psychological structures. I am asserting that healing occurs only in the case where both structures are interpreted and worked through simultaneously.

In this section I have defined and explained my third stage of pastoral counseling. This process is defined as grace. Psychologically, Kohut refers to the self’s appropriation of mature narcissism. Theologically, the self appropriates a more mature spirituality.

Finally, I stated that in my experience and analysis, working with African American women clients, I have observed that there must be an attendance to both the defensive and compensatory structures in the interpretive and working through process of termination in order to attend to their needs arising out of their experiences in relationships of development both among parents and significant others, and among images related to their socio-cultural location compounded by the oppression of race and gender.

Conclusion

In this chapter I demonstrated my model of pastoral counseling with African American women clients using the three stages of the pastoral counseling process. I defined the stages of pastoral counseling. I demonstrated the process and stages by which some
African American women structure meaning and healing in the pastoral counseling relationship.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the problem of the dissertation and the significance of the study, reviews the limitations of the study, reports the conclusion of the study, and recommends further research.

Summary of the Problem

The problem of this dissertation was to make visible theological-philosophical-ethical resources for the construction of a model of pastoral counseling ministry for counseling with some African American women clients. The model would contribute to the conceptualization of the nature, purpose, and meaning of pastoral counseling with some African American women clients who experience themselves as estranged from self, God, and others and who seek Christian grace.

Solution to the Problem

In order to solve the problem, I analyzed the historical and socio-cultural experience that most African American women share in this culture. Implications for a model of pastoral counseling ministry emerged. A model of pastoral counseling ministry to African American women clients must consider: (1) The personal, historical, socio-cultural and contextual experiences of African American women are primary sources for the construction of personality theory and method. (2) The themes of African American family and
community must be considered in regard to social and contextual location. (3) The themes of race and gender discrimination must be considered in regard to the harm of the African American legacy since slavery to the present. (4) The themes of acculturation and the assault on the self understanding of the African American woman’s experiences personally, in relations with self, God, and others. (5) The corrective to the exclusion of the African American woman’s personal, historical, and contextual experiences from the traditional disciplines is the locus of womanist theological response.

The historical and contextual analysis also raised questions in regard to how to make visible those resources for the construction of a model of pastoral counseling ministry with some African American women. Traditional theoretical and theological sources from the dominant culture, informed by the locus of the womanist theological response, provided the means for developing a model of pastoral counseling ministry that responds to the need for grace in the lives of African American women with spiritual concerns by insisting on including the experiences of their reality, using their voices and experiences, in the developing of theory and method.

The clinical theoretical formulation of Heinz Kohut was explicated and analyzed for its potential to contribute to the theoretical construction of a model of pastoral counseling with some African American women clients. The philosophical-ethical emphasis of self psychology theory and method answered the question whether self psychology provided a conceptual resource to the pastoral counselor to respond to the personal, social, contextual and historical patterns that bear upon the psychological development of some African American women. Self psychology in conversation with womanist theological response
made visible the experiences of some African American women clients in the church and in theology. Self psychology method and theory provided a framework for organizing and analyzing data, with an emphasis on intervention.

Paul Tillich’s theology of the self provided a conceptual framework for organizing and analyzing the historical, social, and ultimate experiences of the human being. This aspect of the study is an important resource for a model of pastoral counseling ministry for some African American women because it accommodates the spiritual dimension of the experience of the self in relationships with self, God, and others and provides a theological-ethical framework for interpreting meaning. Further, Tillich’s theological anthropology contributed to the construction of a theology of pastoral counseling based upon the norm of grace.

This model of pastoral counseling ministry was organized around the experiences of African American women clients whom I treated at GAPC. I engaged the selected theoretical and theological disciplines in an interdisciplinary and ecumenical dialogue with selected themes from womanist theology and my experiences to include the historical, contextual, and personal experiences of African American women in the development of theory for a model of pastoral counseling ministry.

The significance of this study is that previously no comprehensive contextual pastoral counseling resources were visible to the pastoral counselor for counseling African American women clients that included holistic variables. These variables include analysis of: (1) her personal contextual experiences; (2) her relationships with self, God, and others; (3) her internalized psychosocial images; and (4) a theory and method of intervention.
Delimitations

The dissertation was limited to the following dimensions: (1) the selection of the clinical theoretical formulation of self psychology as developed by Heinz Kohut; (2) Paul Tillich's theological anthropology; (3) grace as theological norm for a theology of pastoral counseling; (4) the use of my own clinical case study material of African American women whom I have treated at GAPC in Atlanta, Georgia during my practicum residency, to argue the plausibility of this study; and (5) womanist theological response as a normative resource for the pastoral counselor to analyze and critique the theory, method, and theology of a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women. Moreover, the womanist theological response is the locus for conversation between the disciplines to insist upon the organizing and analyzing principles and methods that include the personal, historical, and contextual experiences of African American women.

The rationale for the delimitations of this dissertation are informed by my concern to: (1) make visible resources, in a manageable fashion, that contribute to the development and construction of a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women; (2) to examine the concepts of empathy and grace as analogous concepts that are normative for pastoral counseling with some African American women.

Conclusions of the Dissertation

I conclude the following in my dissertation project:

- The method of practical correlation is an interdisciplinary and ecumenical dialogue between disciplines that helps me form practical strategies of intervention for an African American woman pastoral counselor.

- Womanist theological response is the locus for engaging a conversation with theoretical and theological disciplines for the purpose of the development of
implications toward the construction of a model of pastoral counseling for some African American women.

- The conceptualization of Heinz Kohut's formulation of the self psychological theory and method, analyzed from the perspective of womanist theological response, has the potential to contribute to the development of method, theory, and norms for a model of pastoral counseling with some African American women.

- Some theological conceptualizations of Paul Tillich, particularly the theology of the self, have the potential to contribute to a model of pastoral counseling that accounts for the theological anthropology of the African American woman's experience of self in relations when brought into conversation with the womanist theological response, and the concepts of Kohut in a practical correlation.

- The locus of womanist theological response to the problem of this dissertation makes visible the personal, historical, socio-cultural, and traditional resources regarding the construction of the model of pastoral counseling with some African American women who present in pastoral counseling with a sense of profound estrangement and disconnection from self, God, and others, and with a desire to develop their spirituality.

**Implications of the Dissertation**

The primary implication of this model of pastoral counseling with some African American women clients is that a comprehensive and contextual resource that utilizes the African American woman's experiences as a primary source for the development of the theory and method in conversation with traditional sources is now visible to pastoral counselors who are presented with this problem. This implication satisfies the goal of this project. It raises the question as to what other traditional sources may be made visible by such scholarship.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

It is my recommendation that the conclusions and implications of this dissertation project be engaged in the clinical setting with other populations.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


