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THEORY AND APPLICATION OF ATTACHMENT TO GOD
IN CHRISTIAN SOULCARE

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Nathan Joyce

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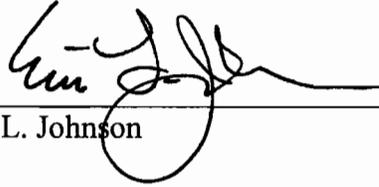
**THEORY AND APPLICATION OF ATTACHMENT TO GOD
IN CHRISTIAN SOULCARE**

Nathan Wayne Joyce

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Date April 7, 2006

To my wife Crystal,
you make me love and laugh,
and to

Emma and Elise,

I hope my love for you resembles the love of God

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PREFACE

This work is a culmination of a long journey of discovery in which I have gained interest, passion, and knowledge for personal and psychological factors within spiritual life. I have by no means taken this journey alone, and I find myself grateful to many persons. Dr. Leigh Conner has been a mentor, guide, and teacher on this journey. He has listened to my creative wanderings that have eventually led to something important, and he has metabolized those ideas in order to hone them. I consider myself to be a part of the lineage of the Oates tradition because I have been academically parented by Leigh Conner. Dr. Eric Johnson has helped greatly in terms of methodological issues and the need for a truly Christian psychology. Dr. Paul Jackson from Union University was the first to encourage me to attempt doctoral work, and his belief in what God was doing in me has resonated in my heart throughout the years.

My peers through this journey have a voice in this dissertation because many of these ideas were born in our discussions. Joshua Creason has been a major help in organizing this dissertation and helping me with computer issues. Kyle Heine, Dax Hughes, and Jason Brinker have all played pivotal roles through their friendship and support.

Great thanks are due to the two churches that have served as the places for my practical education. Seminary would have been incomplete without the lessons I have learned as the pastor of Faith Southern Baptist Church in Ardmore, Oklahoma, and Gilead Baptist Church in Glendale, Kentucky. The patience and belief in the reward of my educational journey displayed by these churches have made the completion of this journey possible. Donna Holsinger, Christian White, and Michael Norton have worked with me and around me to help me simultaneously wear ministerial and academic hats.

My family has been the primary source of encouragement. My parents have taught me to love God, to love ministry, and see the potential in people rather than their weakness. My mother and father, by their courage and faith through difficult childhoods, have taught me the true power of God's ability to compensate for absent parents. My children, Emma and Elise, have guided me in attachment from a very close and personal perspective. I could not be any more grateful to a person than I am to my wife, Crystal. Crystal has sacrificed for, supported, and believed in this journey. She is my best friend and my soul-mate. I am thankful for her faith in God and her faith in me.

Finally, God's presence has offered me hope that has energized this project as well as my entire academic journey. God painted a picture, and in doing so gave me a vision of completing my educational journey at the doctoral level and that vision has carried me through many difficult moments.

Nathan Joyce

Glendale, Kentucky

May 2006

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular evangelical, discipleship tools of the last two decades offers the following insight: “What is the one thing God wants from you? He wants you to love Him with all your being. Your experiencing God depends on your having this relationship of love. A love relationship with God is more important than any other single factor in your life” (Blackaby & King, 1990, p. 45). The emphasis of a relationship with God characterized by a bond of love is not a new concept. Moses declared it in the Pentateuch (Deut. 6.5ff.), David celebrated this truth through song (Ps 31.23), and Jesus claimed that loving God is the greatest of commandments (Matt 22.37, Mark 10.30, Luke 10.27). Protestants have focused upon religion as a direct relationship with God since 1521 when Luther took his stand against what he considered to be the mediating church (Bainton, 1983). In contemporary culture, evangelicals have focused on the relationship with God through Jesus Christ as primary to their belief system.

While it is clear in Scripture, Christian history, and contemporary evangelical application that religion is primarily a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the Christian caregiver is left with several tasks. First, the Christian soulcare provider seeks to understand the psychospiritual nature of the human-divine relationship. What psychological concepts useful for human relationships also apply to the human-divine relationship? How might psychosocial damage affect the human-divine relationship, and how might healthy psychosocial formation affect it? How might the human-divine relationship be therapeutic for psychosocial development? These questions indicate that the Christian caregiver is in need of a theory to guide assessments and interventions that

lead to a greater ability on the person's part to relate to God. This theory must help persons in need to draw upon their greatest resource, namely their relationship with God. This concern for the person's relationship with God is well noted in Christian soulcare literature; however, it is often unaccompanied with a theory that is able to assess the quality of the psychospiritual relationship with God nor does it typically come with strategies able to enhance this relationship. For instance, McMinn (1996, p. 35) observes that "the heart of Christian spirituality is a healing relationship with God." Yet, a theory for understanding the quality of this relationship is absent.

Two issues complicate this first task for the soulcare provider. First, how does Christian anthropology understand the holistic nature of humans so that biological, psychosocial, and spiritual categories are taken into account? Eric Johnson (2004) offers an understanding of human nature that takes into account four different dimensions of a human being. These dimensions are ordered from lower to higher as: biological, psychosocial, moral, and spiritual. Johnson states that all of these dimensions interact with each other in a "modal hierarchy." Damage in the lower dimensions can inhibit development in higher dimensions. Johnson concludes that Christian soulcare providers should work at the highest level possible, and the lowest level necessary. Therefore, the psychosocial development affects the spiritual dimension. Psychological categories are appropriate and necessary to use when assessing the quality of a person's relationship with God. Others have made similar conclusions. For instance, R.C. Sproul (1974) contends that the root of atheism is not intellectual but psychological. Paul Vitz (1999) comes to a similar conclusion when he asserts that many famed atheists had a poor or non-existent relationship with their fathers. Furthermore, psychologists of religion offer evidence of the tremendous contribution that early parental relationships have on one's conception of God (Rizzuto, 1979; Spero, 1992). Finally, the Bible points to several psychological influences upon a person's ability to have an intimate relationship with God including the conscience (Heb 10.22) and fear (1 John 4.17-19). Nonetheless, a

theory is still needed to enable the caregiver to understand the psychosocial makeup of the person he or she is caring for, and to be able to understand how this psychosocial makeup contributes to the person's ability, or lack thereof, to have an intimate relationship with God. Second, how does the caregiver utilize secular psychology for this task when it is often tainted with a worldview antithetical to Christianity? One primary concern for the Christian therapist is that many psychological theories and therapeutic strategies promote independence and autonomy as the highest of psychological achievements (Vitz, 1979). Freud's antipathy for religion led him not only to compare theism to a "savage" existence full of neuroticism (Freud, 1962), but he also saw belief in God as a "wish fulfillment" for an unhealthy form of dependency (Freud, 1962, 1939; for a critique of Freud's views see Vitz, 1988; Rizzuto, 1998; Meisner, 1984, 1987). Humanistic psychology offers the concept of "self-realization" as the pinnacle of psychological growth and believes independence to be a key ingredient of this process (see Rogers, 1951, 1961, 1969). In object relations theory the formation of self through relationships with others is taken with much more seriousness. However, this formation is simply a stage on the road to individuation (Jones & Butman, 1991). The following quote is taken from Anne Wilson Schaef (1989, p. 106) in a book about intimacy and may represent to some degree the feelings of much secular psychology:

We have been taught in this society that in order to be 'intimate' partners we must be dependent upon each other. It is believed that relationships are always defined by some form of dependency whether it be dependency, independence, or interdependency. Any form of dependency is destructive. Any relationship that is defined in terms of dependency of any sort cannot be intimate.

This belligerent view of all kinds of dependency cannot easily be reconciled with the biblical picture of a relationship with God in which God creates (Gen 1), provides (Gen 22), offers refuge (Ps 46), and brings salvation (John 3.16; Eph 2.8) to people. The theory sought here must be able to utilize the best of secular psychology, but only as it pertains to the Christian worldview. Furthermore, this theory must respect the lifelong, healthy dependency a person has with God.

Therefore, since the first task of the Christian soulcare provider is to understand the human-divine relationship, it seems proper to utilize psychological categories but only as these categories can be reconciled with the Christian worldview.

The second task of the Christian soulcare provider is to offer interventions that can enhance a person's psychospiritual abilities to relate to God and to empower the person to remove the obstacles that prohibit intimacy in the human-divine relationship. This task is secondary because the application of treatment is guided by the theory. What is clear about this task is that Christian soulcare operates with the conviction that God is present in the sacred moments of caregiving (Oates, 1986). Perhaps a paradigm shift is in order. Could it be that God is present not to enable the soulcare provider to provide healing, but so that the soulcare provider can assist in helping the person connect with his or her greatest resource, namely the human-divine relationship? It is at this point that spiritual direction becomes therapeutic and therapy begins to spiritually direct (Chan, 1998; Crabb, 1993, 1999, 2003). Focus on the human-divine relationship in Christian soulcare creates a reciprocal result in which a more intimate relationship with God helps to transform the injured psyche and the repair of the injured psyche empowers the relationship with God.

Thesis

I have constructed a generative theory describing the human-divine relationship as an "attachment" relationship from a Christian perspective, and I developed a Christian soulcare strategy congruent with this theory utilizing a narrative process which builds on the Christian concept of "testimony." This theory enables Christian soulcare providers to assess psychospiritual elements of the human-divine relationship and provide a manner of increasing the quality of the human-divine attachment. Furthermore, the threefold goal of this thesis is to increase the awareness of Christian caregivers concerning the importance of the human-divine relationship for therapeutic

and discipleship purposes, to offer a theory for the use of assessments concerning the helped person's relationship with God, and to assist the Christian caregiver in his or her attempt to increase the quality of the helped person's relationship with God.

The theory is constructed as a generative theory in that it is a first order theory rather than a second order theory. A distinction between the two can be seen in terms of the materials used to construct the theory, the theory's scope, and the sequence in which the theory is constructed. First, a generative theory utilizes a broad range of materials in order to develop a cohesive concept. This theory will utilize the Bible, psychology, and Christian literature for its formation. Second, a generative theory is comprehensive as it describes a phenomenon from many perspectives so that the theory offers an overview of the phenomenon. This theory includes a biblical perspective of attachment to God, an overview and critique of attachment theory, a broadening of the biological reductionism of attachment theory in order to emphasize psychospiritual dynamics to a greater extent, a development of a theology of attachment to God, and a description of attachment to God as it pertains to the Christian narrative deemed "testimony." Third, a generative theory marks the genesis of an idea rather than a critique or transformation of a pre-existing idea. While others have suggested that God serves as an attachment figure (see Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1999; Granqvist, 1998, 1999, 2000), no one has accomplished what this theory proposes to accomplish. While Kirkpatrick and Granqvist lead the way in the suggestion that God is an attachment figure, they have done so through the eyes of evolutionary science and not for the purpose of the betterment of soulcare practice. I propose a theory that is rooted in the evangelical worldview. Furthermore, I take up the challenge of Lee Kirkpatrick (1995, p. 455) when he says that "a perceived relationship with God then, potentially could be of substantial therapeutic value in helping persons with insecure attachment histories break out of a self-defeating cycle of unsatisfactory close relationships." Constructing a theory and application for this task is outside of the range of Kirkpatrick's brilliant work on attachment to God and

it is a task that I gladly take. Furthermore, few evangelical writers have written on this subject. Clinton and Sibcy (2002) dedicate one chapter in their book on attachment to the concept of attachment to God. Although they are clear that the human-divine attachment is vital, they offer no theory or modality to aid in creating healthier attachments other than the use of spiritual disciplines. Robert Roberts (1997) dives into the world of attachment in his essay entitled “Bowlby and the Bible.” His essay is primarily a critique of attachment theory in which several strengths and weaknesses of the theory are limned. It seems that the proposed theory would be the first evangelical use of attachment to God and the only work that builds a comprehensive and useable paradigm for soulcare.

The term attachment derives from its use from attachment theory. Attachment theory’s co-creators were John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. While Bowlby championed this burgeoning approach primarily in his trilogy on attachment theory (1969/1982, 1973, 1980), Mary Ainsworth helped to refine the theory through her cutting edge, multi-cultural, and empirical research of attachment (Ainsworth, 1963, 1964, 1967, 1989; Ainsworth, Bell, & Slayton, 1971; Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969). At its inception, attachment theory studied the interaction between parent and child and found several general patterns of relating between the children and their “stronger and wiser” attachment figures. In recent years, attachment has been used to study adolescence (Allen & Land, 1999), romantic relationships (Feeney, 1999), grief (Fraley & Shaver, 1999), adult psychopathology (Dozier, Stovall, & Albus, 1999), family life (Byng-Hall, 1999) and even religion (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1995, 1999, 2005). Presently, the “Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications” (1999) is the most comprehensive resource available.

For a relationship to be an attachment relationship, it must meet five criteria (cf. Bowlby, 1962/1982, 1973, 1980; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1995, 1999; Clinton & Sibcy, 2002). First, proximity is sought and maintained with attachment figures, especially during times of stress or danger. Second, the attachment figure’s presence serves as a

haven of safety, which the attached person will seek in times of trouble. Third, the attachment figure is utilized as a secure base from which to explore the environment. Fourth, separation from the attachment figure causes anxiety in the attached person. Fifth, the loss of an attachment figure causes grief. My thesis states that the human-divine relationship functions as an attachment relationship and that it meets these five criteria.

If this proposition is correct and the human-divine relationship functions as an attachment, then several propositions should be possible. First, the modes of interaction in the human-divine relationship are similar to other attachments. Broadly these modes are secure and insecure; however, insecure functioning may be categorized into three groups including anxious/ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized. If the human-divine relationship does function as an attachment, then these modes of relating would apply to a person's relationship with God and offer understanding to the nature of an individual's attachment relationship with God. Second, caregivers can utilize empirically tested indicators in assessing the human-divine attachment. Some of these indicators are voice quality (Holmes, 2001), affect regulation (Weinfeld et al., 1999; Magai, 1999; Holmes 2001), metacognitive monitoring (Main, 1990, 1991, 1995), and narrative coherence (Main, 1990, 1995a; Holmes, 2001; Byng-Hall, 1999). The proposed theory seeks to utilize these indicators as they pertain to one's relationship with God so that Christian soulcare providers may offer accurate assessments of an individual's God attachment. Third, caregivers can make interventions to aid in the development of more secure attachments with God resulting in a more secure "internal working model" of attachment for the individual. Thus, as Kirkpatrick (1995, p. 455) stated earlier, a secure attachment with God may result in a "substantial therapeutic value in helping persons with insecure attachment histories break out of a self-defeating cycle of unsatisfactory close relationships." This assumption seems to be congruent with the biblical connection

between the vertical relationship (human-divine) and the horizontal relationship (Mark 12:29-31).

This theory focuses upon Christian concepts of the human-divine relationship, rather than a broader theistic concept. This is due to my commitment to Christian caregiving, the lack of a purely Christian perspective on the subject, and the specific power of the Christian message to engage the subject of attachment to God. The final reason deserves some explanation. Robert Roberts (1997, pp. 206-07) states:

No word, used by any biblical author, has exactly the scope and sense that I shall here attach to 'attachment.' But I hope to establish that around this word we can construct a concept whose features are all biblical, though never, in the Bible, tied together quite as they are here.

One study offers further evidence of the relevance of attachment to the Christian faith. This study is an unpublished research project conducted at the University of South Carolina in which an attachment to God scale was used (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992) to distinguish between secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles with God. The findings report that secure respondents (36%) were more likely than either avoidant (22%) or ambivalent (20%) respondents to identify themselves as an "evangelical Christian" (Kirkpatrick, 1999). Kirkpatrick (1999) believes these findings to be due to the evangelical emphasis on one's relationship with God and Jesus.

Beyond these evidences, it seems that the Bible tells a story of attachment, that is, attachment lost and regained. The Christian drama unfolds in the three scenes of creation-fall-redemption (Plantinga, 2000). This tripartite journey is a story of the relationship between God and humanity, and its plot focuses on the nature of the attachment between the two. Scene one opens with God's creation of Adam and Eve who find themselves living in connection to God. The connection between God and the original couple is obvious: God creates them in His image (Gen 1.26), they communicate with God (Gen 1.27), and they inhabit the same territory (Gen 3:8). Scene two offers the antagonist and the conflict within this story. Adam and Eve disobey God and seek to live

independently from Him believing that they too can be like Him (Gen 3.5). It seems that a more pervasive problem exists than eating the wrong fruit. This greater dilemma is that Adam and Eve want to live independent from God, because in self-sufficiency they believe that they can replace God with themselves. The result of this decision is detachment, that is, they are expelled from the region called Eden (Gen 3.23). Not only are they separated from God, but they are in immanent danger on several planes. First, they face the danger of biological life without spiritual life (John 17.3). Second, they face the danger of death (1 Cor 15.22). Third, they face danger with one another (Gen 4.1-15). Fourth, they face danger from one another (Rom 7.17-24; Jas 4.1-2). Finally, they face danger from creation (Gen 3.17-19). How would they cope with the resultant anxiety and fear now that their safe place is taken away? Where would they find safety? These questions bring us to the climax of the story, namely that God sought to connect with humanity once again, and to wed the divide experienced by humanity as detachment from God, which was caused by sin (Isa 59.2). In the Incarnation of Christ, God connects to humanity by “dwelling with us” (John 1.14). Moreover, through redemption, Christ “brings us to God” (1 Pet 3.18).

If a theory of attachment to God can successfully be constructed, then congruent soulcare strategies need to be offered. Types of attachment have been empirically linked to narrative style through the use of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI). The AAI is an interview that elicits the personal attachment narrative from a person. It was developed by Main and Goldwyn (1984) in an attempt to discover an adult’s view of attachment in a manner that would “surprise the unconscious” (Hesse, 1999, p.397). The interviewee gives clues to the observer of his or her attachment experiences, not in the content of the narrative but in the process. A consistent, coherent narrative is a sign of secure attachment (Main, 1990, 1991, 1995a). Narratives that lack consistency and coherence have been empirically linked to insecure attachment.

The Christian tradition utilizes the term testimony as the narrative form of one's relationship with God. The term testimony is used here in two ways. First, testimony is the name given to the narrative that Christians tell to recount their experiences with God and His Son Jesus Christ. The word testimony is taken from the Latin term *testis* and means to "bear witness." Therefore, testimony is the narrative recounting the human-divine relationship which "bears witness" to others. However, could it also be that the testimony bears witness to the speaker as it is re-heard in a way that surprises and restructures the narrative? In telling the testimony the speaker attempts to integrate fragmented parts of the story. The narrative externalized is re-internalized with a greater cohesiveness, thus taking part in the development of a more secure attachment. Second, testimony also refers to the role of the Holy Spirit to bear witness of the person's divine adoption (Rom 8.15-16). The Spirit "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (v. 16). Not only is testimony the narrative of the human-divine relationship and an indicator of attachment style, but it also includes the activity of the Holy Spirit that confirms the believers new role as a child and thus removes the "fear" (v. 15) so that the person can approach God for attachment by signaling through crying out "Abba, Father" (v. 15). Therefore the term testimony has a two fold meaning both which are significantly connected to attachment to God.

Background

My interest in God attachments is both personal and professional. My personal journey has been one in which my personal relationship with God has grown in importance and in potency. My childhood religious experiences were primarily in very strict Southern Baptist churches. These churches promoted a cognitive faith and a rule based ethic. I found myself frustrated by my lack of ability to produce change in my life even though I knew the Bible and tried to live a moral life. It was not until my late teen years that I discovered a more personal aspect to the faith. For the first time I saw

religion as a personal relationship or an attachment. For the first time I sought to offer affection to God and receive affection from God. My prayer life became more dialogical and intimate. Also, I began to associate my faith as a personal journey rather than an institutional tie to a denomination or church. Experiences with God in a relationship have been the most profound religious experiences and transformative events of my life.

A second personal reason for this study is that both of my parents experienced childhoods in which one or both of their attachment figures were absent. Both parents were blessed with substitute attachment figures that aided their injury. However, I have been amazed at their faith in the midst of some hurtful childhood experiences. My father's father committed suicide when my father was six or seven. My dad experienced not only the pain of death but also the pain of abandonment because his father chose to die. He once told me that when he was young, he felt like he must have done something wrong for his father to decide to leave him. My grandmother quickly married and my father was able to compensate somewhat for his loss with this substitute attachment figure. My mother was adopted by her grandparents. She knew her biological mother as a sister and never knew her father. Once again, she too would be the heir of both good and bad substitute attachment figures once her adopted parents died. My parent's faith astounds me. I intuitively believe that it is the attachment that both of them have experienced in God through Jesus Christ that has empowered them to reach such heights after receiving these great wounds. I would like to help others experience a similar phenomenon.

My professional interest in the subject derives from a belief that experiences with God through Jesus Christ in a relationship comprise the core of Christian transformation. In my first unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, I created a goal to define pastoral ministry. I defined it as "the mutual, creative process in which a pastor empowers others to live whole lives through a relationship with Jesus Christ." As a pastor, I believe that I am not the healer, but that I facilitate a process in which persons

seek a greater connection to their greatest resource, namely their relationship with God. As a pastor of ten years, I am interested to know why certain people carry with them an intimate and experiential knowledge of God, while others seem to maintain a guarded relationship with God. I believe that leading people to experiences with God, rather than only a cognitive knowledge about God, comprises the core of the Christian experience. I couldn't agree more with Jonathan Edwards when he says that "nothing is more apparent than this: our religion takes root within us only as deep as our affections attract it I believe that no one is ever changed, either by doctrine, by hearing the Word, or by the preaching or teaching of another, unless the affections are moved by these things" (Edwards, 1959, pp. 101-02). This phenomenological approach to religion demands a psychospiritual investigation of the elements of the human-divine relationship as it may hinder or contribute to the movement of these aforementioned "affections."

Methodology

The type of research conducted is literary and theoretical. Published and unpublished resources from various areas are utilized. The types of resources can be grouped into several categories. First, since this work is intended to represent the Christian community in its attempt to offer effective soulcare, the Bible is of prime importance. Not only does the theory and methodology offered seek to utilize the Bible as a resource, moreover the final theory seeks congruence with a biblical worldview. Second, literature that addresses attachment theory will also be of prime importance. I believe that secular attachment theory has commonalities with the Christian worldview and can contribute to Christian soul care immensely. However, the discontinuity of the two perspectives are highlighted and evaluated. Great effort is given to expand secular attachment theory beyond its biological reductionism so that it includes spiritual elements including a developmental and linguistic component. Third, empirical research, especially as it pertains to attachment theory, is utilized as well. Data from the best of

attachment research as well as research in the psychology of religion contributes much to this theory and soulcare strategy. Fourth, theological literature from Christian history are used to fulfill the demands of the thesis. Included in this are classical Christian theology, contemporary Christian psychology, and the work of the devotional classics.

Integration of these materials is guided by a belief that the Bible is the primary text on the given subject. The Bible is given primacy as the canon, or measuring stick that will measure the validity and viability of all other materials. This point is particularly highlighted in chapter 2, 3, and 4. In chapter three, attachment theory as a whole is described and interrogated by a biblical worldview. An attempt is made to broaden the concept of attachment so that it is more congruent with the biblical perspective of attachments (see Roberts, 1997). Moreover, this study attempts in chapter 3 and 4 to develop a Christian concept of attachment so that the biblical materials and Christian tradition speak directly about the subject at hand. Once this is accomplished, the rest of the paper contains a dialogue with this biblical concept of attachment and is guided by it.

This work also utilizes the case study method for illustrative purposes. Five case studies comprise chapter 7 as an attempt to exemplify the use of “testimony analysis” with the aid of the Adult Attachment to God Interview (AAGI) in a soulcare context. The analysis of these case studies will utilize qualitative methods in order to analyze the testimonial narratives. The purpose of this section is not to test the AAGI as a research instrument, but to illustrate the usefulness of the proposed theory. The cases utilized are made up of evangelical Christians because the focus of this dissertation is the betterment of soulcare within the church. Each participant is interviewed using the questions from the AAGI and simultaneously videotaped. The conversations have been transcribed so that the content of the narratives can be analyzed according to the logic of discourse set forth by Grice (1975, 1989). Conclusions concerning the person’s God

attachment are drawn and a foundation is laid for the chapter on application and strategies.

In summary, the methodology begins with a comparison of attachment theory and a Christian view of attachment. This includes a Christian critique and expansion of attachment theory. Once this work is complete, the next task is to seek a full-orbed understanding of the nature of the human-divine attachment in religious experience and the formation and re-formation of testimony. This new understanding is illustrated in five cases. These two elements naturally lead to strategies for assessment and intervention to increase the quality of the human-divine attachment through Christian soulcare.

Definition of Terms

An attachment relationship is defined as a dyad in which one person seeks security through the presence, availability, or potential availability of another person (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980; Kobak, 1999). For a relationship to be an attachment, five criteria must be true: proximity seeking, haven of safety function, exploration from a secure base, anxiety when separated, and grief when the attachment figure is lost (cf. Bowlby, 1962/1982, 1973, 1980; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1995, 2005; Clinton & Sibcy, 2002).

An attachment behavior is a behavior that promotes proximity to the attachment figure. An attachment behavioral system is the organization of attachment behaviors within the individual (Cassidy, 1999). The attachment bond refers to the tie of affection to the attachment figure (see Ainsworth, 1989 for six elements of an attachment bond).

Attachment to God refers to the idea that God functions as an attachment figure, given the aforementioned criteria, in the spiritual lives of people.

Christian refers to Christianity in the classic tradition in which the biblical worldview is authoritative for life and practice. Christian soulcare is used in a broad

sense, to include the helping efforts of pastoral caregivers, Christian counselors, and other types of Christian helping professionals. The term soulcare is chosen because it contains the goal of drawing upon spiritual resources for the sake of spiritual formation, and other terms were omitted that exclusively connote a therapeutic goal.

The term testimony is defined as a unique narrative recounting of the human-divine relationship in which the Holy Spirit “bears witness” to truth and integrates the fragmented parts of the narrative into a cohesive whole. The cohesive testimony bears witness to others and back to the speaker, thus reorganizing the internal working model of attachment as it pertains to self and God. The narrative focus aids this study in expanding attachment theory from a purely biological base to an ethical and spiritual one. Attachment studies have already begun this expansion by focusing on the developmental transitions of attachment (Allen & Land, 1999; Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999), and on a broader form of attachment that understands attachment to be broader than a function of survival. For instance, the focus on romantic, attachment relationships broadens this concept. A Christian narrative approach offers greater depth to the attachment concept, for in narrative one finds both developmental and linguistic elements. Narrative is the linguistic construction of story that both describes and aids in the emergence of self-hood (cf. Ricoeur, 1988, 1992, 1995). Christianity offers a meta-narrative in the gospel that transforms one’s identity as personal narratives are defined by the meta-narrative of the gospel. Internalization of the Christian story with one’s life is given greater insight as the term testimony describes a narrative that is fundamentally connected to one’s relationship with Christ.

Previous Research

Lee Kirkpatrick (1992, 1995, 1999, 2005), associate professor at the College of William and Mary, was one of the first to propose an attachment-theoretical approach to the psychology of religion. He repeatedly suggests that God serves as an attachment

figure for persons. Particularly, he has been interested in his two hypotheses concerning faith: correlation and compensation. The correlation hypothesis is that persons with secure human attachments will naturally be securely attached to God, with the same being true of insecure attachments. The compensation hypothesis states that persons with poor human attachments may find a substitute attachment in God that can compensate for the deficiencies of human attachment figures (Kirkpatrick, 1992). When the second hypothesis holds true, Kirkpatrick (1995) sees great potential for healing through an attachment with God. Furthermore, Kirkpatrick has conducted several empirical studies concerning God attachment on the following topics: religious beliefs and conversion (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990); a longitudinal study of changes in religious belief and behavior as a function of individual differences in adult attachment style (1997); God as a substitute attachment figure: A longitudinal study of adult attachment style and religious change in college students (1998); loneliness, social support, and perceived relationships with God (Kirkpatrick, Shillito, & Kellas, 1999); and the relationship between attachment to God and affect, religiosity, and personality constructs (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Lee Kirkpatrick's theories have spawned much of my own reflection. However, his work is different from mine in two areas. First, while Kirkpatrick interprets attachment through the eyes of evolutionary science, I interpret attachment through the eyes of evangelical Christian faith. Second, Kirkpatrick studies the psychology of religion in order to describe the phenomenon, while I study it for the betterment of Christian soulcare.

Pehr Granqvist, professor at the Department of Psychology in Uppsala, has recently contributed to this subject by conducting empirical research on Kirkpatrick's theories. Granqvist (1998) has studied the compensation and correspondence hypotheses, attachment and religiosity in adolescence (Granqvist, unpublished), socialized correspondence and emotional compensation due to religiousness and perceived childhood attachment (Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999), singleness and religiosity

(Granqvist & Hagekull, 2000), and sudden religious conversion and perceived childhood attachment. Granqvist's work is different from mine for the same reasons Kirkpatrick's is different.

Robert Roberts (1997) has written a Christian critique of attachment theory entitled "Bowlby and the Bible." Roberts commends attachment theory, believing that it is congruent with the Christian worldview in that both maintain that personal formation includes an attachment to others. However, he challenges attachment theorists to broaden their biological reductionism and include all forms of attachments. Roberts offers a wonderful Christian critique of attachment theory. However, his work differs from mine in several ways. First, he does not offer a comprehensive theory of Christian attachment. Second, his call for an expansion of attachment is appreciated even though the task is yet to be completed. Third, he does not create a soulcare strategy.

Clinton and Sibcy (2002) have written a popular style book on attachments. Their book primarily focuses on human attachments. They devote one chapter to God as an attachment figure. The chapter prescribes the use of spiritual disciplines for increasing attachment. The problem with this solution is that each person will approach the disciplines with a certain self-perpetuating internal working model of attachment (Weinfeld et al., 1999). Although Clinton and Sibcy's work is consistent with the Christian worldview, it differs from my work. For instance, it does not seek to integrate the newest empirical research and theoretical propositions in attachment theory to the attachment to God. Further more, it does not present a comprehensive theory of attachment to God. Finally, Clinton and Sibcy's book leaves the soulcare provider without assessment or intervention skills concerning attachment to God.

Most recently, Beck and McDonald have developed an Attachment to God Inventory (AGI) (Beck & McDonald, 2004). This instrument is a twenty-eight item questionnaire using self-report measures with a likert scale. Their study compares the AGI with the Experiences in Close Relationships questionnaire in order to test

Kirkpatrick's correspondence and compensation theories. The instrument assesses two dimensions of attachment: anxiety and avoidance. The result of this study is that both correspondent and compensation theories have some validity, which notes the complexity of attachment relationships. Furthermore, some difference was found in different faith groups. For instance, Roman Catholic and Non-Denominational Charismatic did not differ on the AGI – anxiety scores, and each had lower scores when compared to the Church of Christ group. The authors are hesitant to place too much weight on these findings, but do believe that it is an indicator that faith group practices and theology may influence attachment bonds. Beck and McDonald's work has two things in common with this dissertation. First, it is a springboard of further investigation from Kirkpatrick's work. Second, it is primarily evangelical and focused on the Christian tradition. However, differences exist as well. Beck and McDonald have not identified the use of narrative means for assessing attachment to God, nor do they attempt to build a theory or application for soulcare. Their goal is different from the goal of the current study.

Outline

Chapter 1 consists of an introduction to the topic.

Chapter 2 summarizes attachment theory from its inception to its present state. Included in this chapter will be a description of the philosophical values of attachment theory.

Chapter 3 critiques attachment theory from a Christian perspective. This chapter compares philosophical similarities and differences between the worldview of attachment theory and the worldview of Christianity. Furthermore, the critique leads to the suggestion of broadening the concepts of attachment to include developmental and linguistic elements. Finally, the chapter describes the unique Christian contribution to the phenomenon of attachment, and especially how "agape" transforms attachments and develops selfhood.

Chapter 4 consists of a theology of attachment to God, highlighting especially biblical, therapeutic resources available to the Christian soulcare provider. Specific biblical images, metaphors, narratives, and doctrines are investigated in order to develop a consistent theology of attachment to God. Doctrinal considerations include: adoption, justification, indwelling of the Spirit, and Union with Christ, and the Fatherhood of God. Works throughout the Christian tradition are also explored. Also, consideration are given to the phenomenon of God as substitute attachment figure.

Chapter 5 develops the idea of “testimony” as the narrative construct in which attachment to God is displayed. Two thoughts converge in this chapter: the empirically tested Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) offers several indicators of a person’s state of mind concerning attachment to parents with the primary indicator being narrative coherence according to the logic of discourse spelled out by Grice (1975, 1989), and the Christian use of testimony as a narrative describing one’s personal (attachment) relationship with God. An Adult Attachment to God Interview (AAGI) is proposed as a tool for elicitation of a person’s testimony in a form that offers attachment to God indicators and possible clues toward attachment to God interventions for the work of soulcare. The result of these ideas is the need for “testimony analysis” for the purpose of understanding a person’s God attachment.

Chapter 6 describes the application of the proposed theory to the care of souls. Great attention is given to the assessment of attachment styles with God and possible interventions that empower the person served to discover a greater sense of security in his or her relationship with God. These strategies utilize the concept of “testimony” and suggest ways in which God attachments compensate for deficient human attachments.

Chapter 7 utilizes five case studies, which illustrate the use of testimony analysis. The aforementioned theory is applied to these cases and analyzed according to the narrative patterns set forth in chapter five. The purpose of these case studies is not to

offer evidence of the reliability and validity of this instrument, but to illustrate its use in the context of life.

Delimitations

The first delimitation is that the intention of the paper is to offer an evangelical perspective of attachment. I have respectfully considered the perspectives of other communities, learned from them, and offered dialogue. However, the primary concern of this work is to enhance Christian soulcare, therefore the focus must be on the Christian perspective. While I certainly believe that other religious and secular communities will benefit from this study, it is primarily intended for the Christian soulcare provider.

The second delimitation is that this paper does not consider all elements of discipleship. The goal of this soulcare contribution is not discipleship but attachment. While it is believed that a more secure attachment with God will aid in the fruition of greater discipleship, it must be clear that attachment and discipleship are different. Attachment to God is the felt-security a person experiences in the human-divine relationship. Discipleship is the personal education and transformation that results from a more secure attachment.

The third delimitation is that the proposed AAGI will not be tested for validity, reliability, and factor analytic structure. The cases utilized are meant to be illustrative. They are not to be considered as empirical evidence of the proficiency of the AAGI.

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

In the late 1940s, John Bowlby was appointed by the World Health Organization to study the effect of institutional living upon young children. It was the experience of this direct observation of the parent-child dyad that allowed him to begin to forge a new path that diverged from his previous British Object Relations perspective. Bowlby found a common pattern among his subjects from a variety of countries: children who had been seriously deprived of maternal care tended to develop as “affectionless” young thieves (Bowlby, 1988). These findings assured Bowlby of what he had known intuitively for some time (at least since his days at Cambridge University), namely that attachment to a caregiver is vital for the psychological health of an individual. Soon Bowlby became dissatisfied with the secondary drive theory of psychoanalysis. In particular he found that attachments were formed in instances when the caregiver did not feed the child. This observation defies psychoanalytic and psychodynamic theory, which sees attachment to a caregiver as a subsidiary of the drive for food (the breast). Bowlby noticed from an ethological point of view that many species of animals attached to caregivers who did not provide food for the child, but did provide contact and comfort.

These findings led Bowlby to investigate another option for the formation of attachments between child and mother. He drew upon fields such as evolutionary biology, ethology, developmental psychology, cognitive science, and control system theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982). His discovery was that the infant’s strong tie to the mother emerged as a biologically based desire for proximity to the caregiver that derives from

the need for survival and through the process of natural selection. In other words, attachment does not occur from associational learning (secondary drive), but rather occurs as a biological predisposition to seek protection from one stronger and more equipped to face danger. This is essentially the genesis of the theory in rudimentary form; however, this theory has been expanded and refined in various ways especially in Bowlby's (1969/1982, 1973, 1980) trilogy, *Attachment and Loss*.

Bowlby was not alone in these discoveries. He was the theorist and author who would articulate attachment theory, but Mary Ainsworth was the leader of the research team who would test and refine the theory. She did so through a measurement tool called the "strange situation" (SS). This tool observed children with their caregiver, separated from the caregiver, in the presence of a stranger, and in the presence of a stranger and the caregiver (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969). The SS observed children in their search for proximity to the caregiver when the strange person, one whom the child did not know and would perceive as possibly dangerous, arrived on the scene. Ainsworth's study was multicultural and empirical (Ainsworth, 1963, 1964, 1967).

Together, Bowlby and Ainsworth set in motion a trajectory for the development of a theory of attachment that would captivate many. Currently, attachment theory is respected as empirically tested. It is used not only to investigate the child/parent relationship, but also to aid in understanding adolescence (Allen & Land, 1999), adult romantic patterns (Feeney, 1999), psychopathology (Greenberg, 1999; Dozier, Stovall, & Albus, 1999), marriage dyads (Byng-Hall, 1999), and religious representations of God (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1998, 1999; Kirkpatrick et al., 1999; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Beck & McDonald, 2004).

Attachment Terminology

An unfortunate misconception is that the term "attachment" can be applied to any sort of connection a person has with someone or something. This is primarily due to

the common use of attachment as equivalent to connection. However, not every connection is an attachment in the technical sense of the word. For a relationship to be an “attachment” it must meet the following criteria (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980; Kirkpatrick, 1999; Clinton & Sibcy, 2003): First, proximity is sought and maintained to the attachment figure. The infant engages in several proximity seeking behaviors such as crying, raising arms to be held, and clinging. As cognitive development increases visual or verbal contact will suffice, and mere knowledge of the attachment figure’s whereabouts is sufficient. Second, the presence of the attachment figure acts as a haven of safety in times of trouble. Bowlby (1969/1982) listed three kinds of situations that activate the attachment system and elicit attachment behaviors: frightening or alarming environmental events; illness, injury, or fatigue; and separation or threat of separation from attachment figure. Third, the attachment figure is used as a secure base from which to explore. The attachment figure that is seen as available and responsive elicits an internal felt security that enables a person to explore the environment with less fear due to the knowledge that the attachment figure is available if needed. Fourth, separation from an attachment figure causes anxiety in the person seeking attachment. This anxiety is seen as healthy in the right appropriation, and furthermore it serves to initiate the proximity seeking behavior. Fifth, the loss of an attachment figure causes grief. An attachment relationship requires all five criteria. Every relational connection is not an attachment. For instance, a social or peer relationship may meet the qualification of grief due to separation, but not proximity seeking for the sake of security.

The following terms must be differentiated in order to understand this theory. They are often mistaken for one another. An attachment behavior is a behavior that promotes proximity to the attachment figure. Bowlby groups these behaviors for infants into two groups. The first kind is signaling behavior, the effect of which is to bring mother to child. Crying, smiling, and babbling all fit in this category. The second kind is approach behavior, the effect of which is to bring child to mother. Approaching,

following, seeking, clinging, and non-nutritional sucking or nipple grasping fit in this category (Bowlby, 1969/1982).

An attachment behavioral system is the organization of attachment behaviors within the individual (Cassidy, 1999). This term is much more complex than the first. Bowlby borrowed this term from ethology to describe a species-specific system of behaviors that lead to certain predictable outcomes. Placing attachment in the category of behavioral system means that an inherent motivation to attach exists apart from some primary drive or apart from the pleasure principle. For instance, Bowlby noted that children became attached even to abusive mothers (Bowlby, 1956). Attachment is inherent in the child expressed in behavioral actions in order to discover desired outcomes. As the child offers attachment behavior and discovers that certain behaviors result in specific outcomes, then the formation of an organization of behaviors is created. This organization is flexible enough to respond to a variety of environmental factors. Thus, an infant may maintain a stable internal organization of the attachment behavioral system in relation to the mother over time and across contexts, yet the specific behavior used may vary greatly (Cassidy, 1999). What is also important about the attachment behavioral system is that it is attempting to control the environment by using what Bowlby called goal corrected behavior. The goal of the child is not the object but a state of mind produced by maintaining a desired distance from the mother (Cassidy, 1999).

The attachment behavioral system is one of many control systems. The other systems include the fear system, the sociable system, and the caregiving system. All of these systems are linked to attachment, but none any more prominent than the exploratory system. The exploratory system encourages a person to seek out and understand as well as discover the environment. The attachment system and the exploratory system can conflict with one another, mainly because the attachment system seeks to maintain proximity to the attachment figure while the exploratory system moves the child away from the parent. It is believed, however, that the child will use the parent as a secure base

from which to explore (Ainsworth, 1963; Holmes, 2001; Cassidy, 1999; Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980). Ainsworth referred to this as an attachment exploration balance (Ainsworth, Bell, & Slayton, 1971). The balance occurs when the child feels secure with the attachment figure and especially when the child knows that the figure is responsive and available. The child will explore as long as the attachment figure can offer security, thus concluding that attachment is actually conducive to exploration. This contradicts the psychoanalytic view that attachment limits autonomy. When the exploration of the child reaches its most dangerous level, the child could retreat to the attachment figure as a haven of safety (Bowlby, 1969/1982).

The attachment bond refers to the affectional tie to the attachment figure. It must be noted that not every affectionate relationship has an attachment bond. Ainsworth (1989) offers six criteria for an attachment bond. First, an affectionate bond is persistent, not transitory. Second, an affectional bond involves a specific person, a figure who is not interchangeable with anyone else. Third, the relationship is emotionally significant. Fourth, the individual wishes to maintain proximity to or contact with the person. Fifth, the individual feels distress at involuntary separation from the person. Sixth, the individual seeks security and comfort in the relationship with the person. One common mistake is to equate the strength of the attachment behavior with the strength of the attachment bond. Just because intense emotions exist toward the attachment figure, does not mean that the attachment is a secure one. In fact, some of the most intense emotional reactions to the attachment figure are from those whose attachment is insecure.

Normative Development in Childhood

Marvin and Britner (1999) describe the ontogeny of attachment in three phases. These phases represent attachment development through the first year of life. Attachment in adolescence and adulthood will be discussed later.

Phase one consists of orientation and signals without discrimination between figures (Marvin & Britner, 1999). This stage usually lasts from birth to sometime between 8 and 12 weeks of age, unless unfavorable conditions exist. The baby signals to humans and reacts to caregiving and contact. The baby is clearly attempting to maintain some sort of proximity. However, he or she does so without distinguishing between persons. In other words the baby signals to any two or more people who offer interaction. In this phase, Internal Working Models (IWM) are extremely primitive and are probably limited to internal “on-again, off-again” experiences associated with the activation and termination of individual behaviors.

Phase two consists of orientation and signals directed toward one or more discriminated figures (Marvin & Britner, 1999). During this phase, simple behavior systems slowly become more complex. For instance, the infant assumes some control rather than the adult bearing it alone. The infant becomes an initiator of the attachment-caregiving interactions. Furthermore, the child begins to differentiate between the caregiver and all other persons. The IWM has formed to the degree that the child knows who the caregivers are, but cannot yet conceive of a caregiver separate from his or her own self.

Phase three consists of maintenance of proximity by the child to a discriminated figure by locomotion and signals (Marvin & Britner, 1999). Phase three begins sometime between 6 to 9 months. The child has a vast array of emerging abilities that affect the attachment relationship. First, the child’s new locomotion skills allow him or her to maintain proximity simply by being able to position his or her self near the caregiver. Second, the child’s new cognitive skill allows him or her to set goals and distinguish between means and ends. The child can now expect certain things from the caregiver and can consciously make plans to see certain ends come to fruition. Third, the child’s communication skills have now developed to the degree that they can verbalize their plans and desires giving them even greater control over proximity. This fact

indicates why separation anxiety can be so intense at this age. Fourth, the infant can now arrange a hierarchy of attachment figures and maintain attachment with subordinate figures. This is usually the father and/or other family members. Bowlby clearly thought that while a child had one primary attachment figure, other subordinate figures also maintain attachments. Fifth, the exploration system of the child is highly active. This simultaneously pushes the child to seek new discoveries and calls upon the need for a secure attachment.

Individual Difference in Attachment

There is a stark contrast between the presence of an attachment relationship and the quality of an attachment relationship (Weinfield, Stroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 1999). Bowlby believed that an infant will form an attachment as long as someone is present for interaction. The quality of attachment is developed through a series of bids and responses resulting in the development of patterns. The quality of individual differences can broadly be grouped into “secure” and “insecure” (Bowlby, 1973). These terms “describe the infant’s apparent perception of the availability of the caregiver if a need for comfort or protection should arise, and the organization of the infant’s responses to the caregiver in light of those perceptions of availability” (Weinfield et al., 1999, p. 69).

The secure infant feels fear when danger arises. However, the infant in a secure attachment relationship is able to rely on the caregiver as a source of protection and comfort if the need arises. When no apparent danger exists, the secure infant shows little attachment behavior and is able to explore freely. The child does not cling to the attachment figure in these cases because he or she knows that if needed, the attachment figure is reliable and responsive. One might suspect that the clinging child has a high quality of attachment, but in reality this clinging is a sign of anxiety due to uncertainty about the attachment figure’s availability and reliability. When danger arises, the secure

infant quickly seeks proximity to the attachment figure. The child who avoids the attachment figure or rebuffs the figure's attempts to approach is insecure about the quality of care he or she may receive (Weinfield et. al., 1999).

The insecure infant has little confidence in the availability and responsiveness of the caregiver. It is important to note that Bowlby (1973) clarified his original position on the primacy of physical proximity as the hallmark of attachment needs. He believed that attachment played a large role in the lives of persons throughout their life (Bowlby, 1980), but noticed that as a person expanded cognitive, communication, and locomotion abilities the need for physical proximity diminished and was replaced by availability, responsiveness, and felt security (Kobak, 1999). The older child can hold a mental representation in his or her mind to substitute for physical proximity. The child of walking age can move toward the parent if needed when physical proximity is tested. Also, the older child is able to communicate and listen to goals that will ease the need for physical proximity. The security level of that attachment after infancy is based upon the attached person's interpretation as to whether the attachment figure seems available, responsive, and readily accessible if needed. If the parent offers these qualities then the child has a sense of felt security. If the parent does not represent these qualities then the child will have felt insecurity (Bowlby, 1973; Kobak, 1999).

Insecure attachment finds itself manifested in three behavioral patterns. These have been tested and examined through Ainsworth's strange situation (SS) instrument mentioned above. The first manifestation is the avoidant attachment style. During the SS the child fails to cry upon separation from parent and actively avoids and ignores the parent upon reunion. There is little or no proximity or contact seeking, no distress, and no anger. The response of the child to the parent seems unemotional. The child focuses on environment instead of parent. The second insecure attachment is manifested as the anxious/ambivalent style. During the SS, these children may be distressed before separation. While with the parents, the child does very little exploring. The child is

preoccupied with parents throughout the test. Upon reunion, the child takes little comfort from the parent's presence, but will focus on parent and continue to cry. After the reunion takes place, the child does not explore any more. The third manifestation is the disorganized/disoriented style. During the SS, the child seems disorganized or disoriented in the presence of the parent, suggesting a temporary lapse in behavioral strategy. For example, the infant may freeze with a trance expression including hands in the air. Or, the child may rise at parent's entrance, then fall prone and huddled on the floor. It could even be that the child may cry and cling to the parent while leaning away from the parent with his or her gaze elsewhere (Holmes, 2001; Weinfield et al., 1999). Holmes (2001) suggests that a continuum paradigm of attachment describes the phenomenon better than a categorical paradigm. The categorical paradigm understands the attachment designation as a label without degrees. The continuum paradigm described persons as leaning toward either avoidant or anxious paths but offers degrees of security or insecurity in these paths. Holmes (2001) understands the secure designation resting in the middle of the continuum in between the extremes of avoidant and anxious. He also understands the disorganized designation setting apart from this continuum as an indication of a major disruptive force in the environment causing dissociation and extreme splitting in order to gain some control of the chaos.

Another way of viewing these four styles is to understand them within the framework of the person's beliefs about self and others. Clinton and Sibcy (2002, p. 96) describe these self and other dimensions in terms of belief statements about the self and other stated below: The secure attachment style believes that the self is "worthy of love and capable of getting the love and support" needed. Those with this attachment style believe that "others are willing and able to love me." The avoidant attachment style believes that the self is "worthy of love and capable of getting the love and support" needed. Those with this attachment style believe that "others are either unwilling or incapable of loving me. Others are not trustworthy; they are unreliable when it comes to

meeting my needs.” Those with the anxious/ambivalent attachment style believe that the self is “worthy of love,” but “not capable of getting the love . . . without being angry and clingy.” Those with anxious attachment believe, “others are capable of meeting my needs but might not do so because of my flaws. Others are trustworthy and reliable, but might abandon me because of my worthlessness.” Those with the disorganized attachment style may say about themselves that “I am not worthy of love and I am not capable of getting the love I need without being angry and clingy.” Those with the disorganized style would also believe that “others are unable to meet my needs, not trustworthy, and not reliable. Others are abusive, and I deserve it.”

These styles affect future development and relationships. Their impact is felt throughout the lifecycle (Thompson, 1999). Although Bowlby believed that attachment models were resistant to change, he also believed that change was possible, that is, change from insecure to secure, and vice versa (Bowlby, 1980).

Internal Working Models and Attachment through Adolescence and Adulthood

Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, and Carlson (1999) offer four possible explanations concerning the reason early attachment relationships influence later development. First, it is possible that the experiences within the early attachment relationship influence the developing brain, resulting in lasting influences at the biological level (cf. Schore, 1994, 1999a, 1999b; Siegel, 1999). Second, early patterns may serve as a foundation for learning affect regulation (Isabella, 1993; Cassidy, 1994; Sroufe, 1996). While the avoidant style cannot access emotions, the anxious style cannot contain them, and the disorganized type cannot orient them. Third, some suggest that early attachment sets a foundation for behavior regulation. Weinfield et al. (1999, p. 75) describe this factor by stating that “through observing and interacting with an attachment figure, an infant learns what it is like to be in a relationship.” Fourth, from the early attachment relationship the child begins to represent what to expect from the world and

from other people, as well as how he or she can expect to be treated by others (Weinfield et al., 1999). Bowlby called this representation “internal working model” or IWM (1969/1982). The IWM may be influenced by all three of the previously mentioned factors: brain homeostasis, affect regulation, and behavior regulation. These factors contribute to a hermeneutically produced internal mental representation of self and others that becomes predictive of relational modes of functioning including attachment modes.

The IWM serves as a psychological organization created by past attachment experiences that lead a person to expect certain things about relationships. Although the IWM has been compared to the “object” in object relations theory, it is more in line with cognitive science and its term schema. Bowlby was influenced by Piaget and wedded his idea of IWM to Piaget’s cognitive development theory (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). IWM’s resist change, but are flexible and can be influenced by the environment. It seems plausible that the level of security in a continuum model, rather than a categorical model, and the level of anxiety in the environment would work inversely to promote change. Thus the higher the level of security the more environmental anxiety would be needed for change to occur. The opposite would also be true in that the higher the level of insecurity, the higher the level of responsiveness from the environment that would be needed to bring change.

IWM’s arise as a child becomes more and more cognitively astute. The IWM allows an older child more freedom due to the fact that physical proximity is no longer needed because the child can carry the image of the attachment figure internally. At this age attachment is no longer concerned with physical proximity, but focuses on the availability and reliability of the attachment figure if the child is in need or danger. Felt security arises as reliability and availability is ensured, and it becomes more important than physical proximity (Kobak, 1999). However, the attachment system is very much still alive and will be throughout the lifespan (Bowlby, 1969/1982). The only difference

is that greater cognitive abilities change attachment from primarily a physical phenomenon to a mental phenomenon.

It may at first glance seem that an adolescent no longer needs an attachment relationship with parents because of the forces that are producing autonomy. Erikson (1994a, 1994b) identified the adolescent crisis as one of autonomy from parents. While Erikson's observation may be correct, he is measuring dependence rather than attachment and the two, while similar, cannot be equated. Although the teenager becomes less dependent upon parents, they do not cease to need parents as an attachment figure. The attachment relationship, however, is transforming. The exploratory system is peaking during adolescence. It is important to remember that exploration best occurs when attachments are secure (Bowlby, 1973; Allen & Land, 1999); therefore, the move toward autonomy is eased when attachments are secure. Because the adolescent has emerging cognitive abilities, attachment is experienced through mental representation and is secure when the adolescent believes that an attachment figure is reliable and accessible if needed, but not primarily proximate in physical terms. The primary point is that attachments persist during adolescent years and remain very important to psychological well-being. Longitudinal studies show continuity between attachment in adolescence and other periods of the lifecycle (Allen & Land, 1999). Also, insecure attachment is linked to several social dangers. Allen and Land (1999) offer a host of empirical studies that give evidence to the link between insecure attachment and problem behaviors during adolescence. Preoccupied attachment strategies have been closely linked to adolescent depression (Allen, Moore, Kupermine, & Bell, 1998). Maternal insecurity has also been linked to depression (cf. Homann, 1997 as found in Allen & Land, 1999). Suicidal tendencies have been reported to be related to a combination of preoccupied and unresolved attachment strategies (Adam, Sheldon-Keller, & West, 1996). Furthermore, children of divorced parents are more likely to have a healthier development and avoid

social dangers if some sort of reliable mentor or adult caregiver is present (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

How should one understand adolescent attachment? During adolescence, the teenager finds him or herself with two competing behavioral systems: exploratory and attachment. The exploratory system is working at a high level giving the impression that the sole movement of the adolescent is to distance him or herself from the parents. However, one must remember that these two systems not only compete, but also contribute to each other. Therefore, a person can better explore when he or she has a secure base from which to explore. The adolescent who knows that parents, or some attachment figure, are available and responsive if needed can explore his or her new social and cognitive abilities as well as the environment to a greater degree. Therefore, adolescence is a time of transformation in which the teenager, through secure base exploration, discovers the skills needed to launch from parents and form other attachment figures, especially romantic ones (Allen & Land, 1999).

Adulthood, especially adult romantic attachment, is an area of study that has been the cutting edge of attachment research and theory for the past several years. All three components of Sternberg's (1986) model of love (intimacy, passion, and commitment) are positively correlated with secure attachment and negatively with avoidant and ambivalent attachment. Although IWM's tend to remain stable, it is possible for adult romantic attachment to bring about some change. Three factors promote stability. First, individuals tend to select environments that fit their beliefs about self and others. Second, working models may be self-perpetuating. For instance, a person who believes others cannot be trusted will approach others from a defensive position. Third, information processing biases lead people to perceive social events in ways that support existing models (Feeney, 1999). However, a secure person who enters a volatile relationship may find his or her IWM shifting to a more insecure status, and vice versa.

Attachment has been significantly linked to affect regulation, communication, and ability of couples to cope with stress (Feeney, 1999)

Research and new theories concerning adult attachment cover a wide variety of areas. Included in this list are family and couple therapy (Byng-Hall, 1999), bereavement (Fraley & Shaver, 1999), and religious experience (Kirkpatrick, 1999).

The primary tool for research on adult attachment is the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) developed by Main and Goldwyn (1984). The interview asks fifteen questions that attempt to “surprise the unconscious” (Hesse, 1999). Scores are grouped in four possible designations. Scoring is based, not on the attachment content of the interview, but on whether or not the person is able to maintain a consistent and collaborative narrative throughout its entirety. Persons are labeled secure when they produce an acceptable coherent and collaborative narrative whether experiences are reported as having been favorable or unfavorable. The dismissing (avoidant) category is assigned when a person minimizes the discussion of attachment experiences. These interviews are internally inconsistent. The preoccupied (anxious) category is given when the narrative violates the principle of collaboration. These persons react not to the question asked but to the memory evoked. They move from past and present tenses inappropriately. They digress to remote topics, use vague language, and oscillate regarding their view of parents. The term unresolved (disorganized) is given when substantial lapses in monitoring reason occur during the discussion of potentially traumatic events (Hesse, 1999). The AAI has been found to have an extremely high correlation with attachment in terms of caregiving and the strange situation (Hesse, 1999). Thus it proves to be a helpful tool for understanding the manner in which adults think about attachments and interpret relationship. The primary mediator for this process is the hermeneutic function in human beings that seeks to interpret events within patterns. Attachment is largely a hermeneutic task in which persons seek to rectify their attachment experiences through the development of an interpretation of relationships.

Philosophical Undercurrents of Attachment Theory

Thankfully, Bowlby spelled out the philosophical driving forces of attachment theory in the first part of his trilogy (1969/1982) as he attempted to differentiate from his previously held position in British object relations theory. In differentiating between these theories, Bowlby offers his readers insights into the philosophical distinctives of attachment theory. He offers four philosophical undercurrents that serve as a guide to the distinctive characteristics of attachment theory. The first two are strengths that lend themselves to integration with Christian concepts: a prospective approach and formation of theory based on direct observation. The next two are more difficult to rectify with Christianity: a reliance on ethology and evolution for interpretation of the data.

First, attachment theory is a prospective approach rather than a retrospective approach. Psychoanalytic theory begins with a symptom of some sort and attempts to retrospectively construct the events that led to this symptom. Bowlby (1969/1982, p. 5) is suspicious of this retrospective perspective and notes:

In the first place we must not overrate the data we obtain in analytic sessions. So far from our having direct access to psychical processes, what confronts us is a complex web of free associations, reports of past events, comments about the current situation, and the patient's behavior. In trying to understand these diverse manifestations we inevitably select and arrange them according to our preferred schema; and in trying to infer what psychical processes may lay behind them we inevitably leave the world of observation and enter the world of theory.

Bowlby in turn believed that attachment theory offered a prospective approach in which subjects are studied through direct observation as young children in real life situations, and assessments are based on the nature of the child's behavior as it contributes to setting the child on a certain trajectory (see Ainsworth, 1990). The prospective approach lends strength to this theory in that it seeks to recognize the root cause of a person's psychological dysfunction in terms of attachment interactions, rather than offering a superficial treatment of symptoms. The prospective approach results in attachment theory having a teleological framework absent in many other theories. This teleological framework offers a genesis of pathogen, a trajectory due to the pathogen, and a

dysfunctional destination, namely an insecure attachment IWM. From a more positive point of view, it also offers a goal for psychological functioning, namely a secure attachment IWM. Attachment behavior is understood to be normal and therefore it differs from psychodynamic theories that attempt to discriminate the normal and pathological populations (Kirkpatrick, 1995). Attachment research focuses on generalizing the “normal” range of human experience and prospectively predicting trajectories. This approach differs from psychodynamic theories that describe the etiology of pathological human experience from a retrospective vantage point. Even adult research on attachment has adopted the prospective approach in attempts to predict future relationship functioning due to attachment styles (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994)

A teleological framework holds several potentialities for therapy in general and Christian therapy in particular. First, it recognizes that all persons are on a trajectory, and thus informs practitioners concerning normative growth and psychological functioning. This dynamic creates a universal application so that attachment theory can aid all persons not just those suffering from psychosis. Second, it sets the goal of therapy higher than simply to relieve the symptom, but also to enable full psychological potential. Third, this theory holds a commonality with Christianity in that they both look forward to greater psychological functioning rather than retrospectively trying to dissolve symptoms caused from the past. For instance, one of the goals of attachment therapy is to offer the client an attachment with the counselor that can set a new trajectory for a more secure IWM (Byng-Hall, 1999; Holmes, 2001). Lee Kirkpatrick (1995) believes that an attachment experience with God can lend itself to reworking the IWM of the individual for healthier future functioning. Theologians have also recognized the importance of the teleological perspective for the sake of current transformation. For instance, Piper (1995) claims that true Christian transformation does not occur when one seeks to live guided by “debtor’s ethics” in which God is paid back for the past. Instead, he argues that transformation

occurs as a believer presses toward “future grace” and thus espouses a teleological framework for Christian growth. Andrew Lester (1995) offers a perspective in which he calls for the use of “hope” by pastoral care providers. He does so by describing the usefulness of future stories and the task of reframing those stories to include hope. In both of these instances eschatology has created a sense of teleology for the individual that results in transformation.

Second and corollary of the first distinctive, attachment is based on direct observation of young children and empirical data. Ironic as it may sound, Bowlby (1969/1982, p. 6) spent some amount of space in his first book on attachment attempting to persuade skeptics of the value of direct observation of its inherent worth. Times have changed and currently empirically tested theories are the *crème del a crème*. Bowlby references K. R. Popper (1934) who argued that the distinction of scientific theory from other sorts of theory is that it can be tested, not only once but over and over again. Attachment theory has accomplished this requirement. Ideas of attachment were first sparked by Bowlby’s direct observation of the development of orphans. He notes (1969/1982, p. xxvii) that “at that time my object appeared a limited one, namely, to discuss the theoretical implications of some observations of how young children respond to temporary loss of mother.” Bowlby (1951) was requested to study the affects of institutional life upon orphans by the World Health Organization and offered a report of his findings which were the seminal ideas of attachment theory. However, it was Mary Ainsworth that became a major impetus to forming an empirical basis for the theory. Ainsworth not only used a large number of subjects, but also tested the theory in different cultures including Ghana (Ainsworth, 1963), and Uganda (Ainsworth, 1967). Attachment theory has been tested to the degree that an empirical foundation has been laid to offer validity to its ideas. What is clear is that attachment theory originated from direct observation of children with mothers, and has grown through empirical testing of the same sort.

This point becomes quite important in the task of developing a Christian attachment theory. One could make a case that attachment theory derived out of evolutionary and ethological thought. Bowlby notes the close connection between the two, noting especially that his theory draws heavily from the behavior of other species. Since this time, evolution and attachment have been even more wedded together (Simpson, 1999; Belsky, 1999) including continued ethological efforts (Suomi, 1999), and studies in the psychology of religion (Kirkpatrick, 2005). Why is it then that evangelicals like Beck and McDonald (2004) and Robert Roberts (1997) find attachment theory viable as a descriptor of a relationship with God? Several answers exist to this question. The first answer lies in the connection between the usefulness of direct observation to vivify the realities of the world and the difference between observation and secondary interpretation. Paul Vitz (1997) contends that a difference exists between data derived from direct observation and the secondary theory used to explain the data. Vitz is tackling the question “how can something Christian also be scientific” in his essay entitled “A Christian Theology of Personality.” He argues that personality theories have three conceptual levels. Level one includes scientific terms and categories that are tied to observations in a clinical setting. Level two consists of conceptual and theoretical concepts distinctive to a given theory and includes interpretation of complex patterns through observation. Level three consists of presuppositions which underlie or control the personality theory in question. Level two and three are regarded by Vitz as “philosophies of life.” How does this apply to attachment theory? Attachment theory has a strong basis within “level one” concepts. As previously mentioned, it has derived from a large empirical basis. It would be difficult to undermine the veracity of attachment behavior due to its “level one” strength as Vitz as defined it. It is clear, however, that Bowlby and his followers interpreted this data through the lens of evolutionary theory. Bowlby was a scientist in the 1950’s when modernism powered by Darwinism dominated the scientific scene. Evolutionary theory is Bowlby’s “philosophy

of life” and the presupposition through which the data is explained. However, from a Christian perspective, Bowlby’s level two and three explanations of the data should not undermine the importance and validity of the data itself, from which the thrust of attachment theory derives. Direct observation of children with their mothers has led to verifiable evidence that children react to separation and reunion with parents in certain ways and seek proximity to those parents. Bowlby immediately applied the theory of evolution to this data and explained this attachment in biological fashion, namely, that it is for the sake of protection, continuity of the species, and reproduction. It seems possible that Christian theorists can take the same data and explain it in terms of a Christian worldview. The point is not to claim that protection and survival are not reasons for attachment behavior; but rather, that when these are the only goals of attachment behavior then life has been reduced to mere biological realities. The Christian tradition can aid this deficiency by offering goals for attachment that emerge from other spheres of life, namely the spiritual sphere.

An interesting caveat is that Bowlby critiqued Freud in a similar fashion that he is now being critiqued. He rejects Freud’s instinct theory as a previously learned presupposition which he applied to psychoanalysis and not from direct observation (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Bowlby (1969/1982, p. 14) states:

First, it is important to remember that the origin of Freud’s model lay, not in his clinical work with patients, but in ideas he had learned previously from his teachers – the physiologist Brucke, the psychiatrist Meynert, and the physician Breur The psychical energy model is, therefore, a theoretical model brought by Freud to psychoanalysis: it is in no way a model derived by him from the practice of psychoanalysis.

Jones (1953, p. 14) remarks that Freud’s idea of psychical energy was already “both familiar and widely accepted throughout the educated, and particularly the scientific world.” Clearly Bowlby was skeptical of Freud’s psychical energy model because it was not based on direct observation in practice of psychoanalysis, but through the interpretive lens of the presuppositions of his day. Therefore, it seems that Bowlby would be open to

this critique since it is based on the same sort of logic: that Bowlby brought to the data a generally accepted presupposition in evolution, through which the data of direct observation was framed. The point is not to discredit Bowlby, but rather to recognize that the data is valid and that it can be interpreted through a different lens, namely Christianity. Contemporary philosophy (see chap. 3) would seem to advocate the usefulness of an attachment theory based on the Christian tradition, just as much as one based on the evolutionary tradition.

The second answer to the question as to “why evangelicals are finding attachment theory viable as a descriptor of a relationship with God?” has to do with the connection between data from direct observation and the usefulness of common grace as a revelation of God. In Genesis 1, it was by God’s Word that creation came into existence. John expands this idea by reminding the New Testament church that Christ is the divine Word through which all has been created (John 1.3). Paul re-emphasizes the same concept when he notes that by Christ “all things were created that are in heaven and that are on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” (Col 1.16). Furthermore, the Bible claims that God is revealed in seasonal changes (Ps 147.15-18), the heavens tell of God’s glory (Ps 19.1-3), and that creation groans for its deliverance (Rom 6.23). While it is out of the current scope to debate the relationship of science with faith, it is an aim to propose that God has revealed Himself through creation and that humans can come to know something about God through observation of that creation. Common grace is the term that is given to this sort of revelation and it should be studied by Christians to enhance knowledge of God, without replacing or undoing God’s special revelation. Furthermore, this is the knowledge that is received through the direct observation of children with parents and found in attachment theory. The task for Christian attachment theorists is to interpret the findings of attachment data within the worldview of Christianity.

Abraham Kuyper (1943) has articulated a position of common grace. Kuyper comments that believers should recognize the “potencies” (Kuyper, 1943, p. 23) of common grace, which has been extended to all mankind (Kuyper, 1943, p. 45). In defining the relationship between Christianity and science Kuyper (1943, p. 125) proclaims that those

who seeks God, does not for a moment think of limiting himself to theology and contemplation, leaving the other sciences, as of a lower character, in the hands of unbelievers; but on the contrary, looking upon it as his task to know God in all of His works, he is conscious of having been called to fathom with all the energy of his intellect, things terrestrial as well as things celestial; to open to view both the order of creation, and the “common grace” of the God he adores, in nature and its wondrous character, in the production of human industry, in the life of mankind, in sociology and in the history of human race.

Kuyper (1943, p. 118) also calls believers to go back from the “Cross to Creation.” It is proposed that attachment theory lends itself to Christianity due to its empirical basis and direct observation of creation.

Third, attachment theory, at least in Bowlby’s initial thinking, drew from the evidence of ethology (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Ethologists study the patterns of animal behavior. Bowlby found it helpful to study other species. While at face value this seems like a large obstacle to forming a Christian attachment theory, it really is not for several reasons. The first reason is that the theory itself relies very little on ethological data. Primarily, Bowlby used ethological information in the form of anecdotal evidence. Although Bowlby gives detailed descriptions of the attachment behavior of rhesus monkeys, baboons, chimpanzees, gorillas, ducks, geese, canaries and more (Bowlby, 1969/1982), his primary evidence of his theory comes from human observation. Bowlby (1969/1982, p. 7) is not even all that sure of the importance of ethology to attachment theory, as he states:

Nevertheless, until concepts of ethology have been tried out in the field of human behavior we shall be in no position to determine how useful they are. Every ethologist knows that, however valuable knowledge of related species may be in suggesting what to look for in a new species under investigation; it is never permissible to extrapolate from one species to another. Man is neither a monkey nor a white rat, let alone a canary or a cichlid fish. Man is a species in his own right

with certain unusual characteristics. It may be therefore that none of the ideas stemming from studies of lower species is relevant. Yet this seems improbable.

These words clearly indicate the point that ethology is not vital to attachment theory, nor does it sever any opportunity of forming a Christian attachment theory. However it should also be noted that ethology continues to be connected with attachment theory (Suomi, 1995, 1999, 2000). The second reason is that the Bible asserts that humans and animals have both similarities and major differences between one another, and therefore species comparisons can simultaneously be viewed with skepticism and minimal usefulness. Christianity does seem to find some sort of relationship between humans and animals. For instance, creation is referred to as a “family” (Eph 3.15). Also, creation and believers have the commonality of worship (Ps 98.8; Luke 19.40) and waiting for deliverance (Rom 8.19-21). However, there is a clearly marked difference between humans and animals in that humans are of a higher order in terms of abilities, worth, and authority (Gen 1.26, 28; Ps 8.5-8). A Christian perspective of anthropology should make a marked difference between humans and animals, and use research on animals with great discernment. It does seem that such attempts to compare humans and animals have a danger for Christian anthropology that requires critical skepticism of such comparisons.

Fourth, attachment theory utilizes a motivational concept consistent with evolution and its focus upon survival. Bowlby rejected the explanations of motivation for attachments offered by psychoanalysis and psychodynamic theories. As mentioned above, Bowlby discounted Freud’s instinctual motivation theory as deriving from presuppositions and not from direct observation of patients (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Bowlby also rejected the psychodynamic idea that attachment is a secondary drive created only in association with the primary drive of eating. Object relations theory understands attachments with mothers to form as a result of the mother’s feeding (Winnicott, 2002). Attachment theory gives evidence that no such association is necessary (Ainsworth, 1967; Schaffer & Emerson, 1964). Cassidy (1999) points out two

important factors concerning this evidence. First, Bowlby (1956) found that even abused infants become attached to their abusive parent. Second, Bowlby's understanding of the inherent motivation of the attachment system had a great deal in common with Piaget's (1954) understanding of the child's inherent motivation to explore the environment.

Clearly Bowlby's understanding of the motivation for attachment was quite eclectic and complex; however, it relied heavily on the concepts of evolution. Two particular concepts of evolution were appealing to Bowlby's understanding of attachment: parental proximity due to the need for survival as well as protection, and reproductive fitness (Simpson, 1999; Belsky, 1999). The key point is that biological survival of the species is interpreted as the primary reason for the creation of attachments. Attachments in this way of thinking are adaptations to environmental cues (Cassidy, 1999; Marvin & Britner, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 2005). This interpretation leaves attachment in a mechanical form in which pragmatic ends of survival are the highest hopes for an individual. Christianity would clearly offer a higher existential teleology that includes higher modes of functioning. The Bible claims that the highest form of life is experienced in a three dimensional experience of love: love of God, love of others, and love of self (Mark 12.29-31). Moreover, Christianity offers the potential of finding significance in one's life in a sacred vocation. Once again, it is not that survival should be rejected as a purpose for attachments, but that attachments form for many purposes as a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. This multifaceted approach to attachment calls for a broadening of the concepts of attachment to include spiritual dimensions.

Bowlby's early theory created a system that was biologically reductionistic. However, this system has been broadened in various ways to move beyond biological reductionism to include psychological, ethical, and spiritual anthropological categories. Several pieces of evidence speak to this broadening. First, Bowlby expanded his own motivational theory to include more psychological categories, namely "felt security" (Bowlby, 1973). This expansion of the theory helped explain why attachment persists

throughout the developmental cycle, and created the potential of mental categories of attachment that seek accessibility in an attachment figure rather than physical proximity (Kobak, 1999). This move by Bowlby was a step in the right direction in that it opened the theory of attachment to psychological and phenomenological categories more congruent with contemporary philosophy (see chap. 3). Second, attachment theory has been expanded by other theorists to study various modes of life including the psychology of religion (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2005), and romantic love (Feeney, 1999; Shaver et al., 1988; Simpson, 1990). Clearly current attachment researchers are working in areas in which goals for attachment are multifaceted. Third, the work of evangelicals like Beck and McDonald (2004) and Roberts (1997) to include full spiritual categories for attachment have aided the broadening of the theory from its biological reductionistic roots. Even so, the task of creating a Christian attachment theory must contain an awareness of the power of evolution in the formation of attachment theory, and seek to interpret the data through the lens of the Christian worldview. This task will include a broadening of the concepts to engage in spiritual categories, use of Christian resources as they relate to attachment to God, and supplementation of the best of attachment research.

Conclusion

Attachment theory is a comprehensive and empirically tested theory of human development and relationships. The philosophical undercurrents of the theory espoused by Bowlby have aspects that are both congruent and incongruent with Christianity. Furthermore, this theory resonates with much of Christianity because it was developed through direct observation, which formed descriptive elements of human behavior. However, attachment also carries with it an interpretation of this direct observation based on evolution and guilty of a biological reductionism that limits humanity to material existence. A Christian attachment theory must utilize the descriptive elements of

attachment theory as it is congruent to the biblical revelation, and articulate a Christian version of interpretation of those descriptive elements. This requires a broadening of the teleological framework of attachment theory to include multifaceted purposes and spiritual categories. An expansion in these categories will be more congruent with contemporary philosophy, more potent for soulcare providers, and more useful for the psychology of religion. The next chapter will seek to give direction to methodological issues that arise in the process of developing a Christian attachment to God theory, to broaden the concepts of attachment theory to include spiritual categories, and to describe the usefulness of Christian attachment to God for soulcare providers.

CHAPTER 3

A CHRISTIAN ANALYSIS OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

Is there a place for God in attachment theory? This is one way of posing the question faced in the development of a Christian attachment theory and a Christian perspective of attachment to God. It has been demonstrated that certain aspects of attachment to God are helpful to Christian anthropology, especially the description of proximity seeking behavior to God. However, the evolutionary focus on survival as the only or primary goal of attachment reduces human nature to biological responses and adaptation. Such a thought is inconsistent with the Christian witness that seeks much loftier goals for attachment to God. Therefore, when Christianity and attachment theory are integrated, one finds certain aspects that are easily translated from one to the other while other aspects carry greater dissonance. The formation of a Christian attachment theory requires a deconstruction or expansion of those concepts that find dissonance and a rebuilding of new concepts more congruent with Christian thought. However, much of attachment theory resonates with the human-divine relationship focus in the Bible and these concepts are utilized to vivify the biblical witness.

The answer to the original question concerning a place for God in attachment theory may be answered in a variety of ways and can be characterized by the broader psychological community as it has interpreted religion. First, some may take an atheistic stance and see no place for God or even a god-image in healthy human development. This has been the stance of much of psychology since Freud's indictment against religion (Freud, 1939, 1962). Religion is a crutch for weak persons to lean upon and a delusional escape from reality. Attachment theorists could take such a view and in turn only apply

the theory to human relations. Second, some may take an agnostic stance and avoid the question concerning the existence of God. These theorists often concentrate on the psychological formation of a god-image and its constructive and destructive uses (Rizzuto, 1979). This method reduces the existence of God and avoids the question of God's existence as an unimportant variable (Granqvist, 2002). Many who take this approach find a positive psychological use for religion (James, 1958; Kirkpatrick, 1995; Fauteux, 1994) and are critical of Freud's diatribe against religion (Rizzuto, 1998). Third, some take a theistic approach in which God is seen as a reality containing therapeutic power in the lives of individuals. These theorists have much in common with the second group in that they too are seeking to understand psychological processes, but differ in their desire to use the information for therapeutic use believing that God is a part of that process (Richards & Bergin, 1997; Pargament, 1997; Spero, 1992; Meissner, 1984, 1987).

Pluralism of opinion within the psychological community concerning the existence of God illustrates one of many methodological concerns when psychology and theology dialogue, although they clearly overlap in many ways as well. Furthermore, secular psychological theories cannot be wholly accepted or rejected due to certain consistencies or inconsistencies with Christianity, but instead must be critically reviewed as propositions that may contain both (Jones & Butman, 1991). To lack this critical discernment would not only be an error in logic, but would also be a psychologically damaging existence that resists the containment of the tension that derives from ambiguity. In an effort to resist such an error, attachment theory is seen to have much to offer Christianity (Roberts, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 1995) although it also has certain limitations. The development of a Christian attachment to God theory will require a broadening of attachment concepts where there are limitations and occasionally a deconstruction and rebuilding of aspects where the contradiction is too great.

This task is accomplished in three steps. The first step is to discuss methodological issues concerning the integration of attachment theory to the biblical witness. Methodological issues include: contemporary philosophical movements and their relation to attachment and Christianity, the use of the Bible when integrating attachment with Christianity, and the field of psychology of religion and its connection to pastoral theology and soulcare. The second step is to broaden the concepts of attachment so that they embrace a Christian worldview to a greater extent. The assumption is that attachment theory contains concepts very helpful to Christianity that move secular psychology in the right direction concerning anthropology; however, these concepts have not been broadened enough for the creation of a Christian attachment theory. The third step is to define attachment to God as a concept and discuss the contributions that Christianity may bring to this concept. While the first two parts seek to investigate the usefulness of attachment to Christianity, the third section seeks to communicate the usefulness of Christianity to an attachment psychology of religion.

Methodological Issues in the Development of a Christian Concept of Attachment to God

Philosophical Issues

Lee Kirkpatrick is a pioneer in an attachment approach to the psychology of religion. Kirkpatrick (1992 and reprinted in 1997a) seeks to use attachment theory as a paradigm for the study of the psychology of religion. His initial work has sparked much of the research described in chapter one on attachment to God. Kirkpatrick asserts that many religious behaviors can be categorized as attachment behaviors, thus giving evidence that a relationship with God functions as an attachment to the “stronger and wiser” Deity.

However, Kirkpatrick does not assert belief in God, nor does he seek to enter the discussion concerning the existence of God. He instead affirms the validity of

evolution. While Kirkpatrick does see value in religion (1995), he also seems to take the agnostic position mentioned above. He does not believe that religion is an innate characteristic of humans (Kirkpatrick, 2005). When discussing the possibility of a unique religion instinct, he refutes each naturalistic explanation (Kirkpatrick, 2005). The list of refuted arguments includes universality of religious behavior (Kirkpatrick, 2005, pp. 216-219), genetics (Kirkpatrick, 2005, pp. 219-220), neurology (Kirkpatrick, 2005, pp. 220-223), and ethology (Kirkpatrick, 2005, pp. 223-224). The consideration that God might actually exist did not even receive a rebuttal. The theistic argument is not even considered.

Kirkpatrick (2005) views the religious attachment system as a helpful “by-product” of evolutionary adaptation, but not an adaptation itself. Kirkpatrick’s (2005, p. 238) model is one in which “the attachment system represents just one of many domain-specific psychological mechanisms that have been co-opted in the service of religion and religious beliefs.” He notes that people “perceive their relationships with deities functionally” (Kirkpatrick, 2005, p. 236). His groundbreaking work seems to fall into the reductionistic trap of modernism, where the goal is survival and a full metaphysical description of anthropology is missing. Kirkpatrick’s personal view of God is unknown. However, his theory of attachment to God is explicit. His theory is most helpful in its descriptive terms: description of relationship with God as an attachment, description of correspondent and compensation paths of attachment formation, and his description of the positive and therapeutic use of attachment to God (Kirkpatrick, 1995). His interpretation of the use, purpose, and goal of such attachment behavior is of much less use to those of a Christian perspective. Evolutionary psychology is a product of modernism and therefore is prone to postmodern critique. What does modern science and philosophies consist of and what is its critique against?

Theologian and author Philip Yancey refers to evolutionary scientists as “the reducers” and notes that “the reducers offer little compelling reason why we humans

should rise above the behavior of beasts rather than mimic it” (Yancey, 2003, p. 23). Modernism is a movement that reduces the world to what is believed to be objective facts, a proposition propelled by secular science and elucidated by Darwinian theory. Historically, modernity challenged the authority of religion as well as what was believed to be the “superstitious nature of premodern beliefs” (Dueck & Parsons 2004, p. 234). The purpose of such a movement seems to have been the dissolving of religious wars through the development of a social consensus (Stout, 1988). Dueck and Parsons (2004, p. 235) list three characteristics of modern discourse: modern discourse tends to “use the language of a certain foundation on which knowledge can be constructed, endorse the language of an autonomous and expressive individual who takes precedence over sociality, and affirm that which is universal over that which is particular.”

The first characteristic indicates that nature is stable and able to be characterized objectively through scientific procedure. Modernism has increased knowledge of the world by creating a system to investigate the world. As mentioned in chapter two, direct observation of creation can add to our knowledge of God. Furthermore, Dueck and Parsons (2004, p. 235) point out that the modernist find their commitment to “evidentialist apologetics” a commonality with conservative theology (see. Greer, 2003; Dembski, 2002). However, Christianity may differ on this point in the sense that modernism only recognizes objectivity for observable data, and much of reality seems to not be observable from a spiritual vantage point.

The second characteristic also has its positive attributes for Christianity, especially that religion cannot be arranged in only communal terms but must be individual and personal as well (see Kierkegaard, 1980). However, modernism’s emphasis on the individual dismisses the power of relationality and vilifies any type of dependence. Bowlby fought this battle as well and sought to show that attachment was normal and healthy and a producer of a more balanced autonomy (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980, 1988). Evolution’s emphasis on the individual animal or species task to

survive as the fittest reduces life to a Nietzschean abuse of power and rejection of a higher metaphysical purpose (Nietzsche, 1967). It is at this point that attachment theory assists Christianity in offering a description of human development that does not bow to the gods of autonomy as a linear movement, but sees it as a complex process assisted by secure attachments. However, there is a second danger concerning this characteristic, namely that morals are discarded in favor of the individual's self assertions. One leading evolutionary theorist says that "we seem to be reaching a point at which science can wrest morality from the hands of the philosophers" (de Waal, 1996). Yancey (2003, p. 22) illustrates the failure of modernism as it pertains to ethics when he states:

In a widely publicized case a year before the famous 'Scopes Monkey Trial' attorney Clarence Darrow successfully defended two university students against the capital offense of murdering a boy for the intellectual experience of it. Argued Darrow, 'Is there any blame attached because somebody took Nietzsche's philosophy seriously and fashioned his life on it? . . . Your Honor, it is hardly fair to hang a nineteen-year-old boy for the philosophy that was taught him at the university.'

Clearly attachment theory is a step in the right direction concerning the striking of a balance between autonomy and dependency (see chapter 1). Bowlby's concept of the attachment and exploratory behavioral systems, which simultaneously complement and contradict, offers a complex system that avoids the individualistic and communal extremes (see chapter 2). Even with this said, attachment could broaden its concepts even more to include "agape" and avoid the pitfall of the reduction of human teleology in terms of survival.

The third characteristic reveals the epistemological goal of modernism as the discovery of universality in social consensus. Objectivity is the goal and inherent is the belief in value free science. While the utopian goal of complete objectivity has largely been dismissed (Richards & Bergin, 1997), the notion of value free science has been crippled by postmodernism's critique that truth reflects historical and cultural structures (Foucault, 1972, 1980). At first, universal truth sounds very appealing to the Christian. However, "modern" truth is arrived at through reduction of the observed thing to its

lowest common denominator for the purpose of gaining a larger consensus. In terms of anthropology, the human is reduced to biological categories while phenomenological categories are ignored. Furthermore, Palmer (1983) criticizes the claim of objectivity on ethical grounds. He notes that objectivity removes the subject from the object of study. This removal results in a release from moral responsibility from the object. He defines truth etymologically as coming from the term “troth” which denotes a betrothal between the subject and the object. While not in favor of reducing truth to the perspective of the subject (the subject should be in dialogue with texts), he does argue for the concept of “love” in education in which an ethical, loving connection is restored between the subject and object. Foucault (1980) adds that modern objectivity created supposed universality that simply served those in power and became a new authority, in other words it became what it was created to destroy. Watson (2004, p. 248) notes that “the power structure of one regime of understanding over threw the power arrangements of another” (see MacIntyre, 1988).

Two facts should be very clear at this point: modernism offered a helpful procedure to gain information from direct observation of creation, and it has serious limitations to knowing the world especially the unobservable world. In the description of modernism set forth above, a postmodern critique has begun. However, several other points of dissonance between postmodern thinking and modern thinking need to be pointed out. Dueck and Parsons (2004) articulate several points of critique from postmodern thought upon modernity. First, there is no human viewpoint from which to begin that transcends all particularities. Reality is socially constructed and humans are a part of the hermeneutic task as interpreters (Ricoeur, 1981; Evans, 1995). As mentioned before, value free science is a myth. Dueck and Parsons (2004, p. 239) state on behalf of postmodern thinking that, “scientific praxes occur within a scientific community that cannot perform its undertakings without some set of historically received beliefs.” Second, postmodernism is skeptical of an autonomous self. If meaning is constructed

socially, then development is a social process. Dueck and Parsons (2004) point to Wittgenstein's (1958) claim that private experiences can be transmitted through language into social realities. One's private world is accessible to others from a phenomenological perspective. Third, in postmodernism, universality is viewed with suspicion and diversity is seen to be a strength. Meaning emerges within one's tradition or culture (MacIntyre, 1988). No community is validated above another and thus pluralism is validated.

Dueck and Parsons (2004) attempt to wade the waters between modern and postmodern thought by claiming that both are viable options. Both are useful in their own way and both represent a necessary critique upon the other. Part of their conclusion is satisfactory and part of it is not. The satisfactory part is that both modern and postmodern approaches have a degree of usefulness for Christianity. The empirical aspect of modernism aids Christians in observing creation and reminds Christians that humans are embodied souls. The phenomenological aspect of postmodernism takes very seriously the internal world of persons, the metaphysical portion of humanity, and the power of discourse, language, and narratives. Christianity takes very seriously discourse, language, and narrative in that the living Word has come in the form of Christ as a new Word from God that transforms all other discourse. What is unsatisfactory about Dueck and Parson's conclusion is that it assumes that modern and postmodern thought are the only choices available. Even they admit that Christianity "precedes modernity and may continue well after the demise of postmodernity" (Dueck & Parsons, 2004, p. 244). Perhaps a third option is necessary.

Before a third option is discussed, it should be noted that the current perspective asserts that postmodern perspectives are an improvement upon modern perspectives. Lee (2004) agrees with this assertion claiming the cognitive revolution of the 1950's was a reaction to behaviorism, but at conception it was functionally similar to behavioral psychology because subjective notions like personal agency and intentionally

were avoided. This was true of Bowlby's original theory that lacked more subjective qualities like "felt security" (Kobak, 1999) due to the over-focus on physical proximity in attachment behavior. Lee follows Rychlak (1994, 2000) and goes on to critique modernism as edging out Aristotelian "final cause" in favor of "efficient causality." (Lee, 2004, p. 223). The result is that modern thought made telic explanations of anthropology "unfashionable" (Lee, 2004, p. 223). Therefore, the availability of experiential anthropologic categories, the use of language as a transmitter of meaning, and need for teleological perspective seem to validate postmodernism as a step in the right direction from modernism. If nothing else, the postmodernist would see the validity of a Christian attachment theory if for no other reason than it would entail another culture's version of meaning (MacIntyre, 1988). In summary, postmodernism is a step in the right direction, but demands another step from the Christian community, because one step forward in one sense might be followed with a step back in another.

P. J. Watson (2004) offers the idea that a third step into postpostmodernism is necessary in Christian philosophy in order to escape the traps of modernism and postmodernism. While others have suggested the need of the development of a movement after postmodernism (e. g. Ludewig, 2004), Watson does so in order to create a model of integration that is congruent with Christian epistemology. Watson (2004, p. 248) notes: "Postmodernism liberates the integration of psychology and Christianity from the domination of modernism, but also leads to a vertiginous relativism." Postmodern thought has both positive and negative influence upon Christianity. The positive influence is that it levels "the relationship of religion with psychology" (Watson, 2004, p. 249). Theological communities hold a tradition that is just as valuable as that of psychology or any other science and cannot be dismissed as unscientific. In fact, in a postmodern world theology is no longer seen as superstition, but instead can reclaim some of its role from the past but perhaps not as the queen of the sciences as it once was (Marsden, 1994). The negative influence of postmodernism upon Christianity is that "the

metanarratives of all forms of social life become equally (in)valid” (Watson, 2004, p. 249). The relativism of postmodern thought conflicts with the foundational approach of Christianity. This dissonance leads many theologians to call for a movement beyond postmodernism (see Erikson, 2001).

Watson (2004, p. 249) suggests that Christians should engage in the task of developing a “postpostmodernism” that transcends the current state of epistemological descriptions. This process would take seriously postmodern epistemological critique concerning the limitations of knowledge due to social construction, but at the same time offer an “ideological surround” that allows for foundational metanarratives that can aid in the unmasking of limitations of all perspectives including one’s own view. Watson (2004) refers to MacIntyre’s (1978) threefold definition of an ideology: an ideology attempts to delineate certain characteristics of nature or society or both, it explains relationships between “what is the case” and how we ought to act, and it is not merely believed by the members of a social group, but believed in a such a way that it at least partially defines for them their social existence. Watson (2004, p. 256) offers three practical implications of an “ideological surround.” First, “no perspective can justify the arbitrary use of power to exert a dominating control over the creation of knowledge about psychology and religion” (Watson, 2004, p. 256). Knowledge is found in various communities and although each community might prioritize knowledge differently, none can claim to be the only repository of knowledge. This implication guards the ideological surround framework from the authoritarian perspective of modernism and takes seriously postmodern critique. Second, “research within an ideological surround requires methodologies that can unmask the limitations in what a perspective can see” (Watson, 2004, p. 256). Modernism and postmodernism can be viewed as useful and yet at the same time be critiqued. Watson (1993, 1994) has established techniques to accomplish such a critique. Third, it would “work from the assumption that perspectives share and also have unique insights that can be combined in broader systems of

understanding” (Watson, 2004, p. 257). While this point values the shared perspectives of different fields of study, it also allows one field to critique another based on the “unique insights” of the critiquing field. Furthermore, foundations within theories are valued rather than discarded due to the fact that unique insights are a key source of knowledge. Metanarratives are then required in an ideological surround. Each community, through critique, dialogue, and reflection can come closer to the truth as they are “reformed and reforming” in an ongoing process. An ideological surround does not discard metanarratives, but cherishes their retelling as a part of the process of coming ever closer to full truth and at the same time avoiding “ghettoization” of communities. The irony is that in attempting to value uniqueness, postmodernism discards metanarratives as authoritarian and thus dissolves the uniqueness of each community as it has been defined through its ideology. An ideological surround values the ideology of a community but calls upon that community to enter reciprocal dialogue and critique with other communities. Issues concerning metanarratives will be discussed to a greater extent in chapter five.

A postpostmodern perspective allows for the creation of a Christian attachment theory that can utilize the foundations of Christianity to deconstruct certain aspects of the attachment concept. At the same time, it allows Christianity to utilize attachment theory as a source of knowledge especially as attachment relationships have been described through direct observation. A wholesale acceptance or rejection of attachment theory is unnecessary, but a critical dialogue between the two utilizing the ideology of Christianity is plausible.

A postpostmodern critique of attachment theory by Christianity might make several points. First, attachment theory reduces humanity to biological categories in its teleological focus upon “survival” as the primary goal of attachment behavior. A postpostmodern critique allows for acceptance of survival as one goal of attachment behavior, but also allows for a broadening of that goal to include higher order

dimensions. Second, an evolutionary attachment theory assumes an atheistic or agnostic framework, and finds dissonance with Christianity that assumes a theistic approach. While this point seems unavoidable, it also receives less attention due to the voluminous nature of the discussion. However, a postpostmodern critique allows for a theistic critique of evolution and vice versa, but even more important it allows a theistic attachment theory to be formed and hold a sense of validity.

Finally, the formation of a Christian attachment theory will require broadening of attachment categories that include: the use of a Christian metanarrative that can connect to and transform the personal narratives of individuals (Lee, 2004; Gerkin, 1984), which in turn will demand a broadened teleological framework (Lee, 2004).

Use of the Bible

The Bible contains the foundations and ideology of Christianity. Within it, a metanarrative is formed in the form of redemption history (Gerkin, 1984). How should the Bible be utilized in the formation of a Christian theory of attachment to God in which a postpostmodern perspective is applied? Johnson and Jones (2000) edit a dialogue between four leading theorists in four different camps that each have a different view of the best use of the Bible as it pertains to psychology. How does each view hold up to a postpostmodern critique?

The first view is the “levels-of-explanations” perspective exemplified by David Myers (Johnson & Jones, 2000). This perspective is characterized by the belief that faith and science are two different ways to explain reality and cannot be integrated without distortion (Johnson, 2004). While a modern critique may find this idea very appealing, a postpostmodern critique would find it problematic. It would contend that different systems of thinking do share both commonalities and discrepancies that can encounter one another in critical dialogue (Watson, 2004).

The second view is the integrationist movement exemplified by Gary Collins in the aforementioned dialogue (Johnson and Jones, 2000; see also Collins 1993, 1988; McMinn, 1996). Integrationists seek to use both psychology and theology as resources for knowing the world and knowing God. The question arises as to which ideology dominates the other. It seems that the goal of integrationism in its evangelical form is to give the Bible a primary place of authority and to use other sources of knowledge when appropriate and useful. Watson (2004) writes in favor of integrationism and seeks to give a philosophical basis for integration through his development of postpostmodernism. Integrationism meets two basic requirements of postpostmodernism in that it is open to other sources of knowledge but maintains an ideology or metanarrative that remains primary. Although Johnson (2004) wonders whether this ideal has been met, the basic tenets of integrationism seem to apply well to a postpostmodern critique.

The third view offered by Johnson and Jones is Christian psychology which is given voice by Robert Roberts (see Roberts & Talbot, 1997). The goal of Christian psychology is not just to integrate two different fields to make a new creation, but rather to create a psychology that is thoroughly Christian and aided by secular theories only as they agree with Christianity. The work of integration and Christian psychology has much in common, especially that both seek to dialogue with secular psychology. However, Christian psychology seems to question the validity of much of secular psychology and intends to deconstruct (a postmodern term) rather than synthesize its unchristian parts so that it can be better utilized by the Christian community. It also finds great acceptance of the postpostmodern critique in that it has an established ideology that is allowed to dialogue with other communities while keeping its foundation as the driving force.

The fourth view offered in Johnson and Jones dialogue is biblical counseling and is represented by David Powlison (2003). Biblical counseling views the Bible as the only accurate source of knowledge for psychology and counseling. Psychology, they might say, has been contaminated by secularism and therefore will only contaminate the

Bible in a dialogue. This view fails to meet Watson's postpostmodern critique in that it is unable to dialogue with other communities and has ghettoized itself already, although it does carry a strong ideology.

Each of these views has only been described briefly in their epistemological function and much more could be said about them and has been said about them elsewhere. For the purpose of this study, it needs to be established that the postpostmodern critique is seen as the epistemology of choice in the formation of a Christian attachment to God and the best course of critiquing the modernism of evolutionary psychology and the relativism of postmodernism without simply choosing synthesis of the two (Drueck & Parsons, 2004). Furthermore, integrationism and Christian psychology seem most congruent with this vision. The Bible is seen as the ideology of Christianity and the metanarrative of the sacred community. However, attachment theory has a great deal to offer the Bible in that attachment theory offers details of dynamics already congruent with Scripture and validated through common grace (Roberts, 1997). If the Bible is the ideological surround then attachment theory constitutes other communal repositories of knowledge. Finally, while this study has much in common with integrationism, it has even more in accord with Christian psychology. Several pieces of evidence speak to this fact. First, attachment is deconstructed from its reductionistic fault and expanded. Second, the Bible is seen as the ideology of primary authority. Third, Christian therapeutic resources are explored in terms of their relationship to attachment to God (see chapter 4).

Psychology of Religion

Plurality in the field of psychology of religion has resulted in a field that lacks direction (Granqvist, 2002; Spilka & Daniel, 1997). The field lacks unity in purpose, methodology, and theory (Conver, 1982). Attachment to God is a concept rooted in the

psychology of religion (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1997). How does a Christian attachment to God theory fit into this pluralistic field?

First, what is the purpose of a theory of attachment to God? Batson (1997) speaks of three different distinct disciplines of psychological studies upon religion each with different purposes. The first type is what he calls “psychology by religion,” and is characterized by the practice of therapeutic psychology by religious professionals. The purpose of this discipline is to utilize psychology for the purpose of ministry, namely pastoral care and counseling. Granqvist (2002) gives very little attention to this field believing it to be outside of the scope of his research. The second type of discipline is “religion by psychology.” This type of research is characterized by what is or ought to be the essence of human nature and often makes propositions concerning the existence of God (Granqvist, 2002). Granqvist (2002, p. 20) offers two points of concern about religion by psychology: it throws itself “outside the boundaries of science and into the realms of metaphysics and philosophy of life,” and “it is inappropriately value-laden with respect of its topic of inquiry.” Of course Granqvist is working with a modernist model which still holds to the utopian belief of value free science, and clearly could have the same concerns about the current project. The purpose of this type of study is to replace religion with typically atheistic notions and psychological processes (O’Connor, 2001; Carrette, 2001; Freud, 1939, 1962). The third type of discipline is the “psychology of religion,” and is characterized as scientific study of individuals’ religious experience. These studies are agnostic while in progress and “methodologically reduces the existence of God, but refrains from any kind of ontological reductionism or embracement” (Granqvist, 2002, p. 20). This is the type of research conducted by Granqvist (2002) and Kirkpatrick (1992, 1997, 1999, 2005). The purpose of this type of study is to offer objective psychological accounts of human religious experience. Granqvist seems to claim that only this category qualifies as science. Exception is taken to this proposition for several reasons. First, in a postpostmodernistic framework, science includes the

recognition of one's ideology and seeks to use that ideology in the process of critical investigation in non-authoritarian ways (Watson, 1993, 2004). Second, it is highly unlikely that agnosticism is value free. The assumption is that indecision contains no value, but in reality agnosticism reduces the world to ambiguity, creates a value-laden principle of unknowing or unsaying as Emmanuel Levinas puts it (Levinas, 1989), and creates blind-spots in the researchers practice ignoring unconscious ideology that all persons carry (MacIntyre, 1988). As far as the reduction of life is concerned, Granqvist (2002) claims that one can "reduce the existence of God" and at the same time "refrain from any kind of ontological reductionism embracement." However, belief or unbelief of God is a primary ontological question, and when it is met with agnosticism life is reduced to ambiguity at a fundamental level. Also, Granqvist has created the value of agnosticism or unknowing for the sake of knowing. Levinas (1989) attempted to avoid idolatry by "unsaying" what has been said. Empiricists attempt a similar task when extremely important questions are ignored for the sake of truth. Unknowing seems counterproductive in a postpostmodern system. A postmodern system does not avoid ideology, but rather recognizes it and "brackets" it temporarily (Patton, 1995). Bracketing differs from unknowing in the sense that it states ideology upfront, rather than an agnostic ignoring of ideologies. Bracketing can be a way of remaining in a non-authoritarian "epistemology of love" as Watson (2004, p. 254) puts it so that other communities are heard. At the same time it allows one to be aware of ideological and value-laden influences to guard from unconscious "blind spots" that otherwise might keep the researcher from a circumspect view of the subject.

Clearly this study would fit into the psychology by religion camp in that psychology of religion in the form of attachment theory and research is applied to pastoral theology for the purpose of creating useful modes of interaction for Christian soulcare providers. A few others have successfully attempted to combine the two disciplines (see Capps, 1993; Pargament, 1997). An unambiguous account of the

ideological surround has already been given in chapter one. A postpostmodern foundation allows for the combination of psychology of religion and pastoral theology fields even carrying the ideology that would accompany the research (Watson, 2004).

Summary of Methodological Issues

The search for a philosophical context that allows for a Christian ideology and the use of the data and theory of attachment seems to have been found in a postpostmodernism as described by Watson. Premodern concerns are taken seriously as foundations of truth in the form of an ideological surround are validated, although it is balanced with an epistemology of love that resists authoritarian use of such an ideology. Modern concerns are taken seriously as well as the scientific process which is seen as an excellent mode of gaining knowledge through observation although it comes with a warning against reductionism that only investigates observable data. Postmodern critique is also taken seriously in that communities are respected as repositories of truth in some way although not to the degree that metanarratives are discarded and ideologies are neutralized. The Christian theorist can use the Bible as primary (Johnson, 2004) and yet investigate other sources of knowledge through dialogue and critique of common grace (Kuyper, 1943). Finally, the field of psychology of religion is seen as useful to pastoral theology and the work of religious professionals.

Attachment theory was created in a modernist philosophical framework (Bowlby, 1969/1982) and seems to remain in such a state. A primary task in the development of Christian attachment theory is the deconstruction of its agnosticism (Granqvist, 2002; Kirkpatrick, 2005) and replacing it with theism. Kirkpatrick's research has opened the door for such a project. He has offered very helpful descriptors of attachment to God that can lead religious practitioners to further investigation, namely investigation that seeks how to utilize this theory in theism and the relationship to God is understood to be therapeutic. This task is a unique one among attachment to God

researchers. It should also be noted that Kirkpatrick (1995) leaves the door open for the development of a pastoral theology of attachment to God when he envisions the potential of therapeutic use with the construct of attachment to God.

A much more difficult task calls for the broadening of categories deriving from a postmodern and postpostmodern critique. The primary limitation of attachment theory is that it is reductionistic in anthropology, teleology, and human development (linguistically). Attachment theory represents a much needed movement in psychology; however, this movement can be taken further to broaden categories already set forth by attachment theorists for the purpose of increasing congruence with Christian perspectives.

The Formation of a Christian Theory of Attachment to God

Lee Kirkpatrick (1992) was the first psychologist of religion to propose an attachment theoretical framework for the study of religious experience. His conclusion that God serves as an attachment figure to believers catalyzed a great deal of research (see chapter 1). His description of God as an attachment figure leads Robert Roberts (1997, pp. 206-07) to claim:

No word, used by any biblical author, has exactly the scope and sense that I shall here attach to 'attachment.' But I hope to establish that around this word we can construct a concept whose features are all biblical, though never, in the Bible, tied together quite as they are here.

As noted earlier, Kirkpatrick's description of God as an attachment figure resonates with the biblical picture of the human-divine relationship, and can be a helpful key to unlock the mystery of security and insecurity in that relationship. Roberts (1997) not only praises attachment theory, but also articulates its limitations in that it is biologically reductionistic and in need of broadened thinking. In other words, much of the work here is to take what is good about attachment theory and make it better.

A postpostmodern critique of attachment theory, through the use of Christianity as an ideological surround, yields two needed areas of expansion so that the theory of attachment to God can find a Christian therapeutic use: The development of the self and higher order teleology.

The first part of this section will contain a description of God as an attachment figure. The second part will articulate a broadened form from Kirkpatrick's original work.

God as an Attachment Figure

Kirkpatrick was not the first to suggest that relationships with parents have an effect upon one's relationship with God. R. C. Sproul (1974) contends that the root of atheism is not intellectual but psychological. Paul Vitz (1999) comes to a similar conclusion when he asserts that many famed atheists had a poor or non-existent relationship with their fathers. Other theorists offer examples of the contribution that early parental relationships have on an adult relationship with God (Rizzuto, 1979; Spero, 1992). All of these claims set forth the idea that the psychological state of the human being influences spiritual connection to God. It would seem that attachment theory would fit this paradigm.

Can it be concluded that God is an attachment figure? Lee Kirkpatrick (1992, 1995, 1999, 2005) argues that God functions as an "exalted" attachment figure. He notes three aspects of religion that correspond to the aforementioned thesis. First, for many, religion is a relationship with God. This is true of the Christian faith, which understands eternal life as knowing God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (John 17.3). Protestants have taken the lead on this issue since 1521 when Luther took his stand against what he considered to be the mediating church, which stood in conflict to his view of the individual in relationship with God (Bainton, 1983). In contemporary culture evangelicals have focused on the relationship with God through Jesus Christ as primary

to their beliefs. Kirkpatrick (1999) summarizes an unpublished research project from the University of South Carolina in which an attachment to God scale was used (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992) to distinguish between secure, anxious, and avoidant attachments with God. The findings report that secure respondents (36%) were more likely than either avoidant (22%) or ambivalent (20%) respondents to identify themselves as an “evangelical Christian.” Kirkpatrick interprets these findings as due to the evangelical emphasis on one’s relationship with God through Jesus.

Second, the prevalence of love between persons and God in religion indicates the function of God as an attachment figure. To love God is the central teaching in the *Shema* of the Jewish faith as quoted in Deuteronomy 6.5 (Cragie, 1976). Jesus reiterates this central focus of religion when asked to choose a greatest commandment (Matt 22.34-40, Mark 12.28-34). Even in American Christianity, the theme of love for God has been central to the Christian faith. Jonathan Edwards (1959) believed that “religious affections” directed toward God constitute a necessary part of true religion.

Third, the Christian focus of God as heavenly parent is congruent with the attachment function of a relationship with God. The Bible offers the image of parent for God as a major theme. God is referred to as the perfectly attuned nursing mother (Is. 49.15), the omniscient and protective father (Matt 6.6-15), loving father (John 14.21), and the father who blesses (Jas 1.17). It seems that the parent image of God would infer that God acts in a parental manner with His children, and it seems that attachment would be one of those functions.

Does the Christian relationship with God meet the five criteria listed in chapter one? Kirkpatrick (1992, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2005) believes that it does. First, the Christian faith seeks to maintain proximity with God. For instance David signals for proximity when he asks God not to take away His Spirit from him (Ps 51). Christians believe that they can signal God and find that God is available and attuned. God is attentive even in secret prayer (Matt 6.6). Believers use prayer to signal God to come

near (1 Thess 5.17), worship (Heb 13.15), and call upon or cry to God (Rom 10.13). Two types of prayers seem to offer greater proximity than the others (Hood et al., 1996): contemplative prayer, and meditation. Persons that focus primarily on petitionary prayer have been shown to have a less secure attachment with God (Kirkpatrick, 1997). Believers are also called upon to draw near to God (Heb 4.14-16, 10.22). It is important to note that God is proximate in some sense all the time (Josh 1.5, 9) and that proximity is a result of the mediator function of Christ (1 Pet 3.18, Heb 4.14-16).

Second, God acts as a “haven of safety” in times of trouble. Psalm 46 claims that God is a “refuge and strength.” It further states that God is a “very present help in trouble.” The psalmist will not fear because of God’s refuge function. This sort of claim is made throughout the Psalms and testifies to God’s reliability and availability for help when needed to bring about a sense of “felt security” (Kobak, 1999). Pargament (1997) has focused on the prevalence of religious coping and found that religion can or cannot be an effective way to cope, with one determining variable being the kind of attachment the person has with God (secure or insecure). Furthermore, research shows that people turn to God in times of crisis (Hood et al., 1996), turn to prayer more than church (Kirkpatrick, 1999), and pray more when dealing with serious illness (O’Brien, 1982).

Third, God seems to function as a secure base. Psalm 23 points to a person who “fears no evil” though they explore the “valley of the shadow of death” because God “is with me.” The God attachment enables greater exploration in any situation due to the felt security that is experienced in the believer because of God’s constant presence. Brother Lawrence (1977) invites believers to “practice the presence of God,” which he describes as a constant attentiveness to God’s presence. Lawrence (1977, p. 21) describes the results of this practice by saying, “My most useful method is this simple attention, done with passionate regard toward God to whom I find myself often attached with greater sweetness and delight than that of an infant at its mother’s breast” (emphasis added). The language he uses offers a vivid image of secure base living with God. In

Christianity, security comes with God only through justification that occurs through Christ's propitiation of sinners as God's wrath turns away from believers (Rom 8.1) and on to Christ (1 Pet 3.18; Isa 53.10).

Fourth and Fifth, Kirkpatrick points to the anxiety and grief when one is separated from God. While Kirkpatrick (1999) focuses on apostasy and excommunication as an institutional separation from God, he may miss the more existential elements of separation from God. For instance, Christ quotes Psalm 22 when his interrogation of God asks, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mays (1994, p. 105) claims that "citing the first words of a text was, in the tradition of the time, a way of identifying an entire passage." In this sense Christ was identifying with the existential pain of being separated from God due to his becoming sin (1 Pet 3.18), but also indicating that he trusted God's constant presence due to the knowledge of God's faithfulness to be attentive and responsive. God was responsive through the resurrection. In other words, Jesus trusted God's faithfulness even though he couldn't sense the Father's presence: this is precisely the secure base function during times of separation. It seems that Christianity would assert that separation from God does cause anxiety, whether it is the separation anxiety due to sin (Isa 59.2) or the ultimate separation experienced as hell. Furthermore, there is another kind of separation that is actually a holy state referred to by St. John of the Cross (John of the Cross, 1987) as the "dark night of the soul." The person loses all sensation of God's presence in order to purify the soul. If the anxiety of this separation can be withstood, then the person can accept God's bid to grow deeper. It seems that without a secure base with God, anxiety would not be contained and the person will either anxiously cling to the sensations of the symbols of religion rather than God, or avoid God all together. A secure base would mean that the person has an image of God as attentive and responsive, offering a sense of felt security that relies on knowledge of God's faithfulness rather than on sensing God. Absence of sensation is not interpreted as abandonment, but rather temporary separation.

The Development of Self

Christianity affirms a holistic account of human nature. Attachment theory has progressed in such a way that anthropological categories have expanded to be more holistic in nature than they were at the theory's inception. Bowlby's (1969/1982) original theory utilized biologically bound behavior systems to describe the motivational factors for child proximity seeking behavior. The child surveys the environment and chooses attachment behavior for the sake of protection and survival. While this original thinking is not disputed, it did lack the complexity necessary for a comprehensive developmental theory. As mentioned earlier, these ideas were expanded because physical proximity could not explain attachment behavior of adolescents or adults who could experience proximity to attachment figures through mental images and memories (Thompson, 1999). Bowlby expanded his original thought to include the goal of "felt security," dependent upon availability rather than physical presence of an attachment figure (Kobak, 1999). Although biological forces remain quite vocal in attachment research (Schoore, 1994, 1999a, 1999b; Siegel, 1999), psychological categories are well represented as well. For instance, inherent in the theory is a very important role for social mediation in development. Also, the development of the IWM as a complex matrix of affect and cognition (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999) also describes internal modes of being and forming as a self. Finally, attachment studies concerning romantic love in adulthood give evidence of a broadened anthropology that includes psychosocial categories (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999; Feeney, 1999).

Other dimensions of anthropology have been seen as outside of the scope of study for evolutionary theorists, and even those who propose an attachment to God do so under psychological categories and not spiritual ones (Granqvist, 2002). While the Christian perspective affirms a powerful role for psychobiology, it also seeks to understand persons from ethical, spiritual (human-divine relationship), and existential

terms. Such perspectives are needed for an expansion of attachment theory and can come from philosophy and theology.

The work of Paul Ricoeur concerning the development of the self is a helpful aid in this expansion and will offer philosophical and theological perspectives to create a more broad theory of attachment to God. Ricoeur is chosen because his philosophy has much in common with the postpostmodern position previously articulated. Ford's (1999, p. 97) description of Ricoeur finds much congruence with the postpostmodern proposal of ideological surround:

Ricoeur himself is more tentative in his theological explorations but in his religious writings he does attest to God as named in the Bible. He does not pretend to have no presuppositions: he risks giving preference to the naming of God in the texts of scripture.

How does Ricoeur define the self and its development? Ford (1999) articulates four philosophical perspectives that Ricoeur rejected or resisted. First, he resists any philosophy of the subject (found in Descartes, Kant) that understands the self to be created without mediation of signs, narratives, other people, etc. Rather, the self is formed in the context of social mediators and is influenced by the subject itself. Attachment theory finds a nice balance between the role of the individual and the role of the attachment figure to co-create a self, although it seems that personal agency (Johnson, 1997) is lost at certain points. Attachment can sound rather deterministic in its dependency upon the environment for the formation of the self, in that it can give the impression that the quality of care given by the attachment figure automatically determines the developmental path of the child. This is perhaps the reason why researchers have been unable to determine whether Kirkpatrick's compensation or correspondence hypotheses of attachment to God are more accurate. The compensation theory hypothesizes that those with poor attachments find compensation for those poor parental attachments in a relationship with God. The correspondence theory hypothesizes that those with secure attachments to parents find it easier to be attached to God than

insecure ones (Kirkpatrick, 1997, 2005). It seems that both paths are viable options given a host of complex variables. Why do some people find compensation in God, some find attachment correspondence to God, and others do not find attachment at all? It seems that perspectives on personal agency and intentionality could help explain the reason that a formula or one stable pattern cannot be determined.

Christianity also agrees that formation occurs in social contexts. Parents are given the task of teaching their children the *shema* (Deut 6.5). Sins and destructive patterns are passed down from one generation to the next with the option to any generation to turn away from that pattern (Ex 34.7ff). The formation of the church itself can be seen as a development of a culture or even countercultural movement that socially mediates through a well formed ideology.

Second, Ricoeur resists definitions of self that understand the self to formulate in the first person as an “I,” but instead sees formation of self to contain influences of others as an “I-you” (Ford, 1999). Attachment also sees development as a relational process. This is one of the distinct advantages that attachment theory carries over autonomy driven psychologies (cf. chapter 1). Attachment could still improve in this category through the creation of higher order teleology for relationships thus expounding goals beyond survival and protection. Christianity finds relationships to be central in the very foundation of the Trinity between Father, Son, and Spirit (Price, 2002). The formation of the church in Acts and the vision of a holy city in Revelation offer vivid pictures of Christian social life.

Third, Ricoeur resists translating all realities to bodies and simultaneously resists dualism between person and body. The Christian idea of an embodied soul is congruent with Ricoeur’s thinking. Attachment theory on the other hand must be expanded to include personal agency, higher order teleology, and linguistic influences.

Fourth, Ricoeur resists any version of human agency that understands human action to be “impersonal event.” Attachment seems to fail here and is in need of a “moral

context” (see Browning, 1976) that can only come with broadened anthropological categories that Ricoeur gladly supplies. Johnson (1997) lists six biblical features of human agency: embodiment, co-agency, inwardness, movement of the will, goodness and evil, and responsibility. This list seems to be in agreement with Ricoeur’s “personal” agency. A Christian form of agency demands an ideology to define goodness and evil as well as an anthropology of freedom and responsibility.

For Ricoeur, the becoming of a self is primarily a hermeneutic task (Ricoeur, 1992). Language and other people are mediators for the development of a self. It is through language that the interpretation task of development occurs. The interaction of the individual with others results in a co-creation of an internal interpretation. Formation of the self occurs with the help of the existential quest of the self as *idem* (answering “what” and “why” questions) and the self as *ipse* (answering “who” questions) (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 125). The interaction of the *ipse* question of “who am I?” and “who are others?” and the *idem* question of “what is happening?” and “why is it happening” eventually creates a sense of self. This sense of self is based then on the *ipse* portion of the self that determines identity, and the *idem* portion of the self that reflects upon actions, reasons, and causation. Both of these parts of the self are hermeneutic because of their interpretive function.

As these parts of the self solidify, a narrative emerges as “the crucial genre for the description of the self in time” (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 153). The narrative is created by the dialogue between the ethical *idem* and the existential *ipse* (Ricoeur, 1992). This connection between the two parts of the self creates several dynamics. First, the ethical ability to give primacy to others over the self is in some way related to self esteem and an individual’s personal identity. In fact, a proper self esteem is necessary for the goal of Ricoeur’s self, which he deems passivity. Passivity of self is defined as “being enjoined to live well with and for others in just institutions and to esteem oneself as the bearer of the wish” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 352). Ethics does not come from self-debasement or

humiliation, but rather can only be achieved as a self is formed with a degree of esteem. Second, Ricoeur uses the term “conviction” to denote that the self does not simply mean myself but embraces myself and that of others (Ford, 1999). The formation of personal identity occurs as a co-creation of the subject (individual) and the objects (others) and therefore ethical responsibility to others is in some way predicated on a self that is not fragmented but integrated and valued. Ricoeur (1992, pp. 193-04) explains the paradox between self-esteem and ethical passivity when he notes that the occurrence of

an exchange between esteem for myself and solicitude for others. This exchange authorizes us to say that I cannot myself have self-esteem unless I esteem others as myself. . . .The equivalence between the ‘you too’ and the ‘as myself’ rests on a trust that can be held to be an extension of the attestation by reason of which I believe that I can (do something) and that I have worth. [It is] the paradox of the exchange at the very place of the irreplaceable. Becoming this way fundamentally equivalent are the esteem of the other as oneself and the esteem of oneself as an other.

It is wise to interject a couple points concerning Ricoeur and attachment theory. First, both believe that formation is a function of the self and the other, although as mentioned earlier attachment theory lacks a fully formed notion of personal agency. This point is pivotal due to the fact that Ricoeur’s development of the self is predicated on a subjective-objective paradox in which esteem for others is created dialogically with esteem for self. Grandiosity, then, is actually a compensation for a lack of esteem in that it is crippled against esteeming others. Ford (1999) points out that this paradox is Ricoeur’s understanding of the command to “love they neighbor as thyself.” Second and related to the first, love of neighbor for the neighbor’s sake is a foreign concept in attachment theory. It is important to remember that the goal of attachments in an evolutionary perspective is reduced to survival and protection. Without discounting this point, it seems that the addition of a notion of primacy of others is needed to describe a higher ethical teleology. In an evolutionary framework all acts of kindness are only masks for selfishness (Yancey, 2003).

As stated earlier, Ricoeur believed that narrative is the crucial genre for definitions of the self. Now that the process of the development of personal narratives have been briefly described, the next task is to articulate how the developing self can be transformed into higher teleological modes which include esteem for “others as oneself” and “myself as an other” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 194). A dual, paradoxical movement must occur: the self must be esteemed, and the self must be able to esteem others. For Ricoeur, there are two conceptual tools for such a task.

The first tool is testimony empowered by trust. Ricoeur understands belief to be a personal and relational venture. Testimonies depend upon trust in that they are second order accounts of first order events and therefore built upon the individual’s interpretation of the events of first order. Testimony is a hermeneutic task as it interprets and re-counts what is “believed” to be true. Ricoeur (1995, p. 118) describes these aspects when he comments:

Here to believe is to trust. With testimony, it seems to me, the problematic of truth coincides with that of veracity. It is in this sense that testimony is related to and dependent upon a hermeneutics: the believing confidence of a second-order testimony in the first, absolute testimony does not coincide with deductive knowledge of empirical proof. It stems from the categories of understanding and interpretation.

Testimonies are not only narrative accounts of events, but can be events themselves.

“Acts of devotion” (Ricoeur, 1995) constitute testimonies, which then cause the formation of a narrative account of the act by a witness. The formation of the narrative account serves as an interpretive account, and contains hermeneutic functions.

The concept of the term testimony has many integrating points with both attachment and Christianity. Adult attachment research has developed its own narrative tool that is able to tap in to the attachment world of adults with great accuracy. The adult attachment interview (AAI) was developed by Main and Goldwyn (1984). The AAI elicits a personal attachment narrative of an individual. The interview asks questions that attempt to “surprise the unconscious” (Hesse, 1999, p. 397). Scores are grouped in four

possible designations that are based on Ainsworth's four categories in the strange situation (see. chapter 2). Scoring is based, not on the attachment content of the interview, but on whether or not the person is able to maintain a consistent and collaborative narrative throughout its entirety. Persons are labeled secure when they produce an acceptable coherent and collaborative narrative whether experiences are reported as having been favorable or unfavorable. The result is that the hermeneutic task of forming a narrative concerning attachment history yields insights into the person's view of attachment and his or her IWM. In Ricoeur's terms, the attachment narrative is a hermeneutic tool that articulates the view of self as *idem* and the self as *ipse*. Within the narrative a personal identity and ethic is "unconsciously" displayed. The narrative is a second order testimony that gives an account of the real events of first order testimony. In other words, parents testified of their attachment interactions with their children through the parent's hermeneutic lens, and now the child testifies to those acts as well in form of a personal narrative which is based upon an interpretive process of those events.

The term testimony has a rich heritage in Christianity. The testimony of communal worship impacts an individual as there is a "continual retelling of the past in the face of new contexts and urgencies" (Ford, 1999, p. 100). The primary story in the Bible is the "gospel of Christ." Christ is the Word of God that testifies to God's nature and actions (John 1.1-4). His "acts of devotion," especially in the cross (Phil 2.5-12) speak a Word into the narrative of history. Followers of Christ testify of that act in narrative form (Acts 1.8). It is the hermeneutic function of each individual to interpret the veracity of the testimony. This testimony interacts with the personal narratives of those who believe to form personal gospel narratives (Gorman, 2001). The Word addresses the self as *idem* and the self as *ipse*. Girard (1978) understands Christ to be the Word from God that unlocks the injustices of all the other words. The testimony of Christ comes to "bear witness" as it is integrated into the fabric of one's personal testimony given in narrative form.

The second tool that transforms the self into higher modes of existence is worship. Ricoeur believed that the principle genre of the Bible is worship (Ford, 1999). Worship is the act of testimony that carries a dual and paradoxical function: the worshiper learns an ethic of passivity in desire for God, and the worshiper is cherished by the love of God. Ricoeur believes that “biblical agape belongs to an economy of the gift, possessing a metaethical character” in which “love is tied to the naming of God” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 25). Ford (1999, p. 85) comments, “This indicates the importance of worship, in which the abundance of God is celebrated in addressing God by name.” In worship, the believer testifies to God that He is who He is. To do so, the worshiper must name God. Naming God can only stand in a postpostmodern ideological surround, for postmodern critique would rather “unsay” something than “say” it, and this is especially true for iconoclasts (see Levinas, 1989). As stated previously, Ricoeur is willing to risk the naming of God.

What name should be given to God? Many options are possible. It seems that the naming of God as “Abba” is primary to an attachment to God concept. Abba is a familial and colloquial title for a father used in intimate settings (Wilson, 1998). Romans 8.14-16 articulates a vivid account of an attachment to God when it states:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

This passage sets up a scenario of attachment: God is the father, believers are sons and daughters, and a process is given by which the sons and daughters learn to signal God. Believers need not avoid God due to fear of bondage. Instead, the believer can discover the name of God as Abba and call that name to the available and responsive God. It seems that Paul understands that life experiences might prohibit a believer from experiencing the full attachment relationship with God, and so he notes that the Spirit of adoption “bears witness” (testifies) to the *ipse* self that a believer is a loved child of God

and therefore can approach God as so. It is important to note the Spirit of adoption testifies along with “our spirit” that “we are children of God.” The testimony of the Spirit has been incorporated into the narrative testimony of the individual.

Worship is the act of “facing God” (Ford, 1999) in which the self is both valued and deferred through passivity and conviction as defined by Ricoeur. Agape is experienced as the testimonial act of God through Jesus Christ and the crucifixion that “bears witness” to a believer’s soul in two distinct ways: God communicates his love for people on the cross (John 3:19; Rom 5.8), and God communicates himself as sacrificial (ethical) for the sake of the other (Phil 2.5-12). The result is an esteem of self (*ipse*) that results in a greater esteem for others (*idem*).

A Higher Order of Teleology

The critique that has been leveled against attachment theory through the thought of Ricoeur has resulted in a commendation of many attachment aspects, but a broadening of anthropological categories to include personal agency, narrative, testimony, and ethics is needed. The narrative focus of this discussion leads logically to the next critique: a lack of a higher order teleology. As stated previously, attachment theory in evolutionary terms limits teleology to survival and protection. This point seems conclusive. However, it seems plausible that a higher goal could simultaneously be sought through the formation of attachments.

Ricoeur has established well the place of narratives in the formation of the self. Narratives contain plots, characters, conflicts and quite certainly conclusions. Rychlack states that “people behave for the sake of reasons, purpose, and intentions rather than solely in response to the impulses of efficient cause” (Rychlak, 1994, p. 8). MacIntyre (1984) places the teleological aspect of humans within the scope of personal agency and ethics. He claims that human action is telic in the sense that it flows from human intentions. He also claims that human goal oriented teleology derives its moral logic

from a more transcendent understanding of human nature. In other words, narratives carry with them telic aspects that derive from personal agency and are defined morally within spiritual contexts.

While the prospective approach of attachment theory lends itself to telic notions, the theory itself lacks an articulation of such goals. Ricoeur's concepts of passivity and conviction offer a Christian teleology that includes the Christian concepts of submission and sacrificial love all the while understanding that such processes come most naturally in a self esteem derived from secure attachments.

Christian Contribution to Attachment Theory

A brief summary of the conclusions of a Christian critique of attachment theory results in the notion that Christianity has something important to add to a concept of attachment to God. A full account of Christian experiential and doctrinal resources for creating more secure attachments with God is the focus of the next chapter. It is important here to summarize the unique contribution of agape. Agape is one of the Greek words for love and often represents God's love (Lewis, 1971). Agape represents the love of God for humanity displayed on the cross of Jesus Christ (John 3.16; Rom 5.8). Agape is a Word from God (John 1.1-4) that speaks directly to the *ipse* and *idem* functions of the self. The cross declares God's love for humanity (Rom 5.8) and creates grounds for security in the human-divine relationship (Rom 8.1). Furthermore, the cross is the narrative that becomes the testimony of God and the metanarrative of the Christian so that the believer's life is transformed by this testimony (Gorman, 2001) in both *ipse* and *idem* realities.

From an attachment perspective, the Incarnation is the event in which God has made Himself available, accessible, and responsive to humanity. When separation occurred in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3.23-24), God's redemptive plan called for a sense of proximity discovered in the Incarnation. However, proximity was not enough for

redemption. In the same manner physical proximity is not enough for secure attachment. A Word was spoken in the “acts of devotion” of Christ that is retold in narrative form to testify to the spirits of believers that they are “children of God.” The cross was necessary to display the love of God for others and to set as an example an ethic of sacrificial love. Without a broader metanarrative such as this, attachment is left to the experiences of the past and the hope for survival. However, through Christian resources attachment is given a rich and powerful mode of transformation. The Christian story is a powerful, transforming agent that guides the interpretive patterns of believers in terms of image of self, image of God, and image of relationships. Without a story such as this, attachment is nothing more than a survival technique.

CHAPTER 4
ATTACHMENT TO GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN
EXPERIENCE

Simon Chan's (1998) vision of the development of "spiritual theology" may be congruent with the task at hand of describing attachment to God in the context of the Christian experience. Chan (1998, pp. 19-20) claims that

a failure to distinguish between spiritual theology and practical theology has plagued Protestantism. In the narrow sense, spiritual theology is concerned with life in relation to God (the supernatural life), whereas practical theology is more broadly concerned with action in the world. In the broad sense, spiritual theology seeks to discover the transcendent within every sphere of life and every area of experience, whereas practical theology concerns the practical application of theology. For example, in practical theology the doctrine that God is love may provide the motive for loving others and practicing charity. But in spiritual theology, the doctrine that God is love is felt as an experiential reality, defining the basic character of our union with God . . . Practical acts of charity flow from such experience. Thus spiritual theology stands between systematic theology and Christian praxis. The importance of the place that spiritual theology occupies between systematic theology on one end and practical theology on the other cannot be overemphasized. Without the mediation of spiritual theology, Christian praxis is reduced to mere activism.

This entire project attempts to connect spiritual theology with practical theology. In chapter three this process is described as the integration of theory and data from the psychology of religion with implications for pastoral theology, primarily because the progression begins with the experience of attachment to God (chapters 2-4) and ends with implications for soulcare providers (chapters 5-7).

While it has been suggested that the Christian experience can be described from one angle as an attachment to God, it is necessary to articulate the way Christian experience functions as an attachment and simultaneously explain the manner in which Christian resources (knowledge and experience) generally create attachments and in particular create more secure attachments. This task emphasizes Chan's (1998) criteria

for spiritual theology in that it describes the manner in which doctrines, revelation, imagery, and spiritual experience forms and transforms attachments to God. When inspecting the Christian experience in its usefulness for attachments generally and attachments to God specifically, one finds that it is full of a wealth of insights containing therapeutic potentialities.

The progression of this task begins with Christian theology and understands adoption to be the central doctrine congruent with an attachment to God spiritual theology. While adoption is deemed the central doctrine, justification by faith is understood to be its basis and Trinitarian Christian experience is understood to be its application. Once adoption is established as the theological construct of substitute attachment, then several biblical metaphors and images will be described in relationship to attachment with God. Finally, the absence of God in the dark night of the soul as it relates to attachment to God will be explored.

Christian Doctrine and Attachment to God

A primary metaphor used within the Bible to describe the relationship of believers to God is that of child and father. While maternal images of God are expressed in Scripture with great vividness (Isa 49.15), the role of God as father seems to dominate. The metaphor of child and parent is easily transferable to an attachment approach to Christianity. God's redemptive plan results in a new experience described as adoption. Several theologians understand adoption to be a type of grace from God experienced beyond justification and describe adoption as an experience based upon the reality of justification (e.g., Murray, 1955; Packer, 1973; Erickson, 1998). This relation between the two is upheld. Therefore, the basis of adoption is understood to be justification by faith and the application is a Trinitarian Christian experience: union with Christ, indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and Fatherhood of God. While the Father is the one who adopts, all three personalities of the Trinity have a vital role in the adoption.

Justification by Faith and Attachment

For an attachment to be secure, the person attached must envision the attachment figure in benevolent enough terms so that he or she is seen to be available and responsive (Bowlby, 1969/1982). A person's image of God is a very influential factor in the quality of attachment to God. In terms of descriptive elements of this relationship, attachment styles with God typically represent a continuum with secure attachment marking the middle place (e.g., Holmes, 2001, p. 10). The avoidant style is found on one extreme of one pole, which is distinguished by distance from God due to insecure attachment. The opposite pole represents the anxious/ambivalent style, which is distinguished by an anxious clinging to God or the symbols and sensations of God in a fear that God will abandon. Disorganized attachment is set apart from this continuum as a state in which God is not only imagined to be unavailable and unresponsive, but is also a "belligerent abuser" resulting in fear of this divine attachment figure. Secure attachment is described as an effective dependence on God that encourages freedom and exploration (2 Cor 3.17, Gal 5.1) due to the ongoing presence of God as a "secure base." As a reminder, it should be noted here that a person can have an attachment to God and it not be a secure one. Those with anxious attachments to God will be unable to regulate their emotions with God. These persons may appear to be very religious, but in reality they are trying to be "good enough" so that God will love them enough to want to be near them. Those with avoidant styles will find their emotional self cut off from God. Intimacy will be difficult because they will seek self-sufficiency due to a fear of trusting others, and in this case trusting God. Those with disorganized attachment to God fear Him as a source of trauma and an uncaring enemy. They may at times seem anxious and at other times seem avoidant. God is dangerous to these persons.

What is the doctrinal basis for a secure base attachment with God? While adoption is a concept that describes the experience of belonging and proximity to God, it is one that a believer develops after an initial sense of conversion. It is possible for

someone to be justified and not experience the full power of his or her adoption (Packer, 1973). However, it is hardly conceivable that a person could experience adoption without first experiencing a legally “right relationship” with God through justification. The weight of sin, guilt, and condemnation prohibits proximity to God because it manifests itself as a shame-filled defensive posture that shrinks back from intimacy with others, especially God. Donald Capps (1993) urges those in the pastoral care and counseling field to reconsider the importance of sin especially as it leads to shame. Capps identifies contemporary culture as a “narcissistic age” in which the primary dilemma is not guilt but shame. Capps (1993, p. 28) follows the thinking of Heinz Kohut when he describes the bipolar aspect of the self in terms of shame and states:

The grandiose self is a defense against the deflating experience of discovering that one is not, after all, the center of reality, while the depleted or shameful self is an exaggerated response to narcissistic injury, an overreaction to the blow that one has sustained.

The existential reality in an age of narcissism is to defend through grandiosity the painful awareness of one’s injuries from not “measuring up” to one’s own standards (Capps, 1993). How does Capps’ theology of shame interact with attachment to God? Shame debilitates attachments through several means. First, “Shame also confronts us with a profound sense of isolation from others, with our aloneness in the world” (Capps, 1993, p. 81). Capps notes primarily that disclosure of shame increases its intensity. The sense of isolation that derives from shame is entitled “tragic estrangement” by Capps (1993). In terms of attachment to God, intimacy with God is hindered by a deep sense of isolation and an inability to gain relational proximity. Second, shame prohibits one’s ability to risk especially in a relational sense. Capps (1993, p. 79) describes what he calls the “self-constricting” aspect of shame: “the frequently self-constricting nature of shame experiences . . . cause one to become less spontaneous, less free spirited, more cautious, more calculating, and less favorably disposed to the element of surprise.” While relationships demand risk of rejection, the self-constricted person is unable to take this

risk due the fear induced paralysis. Third, shame “is a threat to our basic disposition to trust” (Capps, 1993, p. 78). Trust is a major factor in the development of felt security (Kobak, 1999). Fourth, “in the shame experience, the self experiences itself as divided or split” (Capps, 1993, p. 87). These internal inconsistencies explain to some degree the presence of inconsistent and incoherent attachment narratives (cg. chapter 3 and chapter 5). The lack of internal integration results in divergent versions of the image a person holds of self and others. Anxious, avoidant, and disorganized attachment styles are actually interpretive strategies that allow the person to cope with the ambiguity of the divided self (Hesse, 1999). The inconsistency of the attachment figure promotes this division by affirming an external chaos that propels internal chaos. Fifth, “a theology of shame cannot afford to overlook . . . the defensive self, which leads those who have experienced shame to take steps to avoid additional shame experiences” (Capps, 1993, p. 94). Capps describes a similar phenomenon to the avoidant attachment style in which a person avoids proximity for the sake of protecting the self from further injury. Rage against others, contempt for others, striving for power, striving for perfection, transfer of blame, and internal withdrawal are just a few possible defensive strategies (Capps, 1993).

The connection between the theme of sin and proximity is one testified of in Scripture. The result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the creation narrative was separation from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3.23-24), which represents intimate, proximate, and open relationship with God. Of course, the Garden of Eden experience does not fit the criteria of an attachment because the lack of present danger dispelled the need for an attachment. However, once the original couple found themselves separated from God, attachment behavior was necessary. It is important to notice that Adam and Eve’s relational position toward God once they sinned was one similar to shame. The first note of shame is the isolation from the Garden and from full intimacy with God. The second indicator of shame is the act of hiding from God (Gen 3.8). Hiding is a type of defense that keeps others from being in a position of judgment. The third indicator of shame is the

recognition of their nakedness and their attempt to cover themselves (Gen 3.7). This self involvement and consciousness is a behavior congruent with Capps' description of the "self-involvement" of shame (Capps, 1993). The fourth indicator is the fear of God that is expressed for the first time (Gen 3.10). God is interpreted to be the dominant figure who stands against Adam and Eve. A final indicator of the shame reaction to sin is the defensive blaming that takes place as Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent (Gen 3.12-13). If Adam and Eve symbolize the whole of humanity, then a common experience of sin (Rom 3.23) is indicative of the human state, and the common psychological damage of that sin is partially to be seen as shame. It is suggested that sin causes psychological damages in the form of shame that results in a limited proximity to God (Isa 59.2) the giver of life. Of course, redemption is God's attempt to renew what was lost (Plantinga, 2000), and thus bring about a right relationship with God that includes proximity (1 Pet 3.18). To do so, the human-divine relationship had to be "made right" (justified) through the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Justification by faith is the means by which a person becomes righteous. In the Old Testament, righteousness is a personal concept. It is the fulfillment of the demands and obligations of a relationship between two persons (McGrath, 1997). The New Testament takes up a similar meaning and asserts that "justification" has the root meaning of "being in a right relationship with God," or "being right with God" (McGrath, 1997, p. 371). Being right with God involves the expiation of sin (Rom 3.25), reconciliation to God (2 Cor 5.18-20), adoption (Rom. 8.15, 23; Gal. 4.5), and transformation (Rom. 12.20). Safety is discovered with God as His wrath is turned away from sinful persons and directed toward Christ. This meets the demands of justification by making the relationship right and reconciles the relationship for the sake of a new kind of attachment. God's condemnation is removed from believers laying a foundation for safety between the two. McGrath (1997) seeks to apply this doctrine to the contemporary culture in existential and personal terms. McGrath (McGrath, 1997, p. 358) states,

But the truth is that the preachers of every age recognized the need to apply the theme to their specific situation – with the apparent exception of the modern period. For Augustine, the theme was to be proclaimed in neo-Platonist terms; for Anselm of Canterbury, in feudal terms; for Thomas Aquinas, in Aristotelian terms; for Calvin, in legal terms – in short, they proclaimed the doctrine in terms that drew upon experience, hopes, and fears of their own day and age. The theme of ‘justification by faith’ is the fulfillment of human existence through the removal of the barriers that get placed in its path. To the individual who is preoccupied with guilt and knows that he cannot draw near to a holy and righteous God, the word of forgiveness is spoken: through your faith in the death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead your sins are forgiven – rise, a forgiven sinner, and go forward into life in fellowship with your God?

It is interesting that the existential and personal result of justification is the ability to “draw near to a holy and righteous God.” Preoccupied is the name he gives for the person distant from God (a term also associated with the anxious attachment style). It seems that the psychological reality is that for a person to be able to draw near, that is to be able to regulate the fear system (Cassidy, 1999), they must have the psychological experience of safety based on the truth of justification with God (e.g., “perfect love cast out fear,” 1 John 4.17-19). Calvin noted a double grace that occurs in the life of a believer, that is that the believer is justified externally, but also that Christ is internalized beginning the sanctification process (Calvin, 1975). Part of this process is to have a psychological experience of safety with God that allows for a new degree of intimacy.

Justification by faith is the basis or foundation in which the experience of adoption occurs. Forgiveness is a needed resource for a person to be able to esteem the self to the degree that the self can identify and defer to others. For Ricoeur (1992), this means that a self must be efficiently esteemed to be able to see “oneself as another” and to see “another as oneself.” Without justification the self carries too heavy of a load to be able to approach God with any degree of intimacy. After justification, the shame that results from sin may still exist; however, justification removes the sin that causes the shame and therefore is a necessary step to be able to overcome shame to the degree that proximity to God can be enjoyed. Adoption is the process by which this enjoyment occurs.

Adoption and Attachment

Central to the Bible's declaration of adoption as an attachment to God is Paul's description of the life of a believer in Romans 8.14-17. However, to understand the New Testament concept of adoption one must first discover the background of the term from the Old Testament and Greco-Roman culture (Creason, 2004). During the ancient days of the Old Testament, adoption was primarily used by the wealthy to provide a suitable heir for prosperous families that had none (Packer, 1973). *Huiiothesia* is the Greek term for adoption in the New Testament and it is not found in the Septuagint. However, the Old Testament does refer to adoption in several ways. First, it refers to adoption in two narratives (Creason, 2004). Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses (Exod 2.10) and Mordecai adopts Esther (Esth 2.7). Second, the metaphor of adoption is used to describe the covenant that God made with the Israelite nation (Ciampa, 1988). Israel is often spoken of as a son (Exod 4.22; Jer 31.9; Hos 11.1). One key verse in the Old Testament that clearly evokes a vision of adoption is 2 Samuel 7.14 which states, "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me." This verse establishes the Davidic covenant and would in later days be applied to the Messiah (Scott, 1992).

Adoption was prevalent in ancient Greco-Roman culture. In this culture adoptions took place not only so that the adopting parent might have an heir and a legacy, but also so that the adopted person would take care of the parent in old age (Scott, 1992). Adoption is only mentioned of males (Scott, 1992). The process involved introduction of the adopted son to relatives, to the religious brotherhood, and to the townspeople (Scott, 1992). The adopted son would change his name and experience a relationship with parents in the same manner as a natural child.

While commentators disagree as to the role of each of these influences upon Paul's writing concerning adoption as a theological construct (cf. Scott, 1993), it seems plausible that both sources had a part in the New Testament concept of adoption (Dunn, 1988).

What is adoption in the theological sense? Adoption is an act of God's grace separate and subsequent to justification in which God invites believers to experience participation in His family with all the repercussions that brings (Murray, 1955; Packer, 1973). Erickson (1998) understands justification to be a negative blessing in that it takes away judgment whereas adoption is a positive blessing in that it grants favor with God. Experientially, adoption is based on the removal of condemnation through justification, but adds to that removal the granting of an intimate relationship with God, one that is safe and enjoyable (Grudem, 1994). Adoption defines the relationship between the believer and God as that of a loving parent and child.

Adoption carries with it several corollaries that impact attachment to God. First, adoption allows the believer to envision God as a loving parent (Grudem, 1994). Attachments are based upon a complex matrix that includes the image a person has of self and other (Clinton & Sibcy, 2002). Studies show that those who image God as loving and benevolent tend to report a closer relationship with God than those who do not (Kirkpatrick, 2005, pp. 81-85). Of course, the metaphor of father or parent may evoke destructive images of God, but clearly these are false names for God (cf. chapter 5). Erickson (1998) points out that adoption changes God's image for believers to a loving father rather than a police officer whose motive is to catch and punish those doing wrong. In adoption God offers the love and availability that earthly parents could not offer. God's role as a substitute attachment figure is attested to by the fact that many with insecure attachments to parents discover security with God (Kirkpatrick, 1997a). For instance, one study found that parent and self concepts are more affected by abuse than God concept (Johnson & Eastburg, 1992), indicating that a benevolent image of God can persist through trauma and can offer aid in repairing what has been damaged.

Second, adoption brings an experience of safety and certainty (Packer, 1973). The parent-child metaphor encourages the believer to think of the human-divine relationship as fixed and assured. Security is a major theme of attachment. "Felt

security” is the psychological experience necessary for a person to have a secure attachment relationship (Kobak, 1999). Without felt security a person may not seek proximity to a figure, and will definitely resist securing protection in the attachment figure’s presence. Bowlby (1969/1982) identified three classes of events that cause a child to seek a haven of safety: frightening or alarming circumstances that evoke fear and distress; illness, injury, and fatigue; and separation or threat of separation from attachment figures. While those in crisis tend to turn to God more than those not reporting a crisis, those that report an image of God that is belligerent tend not to find religion to be a place in which to cope from crisis (Pargament, 1997). Adoption lays the foundation for experiencing a relationship with God that brings such certainty.

Third, adoption sets the stage for the development of an affectionate bond between believers and God. Love for God and being loved by God are primary themes in Christianity. Jesus claimed that loving God and loving neighbor as oneself are conjointly the highest command of the Christian life (Mark 12.28-34). The most quoted verse of the Bible may be John 3.16 which reminds one that God loved the world. One of the earliest songs that many Christians learn is “Jesus Loves Me.” Clearly an exchange of love is primary to the life of Christian faith. James (1958) remarked in his classic study of religion that religious conversion has much in common with falling in love. Adoption defines the believer’s relationship with God as that of a loving parent-child dyad. The believer is no longer a slave, but now enjoys the privilege of being a child of God (Rom 8.14-17; Gal 4.1-7). Wilson (1998, pp. 62-63) paints a vivid picture of life as a child of God when she notes:

We don’t usually think of being tenderly embraced by kings, warriors, or judges, and Scripture portrays God in all those terms too. But a faithful, loving daddy – ah, that’s a different story. That’s a God we could get close to with the assurance that within his family we have a secure place.

The exchange of love between believer and invisible God needs an image to bear its fullness, and adoption seems to be that image in Scripture.

Fourth, experience of intimacy with God in terms of adoption occurs as a process and not simply a moment in time. While many theologians note that adoption occurs the moment one is justified, they also recognize that the phenomenology of adoption is experienced over time and through a process (Erickson, 1998; Packer, 1973; Murray, 1955). John 1.12 points out that those who believe in the Word are given the “right” or “authority” to become children of God. The verse implies a process in which the authority to become a child must be experienced by the believer for full impact. In other words, a believer does not yet have the full understanding of adoption at salvation’s inception, but develops that understanding through the life of faith.

Trinitarian Experience and Attachment

It has now been suggested that adoption is an experiential process in which a believer discovers the full repercussions of being a child of God. This process begins with the clearing of condemnation through justification and the establishment of a right relation with God. Adoption is understood to be a phenomenological experience in which persons identify themselves as a child of God and enjoy the security, acceptance, and bond of affection that it affords.

Romans 8.14-17 describes the adoption process in Trinitarian terms which include union with Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the Fatherhood of God. The process begins with a pre-conversion experience of fear that comes from a spirit of bondage (v. 15). Fear is directed toward God and it is reminiscent of avoidant or disorganized attachment that refuses to seek proximity to an attachment figure due to its intensity. Anxious attachment is also motivated by fear but utilizes a different behavioral strategy to cope with it, namely clinging to the attachment figure to prevent separation (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Dunn (1988) describes this fear in terms of sectarian exclusivity that results in a psychological experience of shame and rejection due to failures. In

typical shame fashion, Dunn notes that boasting (pride) and fear (shame) seem to go hand in hand. Dunn (1988, p. 452) expresses this thought and claims that fear and boasting

neatly characterize the sectarian mentality as seen from inside and outside: the sectarian self evidently confident that he belongs by virtue of his maintenance of the sect's distinctives as seen within the sect's limited horizons; the same perceived by the critical observer to be motivated by a hidden fear of failing to match up at one or other of the test points by which loyalty to these distinctives is evaluated within the sect. Paul presumably now understood his Pharisaic attitudes in these terms, not as an inadmissible desire to please God by good works . . . , which would tend to inject something of a competitive spirit . . . and so also of fear, fear of failing to come up to the mark of acceptability to his fellows in which they held him.

It is interesting that Dunn describes the experience of religious fear in terms that also apply to attachment: proximity, belonging, esteem. The sectarian mentality can be seen from "inside" or "outside." Sects work through the means of controlling the proximity of individuals to the sect. They decide who is close and who is not. Dunn understands this to be the mentality of religious fear, and it is suggested that this is a similar experience that many have had in religion (see Yancey, 2001). Furthermore, such sectarianism reflects an image of God as one who limits proximity of those who do not "measure up." Of course, it is this mentality that Paul is arguing against. He instead declares that no condemnation exists for believers in the first part of the chapter (Rom 8.1), and now adds the blessing of describing the proximate and intimate familial relationship that one can have with God. Thus fear that limits proximity to God or results in a hypocritical clinging to religious symbols without true proximity to God Himself, is labeled as the experience that adoption hopes to overcome.

The Trinitarian theme of the passage begins with the preceding paragraph in its description of union with Christ. As a prequel to Romans 8.14-17, verse 10 highlights in a modifying phrase the condition of righteousness, namely Christ dwelling in you. Fitzmyer (1993, p. 490) notes that this phrase expresses "the basic union of Christians with Christ. Christ dwells in Christians as his Spirit becomes the source of the new experience, empowering them in a new way and with a new vitality." Thus union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can hardly be distinct. Union with Christ is a

phenomenological encounter with Christ that brings a new sense of proximity with God. In fact, the ministry of Christ marked a turning point in God's attachment story. John 1.14 claims that Christ is the Word of God that was made flesh and that this Word dwelt among us. Bruce (1983, p. 40) comments on this new form of proximity discovered in the Incarnation of Christ:

The further statement that the incarnate Word 'pitched his tabernacle (eskenosen) among us' harks back to the tabernacle (skene) of Israel's wilderness wanderings. The tabernacle was erected, by God's command in order that his dwelling-place might be established with his people: 'let them make me a sanctuary', he said, 'that I may dwell in their midst' (Ex. 25:8). So, it is implied, as God formerly manifested his presence among his people in the tent which Moses pitched, now in a fuller sense he has taken up residence on earth in the Word made flesh.

The Incarnation represents God's fullest availability and responsiveness (two characteristics needed to offer secure attachment) since Adam and Eve experienced the fullness of the human-divine relationship in the garden.

Elsewhere Christ is seen as the avenue through which a person finds proximity to God. Jesus proclaimed himself to be the exclusive way by which a person comes "to the Father" (John 14.6). The crucifixion is the act of redemption by Christ in which the righteous died for the unrighteous so that Christ might "bring us to God" (1 Pet 3.18), thus noting the function Christ carries to induce proximity to God.

It is important to understand that Christ takes part in the adoption of believers. The cry of Abba was original to Jesus because others would not dare to approach its connotation of scandalous familiarity and intimacy with God (Dunn, 1988). The adoption of the believer is a participation in the Father-Son relationship enjoyed by Christ and God the Father. This point is emphasized in Romans 8:17 when it entitles believers as "heirs with Christ" or "coheirs." This adoption is a rather strange one, for it functions inversely to the usual manner of adoption: usually a parent adopts a child to then be enjoined to already existing siblings, but in this case the enjoining with the sibling of Christ brings about adoption with the parent. This is another way of saying that justification is the basis of adoption. Dunn (1988, p. 455) notes that the phrase heirs with

Christ “is the linchpin which holds together all the different strands of Paul’s thought which overlap here: the experience of sharing in Christ’s Abba-relation to God through the Spirit of Christ, as the basis of the confidence of sharing Christ’s inheritance.”

Union with Christ functions in the experience of the believer within the attachment system as well as outside of it. First, union with Christ alters one’s self image. The guilt and shame of a believer is replaced with the righteousness of Christ (Gal 2.20; 1 Pet 3.18). Self image is a major factor in the functioning of attachments with God (Benson & Spilka, 1973; Buri & Mueller, 1993). This new identity offers safety, certainty, and acceptance to the individual (Packer, 1973). While the accuser attempts to deceive believers through delusions of condemnation, the believer overcomes these accusations by the blood of the lamb (Rev 12.11), thus seeing the redemptive work of Christ as pivotal to a new self-image.

Second, union with Christ intensifies and solidifies (rather than intensity due to insecurity) the affectionate bond between believers and God. The ministry of Christ was motivated by the love of God (John 3.16) and serves as a demonstration of that love (Rom 5.8). Christ communicated his personal love for his disciples (John 15.9-14). Furthermore, the love of believers for God is understood to be central to the Christian life in the teachings of Jesus (Mark 12.30). This affectionate bond through the ministry of Christ is pivotal to the success of one’s personal faith (Edwards 1959).

Third, union with Christ brings with it an invitation to proximity to God due to the compassion of Christ. Hebrews 4.14-16 illuminates Christ’s high priestly role as mediator between humans and God (Guthrie, 1998). Proximity is a theme of these verses as they end in the exhortation to “approach” the throne of grace boldly. The description of how one should approach God’s presence is articulated through the adverb “boldly” and stands in direct contrast to a shameful “shrinking back” or distancing (Guthrie, 1998). The boldness of the approach is motivated by confidence in the compassion of Christ. Bowlby (1973, p. 202) speaks of the secure attachment as characterized by

confidence as a type of faith in the availability and responsiveness of the attachment figure, and does so in three points:

- (1) When an individual is confident that an attachment figure will be available to him whenever he desires it, that person will be much less prone to either intense or chronic fear than will an individual who . . . has no such confidence.
- (2) Confidence in the availability of attachment, or lack of it, is built up slowly during the years of immaturity – infancy, childhood, and adolescence – and whatever expectations are developed during those years tend to persist relatively unchanged through the rest of life.
- (3) The varied expectations of the accessibility and responsiveness of attachment figures that different individuals develop during their years of immaturity are tolerably accurate reflections of the experiences those individuals have actually had.

Thus, the experience of approaching God's presence is similar to that of an attachment relationship. The Hebrews 4.14-16 passage intends to secure the relationship with God through assuring the believer that the response of God in times of need will be compassion. This compassion is based on Christ's ability to sympathize with the believer in need because, "rather than being far removed from our human experience, the powerful, now-exalted Son has been in the thick of it" (Guthrie, 1998, p. 175). The weakness of the believer that is sympathized with can refer to sickness, weakness, general weakness related to fleshliness, and moral weakness (Guthrie, 1998). The passage calls for a completely open and unhindered proximity seeking approach of God. As attachment theorists know, intimacy is a complex construct that is often prohibited by several factors. Guthrie (1998, p. 183) comments on the difficulty of approaching God:

The fact of the matter is, however, that we, along with our mother Eve and father Adam, shrink from that awesome Presence; we find it much more natural to drift or run away from God than to draw near to him. Thus, we leave the church or tune out the preacher, return to old, sinful patterns of life, or simply stop meeting with God for prayer and Bible study. In this fallen world the 'gravitational' pull downward of the world, the flesh, and the devil at times make a move toward God seem the most unnatural action in the world.

It seems that guilt is the obstacle of justification, and shame is the obstacle of adoption. Sin cannot separate a believer from the love of God (Rom 8.35-39) for as sin abounds grace abounds above it (Rom 5.20). Could it be that the shame that results from

sin creates a level of insecurity that keeps the believer from being able to approach the presence of God? The writer of Hebrews seems to be trying to dispel shame enough to convince believers that God's consistent reaction of compassion should give enough confidence to seek proximity with boldness even in the midst of temptation.

One can hardly separate union with Christ from the indwelling of the Spirit for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. However, Romans 8.14-17 offers a detailed description of the function of the Holy Spirit in the adoption process. The Spirit is entitled "The Spirit of adoption" (Rom 8.15). Two important points derive from this title. First, the genitive phrase of the title identifies the syntax of the phrase as causation, that is, the Spirit is the catalyst in the adoption process. Second, the Spirit of adoption is contrasted with the spirit of bondage (Fitzmyer, 1993). The spirit of bondage is the natural tendency to limit proximity and freedom while the Spirit of adoption undoes that process and makes both proximity and freedom available. Where does the spirit of bondage come from? The suggestion is that it comes from life experiences in one's history that now play a role in one's relationship with God (Rizzuto, 1979; Spero, 1992; Kirkpatrick, 2005). The Holy Spirit is attempting to bring a sense of belonging (proximity) through adoption while the spirit of bondage brings a sense of fear and defensiveness that relate to Capps' (1993) theology of shame.

The function of the Spirit is to "testify along with" (*symmartyrein*) the spirit of the person of a new identity of being a child of God (Rom 8.16). The term *symmartyrein* could be translated "certify" (Fitzmyer, 1993). The Spirit plays a vital role in the testimony of God to the person's own soul of the new adopted relationship. Elsewhere (see chapters 3 and 5) it is suggested that testimony is the process of forming a narrative account of one's relationship with God, using an interpretive strategy (autonomous, dismissing, preoccupied, disorganized; Hesse, 1999) to form that narrative, rehearsing the story as it is told, and then reinterpret the narrative to begin the cycle once again. The Holy Spirit is the narrator of the adoption (and therefore attachment) story to the inner

world of the believer and stands in opposition to the spirit of bondage and fear, which also vies for the role of narrator. Thus the process of adoption is phenomenological in that it is experienced at the level of the internal world of the believer, in conscious and unconscious as well as cognitive and affective categories in order to convince the person of the security available in the justified relationship with God. Fitzmyer (1993, p. 501) explains:

The preceding context makes it clear that the vital dynamism of the Spirit constitutes the sonship itself and bestows the power to recognize such a status. Now Paul goes further and stresses that the Spirit concurs with the Christian's as they acknowledge in prayer or proclamation this special relation to the father. . . . This is the fundamental affirmation of Christian awareness.

Fitzmyer speaks in psychological categories when he alludes to self-identity ("status") and awareness. It seems that only the intimacy that comes through the Holy Spirit who dwells in believers could possibly convince the soul of such security. The Spirit offers intimacy that is personal as the Spirit of Christ, and perhaps this is the most personal being ever encountered (Smedes, 1970). The double witness of the Holy Spirit and one's own spirit remind the reader of Paul's Jewish background and the need for two witnesses (testifiers) for verification of truth (Dunn, 1988). Furthermore, it indicates the mysterious role of the actions of God and human free will that in some way interact with one another.

The fatherhood of God is expressed in the cry of the believer to God. The believer uses the Aramaic term "Abba" referring to God as father. Fitzmyer (1993) points out that the cry might be a cry of prayer (Exod 22.22; Pss 3.5, 17.6; 18.7; 30.3; 34.18; 88.2; 107.13) or a cry of proclamation. Either way he also emphasizes that the Spirit has enabled the cry directly to God as the term Abba is used in the vocative case (Fitzmyer, 1993). Dunn (1988) gives four characteristics of the cry. First, it is deeply emotional and intense. Second, it is the cry of the individual in spontaneous fashion rather than a formal liturgical statement. Third, it was taken from Jesus' use of the word. Jesus used the term "Abba" as an expression of "intimate sonship" implying a close,

family relationship to God (Dunn, 1988, p. 453). The cry is a “distinct badge” of Christianity assuring believers of their own intimate relation to God (Dunn, 1988, p. 453). Fourth, it is a profoundly personal cry implicit with a sense of trust to the one cried to. Dunn (1988, p. 461) comments:

Also implied is the same sort of intimacy as Jesus’ own use of the word indicates. Jesus’ characteristic prayer address was unusual precisely because ‘Abba’ was so much a family word, expressive of family familiarity and intimacy. For the typical Jewish piety of the period it was almost certainly too bold, over familiar, probably considered impudent and irreverent by most. But evidently it was just such familiarity and intimacy the first Christians experienced too; the intimacy of the Son rather than the legally determined obedience as a slave.

Furthermore, to know another’s name in ancient Jewish culture is to know the person, the person’s function, what the person has the power to do, and how the person relates to you (Murray, 1965). The uniqueness of the name “Abba” can be seen in the fact that it is only used three times (Mark 14.36, Rom 8.15, and Gal 4.6), among the 151 times God is referred to as father, in the New Testament (McCasland, 1953). In a similar fashion of the strange situation test used in attachment research, the calling upon the name of “Abba” connotes the idea that enough security is present to signal, approach, and know God in a secure attachment manner. This naming of God is more than a cognitive labeling. If Dunn is correct, then crying “Abba” is an existential expression of the type of relationship one has with God more than it is an intellectual designation due to external evidence. In the phrase Αββα ο πατήρ, the article can be translated as a possessive pronoun, thus rendering the translation “my Father” and connoting a sense of belonging (McCasland, 1953).

In chapter five it is suggested that naming God “Abba” is the attachment behavior that signals a more secure attachment to God and serves as one of the goals of soulcare with individuals. Several points need to be made concerning this goal. First, the goal can only be reached in terms of a process. Justification is not enough to secure the relationship with God. Adoption is needed and it is a process that occurs beyond justification (Murray, 1955; Packer, 1973; Erickson, 1998). While justification is a major

contributor to adoption, a movement beyond justification is needed. Second, the process is both spiritual and psychological. Adoption occurs in the heart, the place of internal transformation. It is a phenomenological experience that becomes reality in the naming of God. The experience occurs before the naming does, for it is possible to speak the name of God with one's lips and not experience adoption in one's heart (Matt 15.8). Third, the process is enabled by a Trinitarian relationship with God. All three personalities of God enjoy a function in the process of adoption. The Son mediates the way to God and forms the path through personal union with Him. The Holy Spirit testifies in an intimate manner, convincing the soul of its status as a child of God. The Father is called upon as "Abba" in full familiarity and safety.

The Bible and Attachment

Bowlby (1969/1982) describes the attachment system as that which seeks proximity to an attachment figure for sake of safety and for freedom in exploration of the environment. The absence of the attachment figure brings great anxiety or even grief when absence turns into separation. One difficulty in attachment to God is God's invisibility. While many speak of being able to feel God or sense God, proximity is difficult to discern without physical resources.

In fact, the early church community had to cope with the absence of Christ when he ascended. Work (2002) notes that the early church celebrated Christ's real absence as well as his real presence. Work (2002, p. 221) summarizes:

Perhaps the most profound feature of the Church is its experience of Christ's abiding presence (Matt. 18:20). Yet the time between Ascension and Return is defined by Christ's absence! The paradox is well captured at the close of the Gospel of Matthew, in the image of Jesus departing from the presence of his disciples, while simultaneously telling them he will be present (*meth' humon*) until the end of the age (28:20). "Good-bye," Jesus tells his disciples. "I'm not leaving, and I'll be back." This is a defining characteristic of the Church's self-understanding. Jesus' disciples meet in his absence to remember his past presence with them, to anticipate their future presence in his realized kingdom, and to enjoy his continuing presence in their midst.

Work (2002, p. 221) defines this aspect of Jesus' relationship with the Church a reciprocal "presence-in-absence."

How did the early church adjust to Jesus' absence? In an attachment relationship, such absence causes great anxiety and pain. No doubt the early Christians must have felt the same way. Therefore, how did they seek proximity once the physical body of Christ was absent? What resources were available to sense this presence in absence?

Once the Word of God (Jesus) left, Scripture increased in importance in the early church (Work, 2002). Work (2002) suggests that Scripture, among other tangible evidences of Christ's continued presence, enables the believer to sense proximity to Christ even though his physical body is absent. The presence of Christ is first mediated through the Holy Spirit and then through the church as the body of Christ (Work, 2002). The Scripture as the word of God is a "visible media" that gives evidence of God's continued presence. Work (2002, p. 222) summarizes, "Through the practice of Scripture, God makes himself present to the Church, and the Church finds itself present before the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Just as the Holy Spirit mediates the ascended Son, the Bible serves as a mediator of God's presence through "semiotic" means that elicits a sense of presence, or proximity to the believer (Work, 2002, p. 110).

If this is true, then Scripture functions as part of the attachment system to God. Bowlby (1969/1982) clearly understood words to be one type of signaling and feedback between parent and child that allows both to be aware of the other's presence. No wonder believers report going to church and reading Scripture more when going through a crisis (Pargament, 1997). Clearly these are activities that bring God's presence to the forefront of one's awareness, and also bring a sense of proximity. Scripture aids in the "haven of safety" function of God in that the word of God serves as feedback to the believers signaling, and thus brings comfort in the form of proximity to God's presence.

One warning of this type of thinking is necessary. The Bible is not a replacement for God's presence. The Bible is not God, but is God's word. Work (2002) understands the Bible to be a type of icon in that it represents God's presence but cannot be equated with it. The icon contains certain similarities with the object it represents, but cannot stand on its own apart from that object. The Bible only serves as God's "presence-in-absence" as it interacts with the heart of humans and is received through faith (Barth, 1956). In this sense, it is phenomenological and experiential, or as Work (2002) puts it "living and active." The Bible itself claims that spiritual things cannot be received through natural means (1 Cor 2.6-16) and that the Holy Spirit is needed to gain spiritual knowledge (1 Cor 2.13).

Nonetheless, Scripture serves as an effective proximity granting device for an attachment relationship with God. Through Scripture, the believer hears the familiar and reassuring voice of the divine attachment figure, namely "Abba."

Key Biblical Metaphors

The doctrine of adoption is central to a biblical understanding of attachment to God. The metaphor this doctrine elicits of the human-divine relationship is God as parent, namely "Abba." However, other descriptive images of God illuminate the attachment function in the life of faith. Three primary images are described: God as lover, God as shepherd, and God as refuge. Each of these images relates to an attachment function. God as lover relates to the affectionate bond in an attachment relationship. God as shepherd intersects with secure base phenomenon. Finally, God as refuge corresponds to the function of safe haven.

God as Lover: The Affectionate Bond

It has convincingly been argued that romantic relationships can function as an attachment (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999; Feeney, 1999). Several indicators provide evidence of this suggestion. First, romantic relationships include physical contact that serve as a

proximity mechanism. Like parents and infants, lovers spend time engaged in mutual gazing, cuddling, nuzzling, and kissing (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). In virtually every culture this sort of physical contact is limited to parent-child and romantic relationships (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). Second, separation or loss in romantic relationships causes reactions very similar to grief. Studies indicate that lovers are anxious when separated and sad or even depressed when the relationship is terminated (Hazan & Shaver, 1992). Furthermore, it seems that in romantic relationships partners seek proximity to one another especially in times of stress (Weiss, 1982).

The Bible presents the human-divine relationship in terms of a romantic relationship in various places emphasizing various concepts. The Israelites committed adultery when they worshiped idols (Jer 3.1). Believers are said to have been betrothed to Christ (2 Cor 11.2) and are referred to as the “bride of Christ” (Rev 21.9, 22.17). Jesus is designated as the bridegroom (Matt 9.15, 25.1; Mark 2.19). Love for God is understood to be the greatest of commandments and the central truth of the Christian faith (Mark 12.30). Some have even interpreted the sexually explicit and romantically dominant Song of Songs as an allegory describing the erotic love between believer and Christ (e.g., Bernard of Clairvaux, 1958). As anecdotal evidence, William James compared conversion to falling in love (James, 1958). Furthermore, Jonathan Edwards (1959, pp. 101-02) declared that affection is a pivotal ingredient in the life of faith in stating:

A person who has a knowledge of doctrine and theology only – without religious affection – has never engaged in true religion. Nothing is more apparent than this: our religion takes root in us only as deep as our affections attract it. There are thousands who hear the Word of God, who hear great and exceedingly important truths about themselves and their lives, and yet all they hear has no effect upon them, makes no change in the way they live I am bold in saying this, but I believe that no one is ever changed, either by doctrine, by hearing the Word, or by the preaching or teaching of another, unless the affections are moved by these things.

It seems that the presence of love is a vital aspect of an attachment to God.

How is it that God's role as lover interacts with the attachment system in the human-divine relationship? First, God's role as lover is balanced by His role as Lord. While His role as Lord emphasizes His Transcendence, the role of lover emphasizes His intimacy and proximity (Stackhouse, 1992).

Second, according to Bernard of Clairvaux, God is a "tender lover" whose simultaneous separation and proximity paradoxically work together to form the affectionate bond. For Bernard, Christ is a "tender lover" who initiates the relationship through a heart of passion. Bernard (1958, p. SCC84.1) describes the role of desire with faith when he says, "It is not with the steps of the feet that God is sought but with the heart's desire; and when the soul happily finds him its desire is not quenched but kindled." One can see how the tenderness of Christ offers a sense of security to the believer. However, in great irony it is the paradox of simultaneous proximity and separation that "kindles" the believer's desire for God. Bernard describes this paradox as dialectic between weariness and desire. It is the partial experience of God that increases the desire for God due to the delight of the experience. However, it is the weariness due to incomplete knowledge and experience with Christ during separation that grants the believer an awareness of the portion of God still yet to be obtained. Burrows (1998, p. 486) summarizes Bernard's thinking:

This human quest depends as much upon absence as upon presence in this restorative journey. Distance and dissimilarity resulting from the unavoidable dialectic and languor and desire are not simply forces to be overcome . . . but call the monk forward . . . the yawning absence that frames the intense moments of the monk's experience of Christ's Presence.

Thus both proximity and separation work together to form the affectionate bond. Clearly, this is true of an attachment as well. An attachment bond is fueled by both the sweetness of proximity, and the pain of absence that increases longing for reunion (Cassidy, 1999). In a secure attachment, proximity to the attachment figure is longed for during separation but is tolerated until reunion occurs because of the person's confidence in the return of the figure. The same would be true of an attachment to God. Even the sensations of

God's presence may at times be absent, but the securely attached person to God is able to tolerate these moments due to the hope of reunion. In an anxious-ambivalent attachment, proximity to the attachment figure is longed for as well, but upon reunion the attached person is unable to explore once again and clings in a frantic sense to the figure. An anxious-ambivalent attachment to God would be similar to other attachments in the sense that the person's affectionate bond with God is fueled by fear rather than faith and could lead to toxic religious experiences (Arterburn & Felton, 1991). An avoidant attachment does not seek proximity to the attachment figure due to a lack of trust in the figure's availability. In each of these three cases it is not only the presence of proximity that forms the attachment bond, but it is also the interpretive strategy of the attached person that determines what kind of bond exists.

Third, *eros* has much in common with both the attachment system and religious experience. Paz (1995) defines *eros* as desire for otherness. This desire can be misguided, especially through culture: "humans have created for themselves a world apart, composed of this entirety of practices, institutions, rites, ideas, and artifacts that we call culture. By origin, eroticism is sex, nature; by its being a human creation and by its function in society it is culture" (Paz, 1995, p. 10). Elsewhere Paz (1995, p. 49) notes the double sided potential of *eros* when he says, "Eros can lead us astray, making us fall into . . . concupiscence and the pit of the libertine, it can also ennoble and raise us to the loftiest contemplation." Paz points out that God is the supreme otherness and as such is the terminal point for the highest order of eroticism. Therefore, he claims that it is natural that the mystic should use the language of *eros* to attempt to describe the inexpressible. What is striking about these ideas is the role of otherness in the formation of *eros*. The attachment system clearly seeks the presence of others and this seeking is both the producer of *eros* and the produced by *eros*.

Fourth, the biblical perspective seems to be that the affectionate bond is initiated by God's great act of love through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The love of

the believer is a reaction to the love of God through Jesus Christ (1 John 4.19). From an attachment perspective, the crucifixion is God's act of availability, responsiveness, and love that builds confidence in the believer of God's trustworthy status as an attachment figure.

God as Shepherd: A Secure Base

The metaphor of shepherd as it represents God has a rich history in both testaments. YHWH is referred to as the shepherd of Israel (Gen 49.24; Pss 23, 28.9, 74.1, 95.7, 100.3; Jer 31.10; Mic 7.14). God made David His undershepherd (Pss 78.70-72) and the kings of Israel were judged concerning their stewardship of the nation as shepherds (Jer 23.1-4; 49.20; Mic 5.4). God shepherded the Israelites through the wilderness (Pss 77.20, 78.52-53; 80.1) and their return from exile (Isa 40.11; 49.9-10). In the New Testament Jesus is understood to be the good shepherd (John 10.11) and a shepherd and guardian of their souls (1 Pet 2.25, 5.4).

Some have protested against the use of the term shepherd as a metaphor for God. Samuel (1996) points to several of these protests by the Jewish community in his attempt to recover the usefulness of the term. First, modern society is more urban than agrarian and the full meaning of the metaphor may be lost upon contemporary society. Second, referring to God as shepherd makes people "sheep," which some view as a demeaning comparison. Samuel uses such derogatory adjectives as dumb, passive, timid, and easily manipulated to voice the opposition to humans as sheep. Third, the holocaust symbolizes "divine abandonment" which makes the ever present shepherd seem like a far cry from the God of experience. In reality all evil and tragedy could have a similar effect of inducing doubt in the presence of God but the Holocaust is a prime example.

Samuel (1996) hopes to revive the use of the metaphor shepherd as a much needed concept in Jewish tradition so that God can be re-imaged as caring. He notes particularly that shepherd can serve as a root metaphor. The definition of root metaphor

is that it “expresses humanity’s deepest existential concerns and touches upon issues that matter most in people’s lives. They shape the way we view and experience the world. Root metaphors stir our consciousness and challenge our awareness” (Samuel, 1996, p. 9). Samuel speaks in psychological terms when he talks of “consciousness” and “awareness.” He envisions an image that can touch the deep parts of the human soul and encounter both cognition and affect in conscious and unconscious regions. The word “root” speaks of things that are both foundational and hidden. Samuel believes that the metaphor of God as shepherd can cause a foundational transformation in experience to re-image God as caring.

The Hebrew word for shepherd is *ro'eh*. It is more than coincidence that this term is a cognate of the Hebrew word *re'ah* which means friend or neighbor. The connotation of each is that of love and companionship. The term implies nurturing, feeding, stewardship, and liberation all which seem to be consistent with the biblical use (Samuel, 1996). Furthermore, Samuel (1996) understands the concept to be a primary help in overcoming estrangement and alienation in a fragmented society.

Psalm 23 is perhaps the most wide used of the passages referring to God as shepherd. This metaphor is used by Christians to the degree that one Jewish author claims that many Jews consider it a Christian metaphor that has been “co-opted” to personify Jesus (Samuel, 1996). The opening line is the cry of possession from the psalmist that “The Lord is my shepherd.” This statement is a signal that the whole psalm is composed in metaphorical language. Mays (1994, p. 116) notes several qualities of a biblical metaphor when he states:

A metaphor used for theological purposes is very serious business. It does not simply describe by comparison; it identifies by equation. A metaphor becomes the image as which and through which something or someone is known or understood. It conveys more and speaks more powerfully than is possible to do in discursive speech It draws on varied experience and evokes imagination.

The role of the shepherd was known by all in ancient Jewish culture. The primary job of the shepherd is to provide and protect (Mays, 1994). These two tasks are also primary

jobs of an attachment figure especially a parent and child. Furthermore, the psalmist has identified his attachment figure as “my” shepherd. Such images of belonging lead Mays (1994, p. 119) to conclude that “it is the focus of the shepherd’s care on one person that gives the psalm such intimate force. The individual dimension of trust and the experience of grace are lifted up.” The picture painted in the rest of the psalm is of a supreme attachment figure whose availability, responsiveness, and attunement offer a secure base from which to explore.

The shepherd offers a secure base first by reducing the anxiety of the sheep due to proximity to the shepherd. The sheep lie down in green pastures. Keller (1970) points out that conditions must be optimal for sheep to lie down. First and foremost, sheep will not lie down if they are anxious. The presence of the shepherd seems to set the sheep at ease enough to be able to lie down and partake of still waters.

The sheep utilize the shepherd as a secure base from which to explore. They walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but fear no evil because of the presence of the shepherd and his staff and rod. The sheep feel protected in the midst of danger due to the availability and responsiveness of the shepherd. Inherent in the psalm is a sense of trust that the sheep have while traveling in varied environments: green pastures and valley of death (Mays, 1994). Such trust seems consistent with secure attachment that is able to run to the attachment figure if danger arises, but also experiences inner peace due to the attachment figures presence. Proximity to the shepherd is the primary reason to “fear no evil” because “you are with me.”

The proximate presence of the shepherd is highlighted throughout the psalm. In verse four the sheep are assured that He is with them. They sense his presence though the indicators for his presence in the form of a rod and staff. Bowlby (1969/1982) believed that children utilized objects as substitutes for the attachment figures presence in times of separation. The final declaration in verse 6 is that they will “dwell” together forever.

The root metaphor of shepherd indicates the fact that God's omnipresence offers something no other functioning secure base can offer, namely complete availability. What about the dark night of the soul when sensations of God's presence seem to be absent? Psalm 22 is only one chapter before Psalm 23, and it speaks of suffering in which God seems to be absent. Furthermore, the shepherd of Psalm 80.1-7 seems less responsive than the shepherd of Psalm 23. God's apparent absence is a subject yet to be taken up and will be discussed below. However, it is important to note that experiences like those described in Psalm 23 lay the foundation for trust in God in His apparent absence. It is important to remember that in the secure base phenomenon of attachment systems, it is the times of responsiveness by the attachment figure that give the attached person confidence to explore the environment (Bowlby, 1988). Therefore, it may be that the Psalm 23 types of experiences lay the foundation for Psalm 22 and 80 experiences with much more confidence and less anxiety.

God as Refuge: A Safe Haven

In times of danger and stress, persons seek an attachment figure whose presence can offer security and safety. This function of the attachment system is deemed "safe haven." Pargament (1997) has published a masterful and comprehensive book on religious coping entitled "The Psychology of Religion and Coping." Pargament (1997, p. 90) defines coping generally as "searching for significance in times of stress." Religious coping occurs when a person finds religion compelling and available as a resource for orienting and interpreting the stressful events in ways that aid in coping. Pargament is clear that not all coping is religious and not all of religion is coping, but the two do intersect in powerful ways. Pargament (1997, p. 4) describes both the neglect of religious coping in research and the need for new studies:

Unfortunately, our studies of the human response to crises often neglect the religious dimension. Perhaps because psychologists tend to be less religious than the general population, they underestimate the powerful role religion can playing the coping process (Ragan, Maloney, & Beit-Hallahmi, 1980; Shafranske & Gorsuch,

1984). Yet as we will see throughout the book, religion is often present in the most remarkable times of life, expressing itself in many ways. It has much to say about human strengths and resources, but it also speaks to the most disturbing of our capacities. Any understanding of the human response to extraordinary moments remains incomplete without an appreciation of religion.

Empirical studies support the idea that while not all people cope with religion, many do and find it compelling and helpful. For instance, three studies have sought to discover the degree that senior adults turn to religion for coping. Conway (1985-1986) found that out of 65 older women who report medical problems, 91% report prayer as a coping mechanism. Koenig (1988) questioned 263 elderly subjects and found that 95% used prayer to cope with a recent stressor and 81% rely on religious beliefs to do the same. Manfredi and Pickett (1987) found in their study of 51 older adults in senior housing that prayer is the most common strategy for coping. Younger persons were found to use religion to cope from a sibling death with 69.7% reporting religious coping out of the 33 who reported (Balk, 1983). One study found that 80% of 1,299 African-Americans questioned turn to prayer in times of stress (Ellison & Taylor, 1996). Clearly, religion is a compelling coping resource for many in varying ages and races.

God is referred to as a refuge over a dozen times in Scripture (Deut 33.27; 2 Sam 22.3; Pss 2.12; 14.6; 46.1, 7,11; 57.1; 62.7-8; 91.2,9; 94.22; 142.5). The metaphor is found primarily in the Old Testament. Mays (1994, p. 183) describes the worshippers' reference to God as a refuge as designating "a figure for trusting life to God's saving help in the presence of danger." This description is quite similar to that of an attachment behavior. In fact, Psalm 46 contains many of the elements of an attachment haven of safety sort of relationship between worshippers and God. First, there are present dangers: cosmic cataclysmic events and battles with warring nations. The psalmist as well as the worshipers who collectively sing this song (the voice is plural), are in the midst of crisis (Durham, 1971). Second, God is a near, available, and responsive "very present help in trouble" (Ps 46.1). God's availability and protection are compared to a refuge or fortress that can protect its inhabitants from external danger. Third, a decrease in anxiety occurs

due to the presence of God the refuge. The conclusion the worshippers make is that they “will not fear” (v. 2) due to the presence of their divine attachment figure. The worshippers designate God as a refuge three times as a chorus to their song. The refuge not only offers protection, but rest from anxieties because the worshippers trust in God’s help.

Evidence concerning the use of religion in coping with crisis seems to point to the fact that people turn to prayer more often than they turn to the institutional church (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975). When people choose religion as a coping device, they tend to turn to experiential practices like prayer more often than church attendance or visiting a minister (Pargament, 1997). Added to this evidence is the fact that church attendance in the United States is at a plateau when compared to church attendance by percentage over forty years ago; however, spiritual practices like prayer seem to have risen in that same span of time (Adler, 2005). This trend seems to support an attachment perspective of religious experience in that people in crisis turn to an attachment figure for security rather than institutions (Kirkpatrick, 1997a). Furthermore, prayer seems to be a signaling device in which person’s call upon God as an attachment figure for help and proximity in times of stress. For instance, in Psalm 142.5 the worshiper cries to God when asking Him to be a refuge. Prayer can offer a sense of proximity that is transferable into comfort and security in the experience of the praying person, like any verbal assurance does from attachment figures. Kirkpatrick (1997a) compares prayer to a type of social referencing. Kirkpatrick (1997a, p. 125) illustrates the concept in that “young children exploring their environment check back with their mothers visually, verbally, and physically from time to time to reassure themselves that she is still available and attentive.” Prayer may function in a similar way. This is the type of social referencing that Brother Lawrence (1977) attempted to experience every moment of the day by “practicing the presence of God.” In this sense, through prayer God functions as a secure base from whom believers explore both their internal and external worlds. It is also

insightful that believers not only pray through verbal means but utilize the visual and physical as well. Sometimes prayer is referred to as “crying” (Ps 77.1), which is a typically signaling device for babies. In Psalm 121 the worshipper lifts up his eyes to wait for the proximate presence of God in a time of need. He demonstrates a sense of trust and confidence that God will mobilize and draw near to him even though God currently seems absent. Furthermore, worshippers often raise hands and arms to God reminiscent of an infant waiting to be picked up by a parent (Kirkpatrick, 1997a). Glossolalia has been referred to as a childlike form of language or infant babbling (Kirkpatrick, 1997a). Clearly, prayer is a type of communication in the human-divine relationship that fosters proximity, brings the comfort of a haven of safety, and produces confident exploration from a secure base. In fact it is hard to imagine attachment to God at all without prayer. However, the type of attachment a person has, secure or insecure, very well could help or hinder the process of coping (Pargament, 1997). The ability to call upon the name of the Lord in confidence, safety, and with a sense of belonging seems vital to the Christian life and it seems to be partly determined by the level of security one has in the attachment with God.

Some mystical practices have been compared to a type of regression that may offer a moratorium from crisis (Fautuex, 1994). Mystical experience has often been described as three stages that include purgation, illumination, and unity. The unitive stage has been compared to the symbiotic state of infant and mother (Fautuex, 1994), in other words, the type of proximity that offers bliss in the presence of an attachment figure. This unitive phase has been described as the “oceanic” bliss of the temporary dissolving of psychological boundaries between God and the worshipper (Fautuex, 1994). Such an experience as this very easily could serve as a refuge from harm and danger because of the proximate presence of God. While Freud argued that such a refuge was a crippling “wish fulfillment,” Fauteux (1994, p. 86) argues that while it is regressive it is possible to be regressive “in service of the ego” rather than in destruction of it. Fauteux

(1994) lists several benefits of this regressive refuge. First, it can place a needed temporary moratorium upon external stimuli and this moratorium can offer time to rest, heal, and regroup. Without such a time, the anxiety of given situations can become overwhelming and destructive. Even Freud knew that some escape from anxiety could be helpful. Second, a time of refuge can foster incubation for psychological information. Incubation is the resting of analytic efforts so that information flows freely so intuition can transmit knowledge while giving analysis a break. Third, the symbiotic relationship with God in the unitive stage of mystical experience can aid in the re-building of basic trust. Fauteux (1994) speaks in a similar voice as Kirkpatrick (1997) who also believes that God can serve as a therapeutic attachment figure. The symbiotic union of God and worshippers can offer an environment to experience enough safety to reestablish basic trust. Regression can be therapeutic when it aids in revisiting damaged and fragmented psychological material for the sake of repair. Both cognitive therapies and emotion focused therapies attempt to repair some sort of malfunction caused by past damage and attempt to restructure cognitive and affective schemes through new experiences (e.g., Bucci, 1997; Greenberg & Paivio, 1997). Perhaps this type of regression resulting in a sense of trust is what Christ had in mind when He claimed that believers must receive the kingdom of God like a child (Mark 10.15). Third, depending upon God as a refuge from crisis creates a safe environment in which parts of the self can be explored. Fauteux (1994) claims that secondary psychological processes keep person's from being aware of primary psychological process, especially repressed emotions. Until the normal mode of operation is temporarily dissolved through purgation, the path of illumination is blocked in the sense that deeper processes remain outside of self-awareness. It is important to remember that Fauteux approaches the subject from a psychoanalytic perspective and understands primary process to include underlying original psychological material that is covered up in the formation of the ego (secondary process). What is most helpful from an attachment perspective is that it is the presence of God that allows the regression to be

in service of the ego rather than that which fragments the ego. Purgation assists the person in dying to the “false self” so that the true self can be encountered. Fauteux (1994) warns that this type of regression can only be helpful if the experience is integrated into ego functioning once secondary process is re-established.

The Dark Night of the Soul: Attachment with a Distant God

Is God always present? Evangelical Christianity would seem to answer in the affirmative. However, persons are not always able to sense God’s presence, especially in times of pain or despair. How does attachment to God function in times of these dark nights when God seems absent?

Defining the Dark Night of the Soul

While the term and concept of the “dark night of the soul” is mentioned by Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, and Henry Susa, it has most vividly and comprehensively been described by St. John of the Cross (Harkness, 1944). A product of the Catholic mystical tradition, St. John of the Cross lived from 1542 to 1591 and was the co-founder along with Teresa of Avila of a reformed Carmelite monastic order entitled the Discalced Carmelites (King, 1995). While John’s writings focused on the reality of God’s presence, his most enduring concept seems to be the “dark night of the soul,” which highlights God’s absence.

John describes the bliss of a new convert in terms compatible with attachment. He paints a picture of the newly formed attachment to God when he says, “After a soul has been converted by God, that soul is nurtured and caressed by the Spirit. Like a loving mother, God cares for and comforts the infant soul by feeding it spirit milk. Such souls will find great delight in this stage” (John of the Cross, 1993, pp. 33-34). However, this stage of bliss in the proximate presence of God will not last. In order to purify the

believer from sensual pride, God will remove the sensation of His presence in the “dark night of the soul.” John (1993, pp. 33-34) defines the dark night of the soul:

The ‘dark night’ is when those persons lose all the pleasure that they once experienced in their devotional life. This happens because God wants to purify them and move them on to greater heights. . . there will come a time when God will bid them to grow deeper. He will remove the previous consolation from the soul in order to teach it virtue and prevent it from developing vice.

John vividly describes the dark night once again in terms of separation from an attachment figure as he notes:

God now sees that they have grown a little, and are becoming strong enough to lay aside their swaddling clothes and be taken from the gentle breast; so he sets them down from His arms and teaches them to walk on their own feet; which they feel to be very strange, for everything seems to be going wrong with them (John of the Cross, 1959, p. 63).

The emotional state of the dark night has been likened to depression and thus contains great emotional distress (Harkness, 1945). The cause of the distress is a frustrated quest for divine presence, a union of self distrust with self-condemnation, and isolation from God and people (Harkness, 1945). The similarities to attachment are many. The presence of God brings a sense of “consolation” and pleasure. Separation from the presence of God causes emotional disturbance. Once separated, the believer fervently seeks the presence of God once again. The “dark night” sounds very similar to Ainsworth’s strange situation test.

For John, the dark night is not an impasse but a *kairos* moment pregnant with the potential for growth and maturity (King, 1995), the purpose of which is to cleanse the believer of spiritual sins. The first sin is pride, and John describes the behavior of this pride as people who become too spiritual, speak of spiritual things all the time, and desire others to notice their spiritual maturity (John of the Cross, 1993). The second sin is greed and is characterized by an attachment to spiritual pleasure or consolation and an attachment to the feelings God gives rather than God. The third sin the dark night addresses is luxury, which is described as impure thoughts in the midst of communion. The fourth sin is wrath, which is described as being “very anxious and frustrated just as

an infant is angry when it is taken away from the mother's breast" (John of the Cross, 1993, p. 35). The fifth sin is gluttony in which individuals become addicted to spiritual sweetness and wanting more and more of it. The sixth sin is envy in terms of being jealous of other's spiritual growth. The seventh sin is sloth due to the weariness caused by the dark night (John of the Cross, 1993).

Attachment and the Dark Night

The behaviors being purged through the dark night correspond closely to anxious-ambivalent attachment. Several points of intersection between the two exist. First, both contain emotional disequilibrium. In anxious-ambivalent attachment, the person struggles to regulate emotions (Holmes, 2001; Magai, 1999; Kobak, 1999). In John's understanding, the novice believer experiences great bliss at the initiation of faith and great despair during the dark night.

Second, both exhibit a behavior of clinging to an object out of fear. The anxious-ambivalent child clings to the parent upon reunion and is paralyzed and unable to explore the environment once the reconnection is made. The person in the dark night is clinging to sensations associated with God's presence and religious objects. This person's desire for God is fueled by fear not by faith. Arterburn and Felton (1991) describe this type of religion as toxic faith in their book entitled "Toxic Faith: Understanding and Overcoming Religious Addiction." In their book, the authors list twenty-one toxic beliefs that fuel religious addiction. The beliefs could be grouped into two classifications: destructive images of God and destructive images of self. Several impaired God-images are mentioned: vindictive God, mortal Christ, impersonal God, spiteful God, and conditional love. The distorted images of self are closely linked to the impaired view of God because they all focus upon a frantic earning of one's acceptance and nearness to God or on the other extreme they refer to spiritual entitlement. In great irony, the perspective of toxic faith seems to be a shaming God coupled with a grandiose

believer or vice versa. Shame and pride seem to be two sides of the same coin (Capps, 1993). The integration of self-image and image of other (in this instance God) are primary factors in the type of attachment style a person has. Bartholomew (1990) proclaims that attachment patterns reflect working models of self and others. Bartholomew (1990) suggests four possible attachment styles. The secure style created through both a positive model of self and others is characterized by comfort with intimacy and autonomy. The preoccupied pattern is characterized by a negative model of self and a positive model of others, and thus clings to others in a frantic need for esteem. The dismissing pattern is characterized by a positive model of self and a negative model of others, thus these persons avoid others as not trustworthy enough for connection. The fearful pattern is characterized by a negative model of self and other, thus it creates a situation of social isolation.

Attachment Pathways in the Dark Night

It seems very likely that the purpose of the dark night is to enable the believer to transform from an anxious-ambivalent clinging to God and the symbols of God out of fear, to a more secure style with God in which greater intimacy is possible. The dark night could increase security as a means of increasing spiritual maturity as the two seem to be correlated with one another (TenElshof & Furrow, 2000). Without such a process, toxic religion is the result and anxious attachment to God will be the mode of operation in the life of a believer. Anxious attachment to God could be characterized as a lack of emotion regulation toward God (avoidant persons would not be able to access emotions), a clinging to the symbols of God through fear, and attempts to earn proximity to God to compensate for a negative model of the self. The dark night is a momentous time of crisis for the believer that could be constructive or destructive. Entering into this time may seem abandoning to the insecurely attached person; however, those who enter into it with a sense of security have the added ability to contain their own anxiety in the dark

night believing that God will be faithful to return or perhaps believing that God remains constant even when the sensation of His presence is absent. Another possible scenario is that those who enter into the dark night with insecure IWM's may discover a faithful God who is available and responsive in ways that parents were not. Those who fail to believe in God's goodness to the degree that He is envisioned as faithfully returning when needed will be crippled in faith and either succumb to religious addiction or religious avoidance. Perhaps some have developed their atheism because of the presence of trauma and the seeming absence of God (Vitz, 1999; Sproul, 1974).

Kirkpatrick (1997a) wonders about the role of attachment in the development of theism, agnosticism, or atheism. Do secure individuals not turn to God because they are without need for compensation? Do insecure individuals reject God because they are unable to trust him? Do secure individuals find God easy to believe in because of their ability to trust? Kirkpatrick (1992, 1997a, 1999, 2005) refers to two hypotheses for possible answers. The first is the compensation hypothesis which contends that persons turn to God in order to compensate for that which their parent's could not give. The second is the correspondence theory in which persons tend to reenact their relationship with their parents in their spiritual relationship with God. Kirkpatrick (2005) declares that both could be true in different circumstances. Both seem to have merit and both can co-exist because attachment is only one of many variables affecting faith. One factor is the dark night of the soul. The reaction to God's absence may be as vital to the conception of faith as His presence. Several variables exist concerning the success of the dark night. First, what kind of attachment IWM does the person have coming into the dark night? What resources are available to sustain a person through the dark night? The body of Christ (church) and the Bible are understood to be Christ's "presence-in-absence" and they serve as resources to contend with the despair of the dark night (Work, 2002).

Separation from God is a vital part of secure attachment. In the same manner as a child with a parent, the believer never discovers God's faithfulness to be available and responsive in times of need if separation does not occur. Thus the psalmist pens the words that Christ would later declare, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Ps 22.1; Matt 27.46; Mark 15.34). In this cry Christ identifies with the entire psalm and one must read Jesus' word in light of the entire pericope (Mays, 1994). The psalm is a declaration of trust in God's presence even though the sensation of God's presence is absent and in this sense it has much in common with the dark night of the soul. Psalm 22 eventually confesses God's attentive availability even in the midst of this dark night. The psalmist confesses, "Nor has [God] hidden His face from him; but when he cried to Him, he heard" (Ps 22.24b). The psalm is a confession of secure attachment even in the midst of separation from the divine attachment figure. The role of soulcare may often be to identify such seasons and to empower others to attach to God in more secure ways so that the dark night can not only be tolerated, but can produce greater spiritual maturity.

Conclusion

Clearly, not only does attachment theory have much to offer Christianity, but Christianity has much to offer attachment theory, especially an attachment to God. God's primary action in attachment is adoption in which God interacts with believers as a heavenly parental attachment figure. The three persons of the Godhead are involved in this process: union with the Son brings a person into the heavenly family, the indwelling of the Spirit testifies of the new familial status, and the result is a cry to God as "Abba" in an intimate voice. In this sense God compensates for what has been missing in the human attachment relationships. However, God not only functions as an adopting parent, but as a lover (affectionate bond), shepherd (secure base), and refuge (haven of safety). Finally, God's separation in the dark night need not be seen as a lack of attachment, but rather it can be seen as that which engages the attachment system in order to develop a

greater spiritual maturity in a believer. One goal of soulcare is to establish a more secure attachment with God resulting in greater spiritual maturity, and to sustain persons in the midst of crisis and the dark night of the soul so that they are assured that God has not abandoned them. To do this, the soulcare provider will have to work at the level of the attachment narrative.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONCEPT OF TESTIMONY AS A REPRESENTATION OF A PERSON'S 'STATE OF MIND' CONCERNING ATTACHMENT TO GOD

“Everyone has a story. Put another way, everyone’s life is a story. But most people don’t know how to read their life in a way that reveals their story. They miss the deeper meaning in their life, and they have little sense of how God has written their story to reveal himself and his own story” (Allender, 2005, p. 1). These words exemplify a growing interest in evangelical Christianity in personal narratives, the meaning these narratives carry, and the role of faith in the transformation of these narratives (Eldredge, 2004; Benner, 2004). However, a model for the use of personal narratives in soulcare is needed.

Now that a clear connection of attachment and Christianity has been described and a Christian concept of attachment to God has been formed, the next step is to create a model for clinical application of attachment to God. The concept of testimony, articulated by Ricoeur, and expanded on several points, is suggested as the construct most useful for assessments and interventions so that a more secure attachment to God may be formed. Three different streams of thought are followed and eventually enjoined to form a conceptual river. The first stream of thought is that attachment research in the form of the adult attachment interview (AAI) and the current relationship interview (CRI) has discovered a way to tap into the construct of a subjects “state of mind” toward attachment through narrative means. The second stream is that the term testimony, as described by Ricoeur, offers a narrative account of the human-divine relationship and a personal account of one’s “state of mind” toward attachment to God. The third stream is that a truly transformative therapeutic encounter in a Christian paradigm demands the use of a

metanarrative that includes a high level teleology and a moral context. An explanation of attachment in adulthood is necessary as a foundation before these streams can be described or integrated.

Attachment in Adulthood

Attachment theory has clearly articulated that attachments exist from the “cradle to the grave” (Bowlby, 1969/1982, p. 208). Ainsworth (1989) added validity for attachment research with adults in her address covering the topic “attachments beyond infancy,” which was given when she was the recipient of the American Psychological Association Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award. Even prior to this speech, George, Kaplan, and Main (1984) had established the adult attachment interview as a powerful research tool for the purpose of tapping into the general state of mind of an adult concerning attachments.

Adult attachment possibilities exist in various relationships: romantic relationships, close relationships, parent to child, partner to partner, and adult child to older parent (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999). Ainsworth (1991, p. 38) identified “secure base” phenomenon as the critical element of adult attachments when she says that there is

a seeking to obtain an experience of security and comfort in the relationship with the partner. If and when such security and comfort are available, the individual is able to move off from the secure base provided by the partner, with the confidence to engage in other activities.

Crowell, Fraley, and Shaver (1999, pp. 435-36) differentiate adult attachment relationships from other kinds of relationships when they say that “attachment relationships are distinguished from other adult relationships as those that provide feelings of security and belonging, and without which there is loneliness and restlessness.” The other kinds of relationships listed are those that provide guidance or companionship; sexual gratification; opportunities to feel needed or to share common

interests or experiences, feelings of competence, alliance, or assistance (Crowell et al., 1999; see Ainsworth, 1985; Weiss, 1974).

Adult attachment is similar to the attachment of children in that all five criteria are present: proximity seeking behavior, anxiety upon separation, grief upon loss, safe haven function, and secure base phenomenon. The primary difference between the attachment of children and the attachment of adults is that adults have transitioned to what Main calls the “level of representation” (Crowell et al., 1999, p. 436). The cognitive abilities of adults result in an organized psychological structure called the internal working model (IWM), as mentioned previously. The IWM is largely unconscious and has been formed from early attachment experiences in which children have developed a view of the self, others, and the relationship between the two, so that the person comes to expect certain outcomes and move to those ends due to this mental representation (cf. Bretherton, 1985). The internal working model contains a general view of attachments rather than a degree of security in any given attachment relationship.

The IWMs are described as “working” because “they are the basis for action in attachment-related situations and because in principle they are open to revision as a function of significant attachment-related experiences” (Crowell et al., 1999, pp. 436-37). While these representations are stable and resistant to change (cf. chapter 2), they do have the ability to change as specific attachment relationships offer new and different experiences than those previously incorporated into the IWM. Thus a given relationship influences the IWM and the IWM influences the specific relationship. Inconsistencies in experience with the IWM call for strategies by the individual that exist for the purpose of maintaining cognitive organization (see Main, 1981, 1990, 1991). These inconsistencies come in the form of stress or conflicting information. Secondary strategies form as defensive maneuvers in order to maintain the current IWM organization. Thus inconsistencies between experience and the IWM can result in an increase or decrease in the security level of the IWM. The result is that inconsistencies in the form of relational

dynamics and cognitive schemes can offer possible transformation of the person's IWM. Furthermore, Bowlby believed that changes in attachment schemas could occur later in life through the influence of new attachment relationships (Crowell et al., 1999, pp. 436-37) which cause the IWM to assimilate elements of that relationship (Oppenheim & Waters, 1995; Owens et al., 1995).

The move to the "level of representation" of adult attachment systems is fueled by the person's linguistic abilities. Language is the medium in which mental representation occurs. Much in line with Ricouer's perspective upon development, attachment has come to understand narrative as the form in which the IWM of a person is unconsciously carried. Therefore, some attachment researchers have focused on narrative measurements of attachment representation (cf. Crowell et al., 1999, pp. 438-447).

Narrative Measurements of Attachment Representation

The AAI has been celebrated as a powerful and useful tool for measuring adult "state of mind" of attachment experiences. Closely related to the AAI is the CRI (Current Relationship Interview), which follows along the same lines as the AAI with the difference being that it attempts to measure attachment to a specific and current relationship. The AAI is focused upon because of its dominance in use, although the CRI contains vital points for attachment to God as well.

Brief History of AAI

Hesse (1999) has written a comprehensive and historical perspective of the AAI. It is the most complete description of the AAI available. The AAI protocol was developed in the early 1980s (Main & Goldwyn, 1984). Its inception came through the observation by Main and Goldwyn that a parent's current state of mind concerning his or her own attachment experiences related significantly to their children's behavior toward that parent in the strange situation. Four categories of AAI classification were created and were found to be highly correlated with strange situation categories: autonomous

(secure), dismissing (avoidant), preoccupied (anxious/ambivalent), and disorganized/unresolved (disoriented) (Main, 1995, 1996; Main & Hesse, 1990; Main & Solomon, 1990). Since the first correspondence between the parent's AAI classification and the infant strange situation test was reported, the results have been replicated repeatedly (Hesse, 1999). Furthermore, psychometric properties of the AAI have found that few subjects in clinical populations have been found to be secure. Finally, Hesse (1999) reports that in three out of four low risk samples an infant's secure versus insecure response to mother in the strange situation has predicted the coherence of that individual's life narrative 16 to 20 years later.

Crowell, Fraley, and Shaver (1999) point to several key ideas that the AAI was based upon. First, working models function at least partially outside of conscious awareness. Second, working models are based on attachment experiences, and are being formed in the first year of life. Third, attachment representations guide behavior and affect regulation. Fourth, formal operational thinking allows a person to observe and assess a given relational system. Fifth, resulting from the fourth point, models can be transformed without actual changes in experiences in the relationship. Finally, working models are processes that serve to use or limit the use of information.

AAI Protocol

The AAI is an hour-long interview consisting of 18 questions all related to attachment experiences. Only 14 questions are available from George, Kaplan, and Main (1984, 1985, 1996) and are reprinted in Hesse (1999, p. 397). The following is a list of the basic questions entitled, "Brief Precis of The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) Protocol."

1. To begin with, could you just help me to get a little bit oriented to your family – for example, who was in your immediate family, and where you lived?
2. Now I'd like you to try to describe your relationship with your parents as a young child, starting as far back as you can remember.

3. Could you give me five adjectives or phrases to describe your relationship with your mother/father during childhood? I'll write them down, and when we have all five I'll ask you to tell me what memories or experiences led you to choose each one.
4. To which parent did you feel closer, and why?
5. When you were upset as a child, what did you do, and what would happen? Could you give me some specific incidents when you were upset emotionally? Physically hurt? Ill?
6. Could you describe your first separation from your parents?
7. Did you ever feel rejected as a child? What did you do, and do you think your parents realized they were rejecting you?
8. Were your parents ever threatening toward you – for discipline, or jokingly?
9. How do you think your overall early experiences have affected your adult personality? Are there any aspects you consider a setback to your development?
10. Why do you think your parents behaved as they did during your childhood?
11. Were there other adults who were close to you – like parents – as a child?
12. Did you experience the loss of a parent or other close loved one as a child, or in adulthood?
13. Were there many changes in your relationship with parents between childhood and adulthood?
14. What is your relationship with your parents like for you currently?

Hesse (1999) notes that the interview is semi-structured in the sense that it is conversational but organized around the questions. The interview is taped and then completely transcribed for review. Intonation and facial expressions are disregarded and the interview is transcribed so that the research can focus to a greater extent on linguistic factors. Both facial expression and intonation have vital roles to play in the therapeutic process (Holmes, 2001), but they do not play a major role in this research tool (Hesse, 1999). Hesse (1999, p. 421) recognizes the need for new perspectives upon the relation of language and attachment when he says, “if we are to use the instrument to achieve a better understanding of the relations between language and attachment, additions to or modifications in the present system intended to increase its predictability logically should

be confined to uncovering new parameters of language.” The use of the hermeneutic philosophy of Ricoeur, and the use of the concept testimony aid in this expansion.

AAI Scoring and Categories

Hesse (1996) notes that in the AAI the central task of the subject is twofold: produce and reflect upon memories related to attachment, and simultaneously maintain a coherent discourse along with the interviewer. Scoring is based upon the coder’s assessment of the individual’s childhood experiences with parents, the language used by the individual in the interview, and the individual’s ability to offer a coherent narrative and collaborate with the interviewer (Crowell et al., 1999). Attachment scores are not based upon the quality of attachment experiences that the individual recalls, but instead are based upon the manner in which the person recounts the experiences. The interview surprises the unconscious (George et al., 1984, 1985, 1996), so that the person shares the attachment narrative and in the process reveals the IWM in the structure of the narrative and interpretive strategy used toward attachment latent content. The key is the person’s (in)ability to offer a consistent and collaborative narrative. Therefore, a person whose experiences were negative may be able to recount his or her experiences in a consistent and collaborative way and then would be scored secure. The opposite is also true: someone with pleasant experiences may be unable to recount a consistent and collaborative narrative and would be deemed one of the insecure categories.

Grice’s (1975, 1989) principles of discourse relate directly to the scoring classification. Hesse (1999, pp. 404-05) summarizes Grice’s four criteria that must be met for a discourse to contain a “cooperative principle.” The criterion of quality demands that the discourse be truthful and have evidence for what is said. The criterion of quantity calls for the discourse to be succinct and yet complete. The criterion of relation requires the discourse to be relevant to the topic at hand. Finally the criterion of

manner calls for clear and orderly discourse. Hesse (1999, p. 404) adds his explanation of these criteria:

To participate most effectively in the interview, then, the speaker must respond to each question as relevant, and then relinquish his or her conversational turn. Discourse is judged coherent when a subject appears able to access and evaluate memories while simultaneously remaining plausible (consistent, or implicitly truthful) and collaborative...The interview moves at a relatively rapid pace, requiring the speaker to reflect upon and answer a multitude of complex questions regarding life history. Ample opportunities are thereby provided for speakers to contradict themselves, to find themselves unable to answer questions clearly, and/or to be stimulated into excessively lengthy or digressive discussions of a particular topic.

The AAI's classifications of discourse style have been shown to be unrelated or weakly related to social desirability, socioeconomic status, sex, negative affectivity, temperament, autobiographical memory concerning aspects of one's life other than attachment, discourse style in non-attachment issues, and intelligence (Granqvist, 2005).

A transcript is placed in the "secure/autonomous" category when the narrative produced in the interview remains coherent and collaborative. Once again, a narrative is coherent when it is consistent and offers answers to the questions asked rather than dismissing the question or digressing into preoccupied topics. Collaboration is understood to consist of the ability to speak clearly to the topic at hand and then "return the conversational turn to the interviewer" (Hesse, 1999, p. 397). Whether the content in the narrative displays positive or negative attachment interactions is less relevant than how the narrative is structured. A secure/autonomous narrative may have great trauma and tragedy and still be coherent and collaborative. Although the form of narrative is a primary factor, the content-oriented parameters exist as well (Hesse, 1999; Main & Goldwyn, 1998). Narrative content is deemed as secure when the person values attachment relationships and understands those relationships to be influential, while simultaneously remaining objective enough to be able to explore thoughts, feelings, and negative aspects of the attachment relationship. The speaker offers evidence to back up his or her appraisals of the attachment figure (Hesse, 1999). Main and Goldwyn (1998;

see Main, 1991) add to this criteria the ability for metacognitive monitoring which refers to the ability of the speaker to assess the narrative afresh while in the midst of the interview. Hesse (1999, p. 401) points out that some narratives that are categorized as secure/autonomous fall into the category of “earned secure.” This category refers to those whose attachment experiences were negative, but have found themselves on a pathway to a secure “state of mind” toward attachment.

A transcript is placed in the “dismissing” category when the speaker attempts to minimize attachment relationships and experiences. These transcripts are not coherent in that they usually offer favorable to highly favorable appraisals of attachment figures but contradict these appraisals in other places in the interview. The overly positive appraisal of attachment figures is an attempt to “dismiss” the negative interactions of attachment. Furthermore, little or non-convincing evidence is given for the positive appraisals. Negative affects of attachment relationships are disregarded. The answers to the questions in the interview are excessively brief, thus violating Grice’s criteria of quantity. These transcripts are typically shorter than those in other categories. Furthermore, children of those deemed dismissing have repeatedly been classified as avoidant (Hesse, 1999, p. 397). It seems that the psychological undercurrent for this category is an inability to integrate the positive and negative aspects of the attachment figure, and defense mechanisms that avoids intimacy due to the minimization of attachments.

A transcript is judged to be “preoccupied” when the law of collaboration is violated. These speakers maximize attachment to the degree that they dominate the conversation and talk excessively about memories that may or may not be relevant to the question at hand. Hesse (1996) claims that this style of narrative is indicative of the speaker’s lack of focus upon the question due to the negative power of the memories associated with the conversation. These memories seem to draw the person away from the intent of the question and lead to long and excessive tangents. Hesse (1999, p. 398)

also points out that preoccupied speakers may digress to remote topics, use vague language, and oscillate their view of parents. These speakers violate Grice's criteria of quantity through excessiveness, relation in that their answers lack relevance, and manner in that little order exists (Grice, 1975, 1989). Children of these adults have repeatedly been found to be anxious (Hesse, 1999, p. 398).

A transcript is deemed "unresolved/disorganized" when the narrative lacks a consistent strategy. Lapses in reason or discourse occur when the topic includes traumatic events. This category is linked to the disorganized/disoriented category in the strange situation test (Main & Solomon, 1990).

The following is a list of narrative descriptions of the four attachment categories (Hesse, 1999, p. 399):

Secure

Coherent, collaborative discourse. Valuing of attachment, but seems objective regarding any particular event/relationship. Description and evaluation of attachment related experiences is consistent, whether experiences are favorable or unfavorable. Discourse does not notably violate any of Grice's maxims.

Dismissing (Avoidant)

Not coherent. Dismissing of attachment-related experiences and relationships. Normalizing ("excellent, very normal mother"), with generalized representations of history unsupported or actively contradicted by episodes recounted, thus violating Grice's maxim of quality. Transcripts also tend to be excessively brief, violating the maxim of quantity.

Preoccupied (Anxious/Ambivalent)

Not coherent. Preoccupied with or by past attachment relationships/experiences, speaker appears angry, passive, or fearful. Sentences often long, grammatically entangled, or filled with vague usages ("dadadada," "and that"), thus violating Grice's maxims of manner and relevance. Transcripts often excessively long, violating the maxim of quantity.

Unresolved/Disorganized

During discussions of loss or abuse, individual shows striking lapse in the monitoring of reasoning or discourse. For example, individual may briefly indicate a belief that a dead person is still alive in the physical sense, or that this person was killed by a childhood thought. Individual may lapse into prolonged silence or eulogistic speech. The speaker will ordinarily otherwise fit one of the other categories.

Hesse (1999, pp. 402-03) offers a more descriptive articulation of these subtleties that he entitles, “‘State-of-Mind’ Scales Used in the AAI, Related to the Three Major Categories.” These scales serve as descriptors of narrative style and dynamics within the interview:

Scales Associated with the Secure Adult Attachment Category

Coherence of transcript. For the highest rating, the speaker exhibits a “steady and developing flow of ideas regarding attachment.” The person may be reflective and slow to speak, with some pauses and hesitations, or speak quickly with a rapid flow of ideas; overall, however, the speaker seems at ease with the topic, and his or her thinking has a quality of freshness. Although verbatim transcripts never look like written narratives, there are few significant violations of Grice’s maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The reader has the impression that on the whole this text provides a “singular” as opposed to a “multiple” model of the speaker’s experiences and their effects.

Metacognitive monitoring. For the highest rating, evidence of active monitoring of thinking and recall is evident in several places within the interview. Thus the speaker may comment on logical or factual contradictions in the account of his or her history, possible erroneous biases, and/of the fallibility of personal memory. Underlying metacognitive monitoring (Forguson & Gopnik, 1988) is active recognition of an appearance – reality distinction (the speaker acknowledges that experiences may not have been as they are being presented); representational diversity (e.g., a sibling may not share the same view of the parent); and representational change (e.g., the speaker remarks that what is said today might not have been said yesterday).

Scales Associated with the Dismissing Adult Attachment Category

Idealization of the speaker’s primary attachment figure(s). This scale assesses the discrepancy between the overall view of the parent taken from the subject’s speech at the abstract or semantic level, and the reader’s inferences regarding the probable behavior of the parent. Since the reader has no knowledge of the speaker’s actual history, any discrepancies come from the transcript itself. For the highest rating, there is an extreme lack of unity between the reader’s estimate of the speaker’s probable experiences with the primary attachment figure(s) and the speaker’s positive generalized or “semantic” description. Despite inferred experiences of, for example, extreme rejection or even abuse, the portrait of the parent is consistently positive, and gratuitous praise of the parents may be offered (e.g., references to “wonderful” or “excellent” parents).

Insistence on lack of memory for childhood. This scale assesses the speaker’s insistence upon her inability to recall her childhood, especially as the insistence is used to block further queries or discourse. The scale focuses upon the subject’s direct references to lack of memory (“I don’t remember”). High

ratings are given to speakers whose first response to numerous interview queries is “I don’t remember,” especially when this reply is repeated or remains firmly unelaborated. Low scores are assigned when speakers begin a response with a reference to lack of memory, but then actively and successfully appear to recapture access to the experience they have been asked to describe.

Active, derogating dismissal of attachment-related experiences and/or relationships. This scale deals with the cool, contemptuous dismissal of attachment relationships or experiences and their import, giving the impression that attention to attachment related experiences (e.g., friends loss of parent) or relationships (those with close family members) is foolish, laughable, or not worth the time. High ratings are assigned when a speaker makes no effort to soften or disguise his or her dislike of the individual or the topic, so that – in keeping with the apparent intent of casting the individual (or topic) aside (“My mother? A nobody. No relationship. Next question?”) – the sentences used are often brief and the topic is quickly dropped. Moderately low scores are given for “gallows” humor: “I didn’t mind another separation, I guess that one was #13.” (Note: Speakers receiving high scores on this scale are assigned to a relatively rare adult attachment subcategory, Ds2, in which attachment figures are derogated rather than idealized).

Scales Associated with the Preoccupied Adult Attachment Category

Involved/involving anger expressed toward the primary attachment figure(s). Accurate ratings on this scale depend upon close attention to the form of the discourse in which anger towards a particular attachment figure is implied or expressed. Direct descriptions of the angry episodes involving past behavior (“I got so angry I picked up the soup bowl and threw it at her”) or direct descriptions of current feelings of anger (“I’ll try to discuss my current relationship with my mother, but I should let you know I’m really angry at her right now”) do not receive a rating on this scale. High ratings are assigned to speech that includes, for example, run-on, grammatically entangled sentences describing situations involving the offending parent; subtle efforts to enlist interviewer agreement; unlicensed, extensive discussion of surprisingly small recent parental offenses; extensive use of psychological jargon (e.g., “My mother had a lot of material around that issue”); angrily addressing the parent as though the parent were present; and, in an angry context, slipping into unmarked quotations from the parent.

Passivity of vagueness in discourse. High scores are assigned when, throughout the transcript, the speaker seems unable to find words, seize on a meaning, or focus upon a topic. The speaker may, for example, repeatedly use vague expressions or even nonsense words; add a vague ending to an already completed sentence (“I sat on his lap, and that”); wander to irrelevant topics; or slip into pronoun confusion between self and parent. In addition, as though absorbed into early childhood states or memories, the subject may inadvertently (not through quotation) speak as a very young child (“I runned very fast”) or describe experiences as they are describes to a young child (“My mother washed my little feet”). Vague discourse should not be confused with restarts hesitations, or dysfluency.

“State of Mind”: Defining the Construct Measured by the AAI

Hesse (1999) notes that one common misconception concerning the AAI is that it measures whether or not a person is “securely attached” to a specific person. Rather, the AAI seems to measure the individual’s overall “state of mind” concerning attachment. This state of mind has been influenced by many relationships to form a complex and multifaceted perspective concerning attachment. There is no doubt that overall state of mind concerning attachment effects specific relationships and vice versa. The situation is further complicated due to multiple attachment figures each containing different levels of security. The protocol of the AAI covers many early and current relationships and therefore is more related to the IWM than any specific relationship. However, some attempts have successfully been made to use similar concepts to study attachment within a current relationship.

Current Relationship Interview (CRI)

The Current Relationship Interview (CRI) parallels the AAI in terms of scoring system and process. This interview process seeks to assess adult attachment within specific, close relationships. It is different from the AAI in the sense that it seeks to tap into the level of security in terms of attachment in a specific and current relationship (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Crowell, Fraley, and Shaver (1999, p. 444) comment that the CRI “explores the process by which a new attachment relationship may be integrated into an already existing representation of attachment, or by which a new representation develops.” The narrative is evaluated in a similar way to the AAI.

The CRI is vital to a theory of attachment to God for it indicates several relevant points. First, narrative accounts can be used to understand a specific relationship and current relationship. An attachment to God theory seeks to understand the level of security specifically within the human-divine relationship. Second, the CRI indicates that narrative measures can aid in understanding the manner in which an individual

attachment influences the overall scheme of the IWM and vice versa. Therefore, it is possible for an attachment to God to be a transforming agent within the attachment system so that the system becomes more secure.

Conclusions Drawn from Narrative Attachment Research

The formation of personal narratives has been heavily linked to a person's "state of mind" concerning attachment. Both the AAI and the CRI indicate that the manner in which narratives are structured and the form that the content of those narratives take derive from psychological processes that are significantly associated with attachment. It is also vital that these concepts find clinical application.

Furthermore, if God truly does function as an attachment figure as suggested, then God would be a contributing factor in the formation of IWM's and in the formation of life narratives. Moreover, the CRI suggests that current relationships create specific narratives that are interwoven into the life narrative of the person. If this is true, then believers in God would both consciously and unconsciously form a narrative centering on relationship with God. Others have suggested that human relationships influence a person's relationship with God (Rizzuto, 1979) and that a person's relationship with God might be therapeutic in terms of person's healing from repressed and fragmented psychological objects (Fauteux, 1994). What attachment theory offers is a place for soulcare providers to enter into a subject's experience of attachment to God. That place is the testimony. In a sense, discourse analysis of one's narratives can aid the soulcare provider in the analysis of the soul.

Testimony: A Narrative Representation of Attachment to God

The development of the term testimony demands a return to the thinking of Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur (1995) describes testimony in three degrees. These degrees from first to third are acts, narrative, and internal testimony.

The first degree of testimony is “real acts of devotion up to death” (Ricoeur, 1995, p. 116). These acts speak in the name of the absolute. In other words, these acts of devotion speak a word from God through the actors. From the Christian perspective, the crucifixion would be the highest and most abundant form of testimony in that it spoke a word from God (John 1.14) through the act of the devotion of dying (Phil 2.5-11). It seems plausible that if certain acts speak the name of the absolute, then other acts would not, and that these acts can distort the name of the absolute. For instance, the Bible commands parents to offer acts of testimony to children that speak the name of the absolute: they are to decorate and adorn themselves with the *shema* (Deut 6), offer the Passover supper through symbol and narrative (Ezek 45.18-25), and live in the household ethics of treating children “as to the Lord” (Eph 5-6). Because of parental actions, the name of the absolute is more or less easily heard from the child. Of course a whole host of other factors exist as well: temperament, genetics, brain functioning, and other environmental factors. No matter how consistent a parent may be, a child will need to discover the nature of God as greater than the acts of devotion or non-devotion of parents (Isa 49.15-16). This is due to the fact that these acts of devotion cannot completely display the nature of God. These actions by parents are simultaneously first degree testimony to the child since they are acts to be observed, and second-degree testimony to the parents since they are acting upon their own observation of previous acts of devotion or non-devotion.

The second degree is “testimony rendered to this testimony by witnesses to its witnesses” (Ricoeur, 1995, p. 116). This is the testimony of narrative in which the witness of the rendered acts of devotion forms a story concerning the original acts. These are “witnesses to its witnesses” in a cyclical fashion: those who bear testimony have received that testimony from others. Every first degree testimony occurs because of some other second degree testimony. Second degree testimony, namely the forming of narratives that carry interpretations of first degree actions, is the mediator between

external actions and internal consequences. This point is illustrated by thinking about parental acts and their influence upon children. Parents are offering first degree acts that speak or hide the name of the “absolute” to their children. These parental actions come from the narrative that the parents formed as they observed acts by their parents. So they are mediated by second degree testimony of original acts observed by the parents (first degree), interpreted by the parents (second degree) and acted upon by the parents with the children due to the resultant internal structures of attachment (third degree). The children then receive third degree testimonies as first degree real actions upon which they will form a narrative.

Third degree testimony is described as “internal testimony” which is defined by Ricoeur as trust. Third degree testimonies are inseparable from trust (Ford, 1999). Ricoeur (1995, p. 118) notes, “Here to believe is to trust. With testimony, it seems to me, the problematic truth coincides with that of veracity. It is in this sense that testimony is related to and dependant upon a hermeneutics: the believing confidence of a second-order testimony in the first.” The outcome of the third degree of testimony is dependant upon the hermeneutical process of the second degree which is the formation of a narrative. While Ricoeur describes a process in which the outcome is trust, it seems just as plausible that the outcome could be “mistrust” of the acts of the first degree.

The key point is that testimony is mediated by a hermeneutic process through the formation of a narrative concerning the first acts observed by the testifier, and that this process has an outcome of trust or mistrust. Both Ricoeur and narrative attachment research hold a commonality at this point: both understand narrative to be the mediating function of internal process with the external world. Attachment theorists describe the AAI as the person’s state of mind concerning attachment (Hesse, 1999). This “state of mind” has been created in a process of hermeneutics in which the adult has formed an attachment narrative that includes a strategy of interpretation (dismissing, preoccupied, or disorganized). From a Christian standpoint, some acts from parents speak the name of

the absolute (testify of God's accessibility and reliability), some distort it (acts of non-devotion that present God as belligerent and neglecting), and some do not speak it at all (neutral). Moreover, Rizzuto (1979) has clearly demonstrated the role of early parental action to influence God image as an adult. The key issue in the hermeneutic process is trust. Trust also seems to be a key issue in formation of attachments (Kobak, 1999). Can the child trust the parent and thus create a secure narrative? Bowlby (1973, p. 202) speaks of trust when he offers three propositions concerning parental availability:

- (1) When an individual is confident that an attachment figure will be available to him whenever he desires it, that person will be much less prone to either intense or chronic fear than will an individual who . . . has no such confidence.
- (2) Confidence in the availability of attachment, or lack of it, is built up slowly during the years of immaturity – infancy, childhood, and adolescence – and whatever expectations are developed during those years tend to persist relatively unchanged through the rest of life.
- (3) The varied expectations of the accessibility and responsiveness of attachment figures that different individuals develop during their years of immaturity are tolerably accurate reflections of the experiences those individuals have actually had.

The term confidence that Bowlby uses has as its roots in the Latin term for faith. Trust is a vital element in the formation of secure attachments. Bowlby also claims that the expectations of the child concerning the attachment encounters are very accurate reflections of those attachment encounters. The narratives in the AAI are not deemed true or untrue, because they measure state of mind rather than veracity (Hesse, 1999). The narrative formed by the adult accurately reflects attachment experiences not in content but in form. In this sense attachment theory seems to connect with Ricoeur's view of testimony in that Ricoeur (1995, p. 117) claims that testimony is a "dialogic structure . . . between testimony of acts and testimony of witness."

It is in the hermeneutic process of narrative formation that trust will or will not be formed. The formation of a narrative results in third degree testimony as internal witness (sounds similar to IWM) that guides one's ethical and relational actions. For Ricoeur, the narrative is formed around the *ipse* question concerning "who," and the

ethical outcome is represented in the *idem* question of “what” and “why.” Ford (1999) relates the *idem* self to the term character and thus finds an ethical connotation to this hermeneutic question. The *idem* is based on the *ipse* which contains questions of personal identity to be answered in the formation of a life narrative (Ricoeur, 1988). Attachment theory has its own ethical outcome from the hermeneutic and narrative process. This outcome is seen in the connection between the AAI and the strange situation. As previously mentioned, the AAI is very accurate in its ability to predict the strange situation outcome of the child of the adult tested with the AAI. The ethic of love can be distorted by the parent through avoidance or anxious attachment. The internal testimony of the parents either injects trust or mistrust into the attachment relationship. The cycle of the three degrees of testimony repeats itself to the next generation.

Can Ricoeur’s understanding of testimony and a narrative developmental theory of attachment be this easily integrated? The attachment narrative construct found in the AAI and the CRI are seeking to understand attachment in human relationships. Ricoeur speaks of testimony as a process in which testifiers “speak the name of the absolute” (Ricoeur, 1995, p. 116) and is therefore describing a process of knowing God. Therefore the goal of each is different; however, the process of each (testimony and AAI narrative) is quite similar in several ways. First, both understand human development to be dependant at least somewhat upon the actions of others. For attachment it is the “availability of attachment . . . built up slowly during the years of immaturity” (Bowlby, 1973, p. 202). For Ricoeur, the image of God is testified of by “real acts of devotion” (Ricoeur, 1995, p. 116). Second, both understand human development to be mediated by hermeneutics. For attachment it is the formation of an attachment narrative (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Hesse, 1999; Crowell et al., 1999) from an IWM (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). It is important to remember that the IWM has much in common with Piaget’s cognitive development and therefore contains a hermeneutic quest. For Ricoeur, narrative is the crucial genre for the description of the self in time (Ricoeur, 1988).

Hermeneutics plays a large role in “figuring the sacred” in that “testimony is related to and dependent upon a hermeneutics” in which the person seeks whether or not he or she has “believing confidence of a second-order testimony in the first” (Ricoeur, 1995, p. 118). Third, both understand trust in those depended upon to be a vital part of human development. For Bowlby, it is the confidence that a child can have in parents to be available, reliable, and responsive (Bowlby, 1973). For Ricoeur, it is the trust that one has in the testifier and the testified. Both are tested in the *ipse* questions of “who speaks,” “who acts,” and “what is it.” If a second degree observer finds the testifier and the testified trustworthy, then that which is testified to is accepted. Fourth, both see healthy human development to be contingent upon some degree of security or esteem. For attachment theorists, it is the secure base in an attachment figure that allows greater exploration of the environment and healthier development. For Ricoeur, self-esteem is necessary for ethical effacement, which he defines as giving primacy to others over the self (Ricoeur, 1992). The paradox for Ricoeur is that one cannot give primacy to others, which he calls conviction, until the person has been esteemed. Attachment also finds an impaired ability to love in persons who have not yet experienced security with an attachment figure. Ricoeur finds the greatest Christian expression of this paradox in worship because the worshiper learns conviction in deferring to God, but also is esteemed by the love of God (Ford, 1999).

Ricoeur’s concept of testimony has much in common with the attachment narrative. However, four primary differences distinguishes the concept of testimony from attachment narratives and simultaneously enrich the use of testimony for Christian soulcare. First, Ricoeur’s concept of testimony seeks knowledge of God. Ricoeur (1995) writes about testimony in response to Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas (1989) has argued for an unsaying of things concerning God. He is concerned with idolatry and misrepresentation of God through language. Levinas objects to theology, believing that it objectifies what it should not. Ford (1999, p. 51) notes that Levinas’ “whole philosophy

of something 'said' which is yet testifying to something which can never be said. He rejects theology and its talk of God because he sees it inevitably reducing God to the "said." In Ricoeur's essay (1995) he describes testimony as a hermeneutic process described above in three degrees and socially influenced by the acts of others. At first it may seem that Ricoeur agrees with Levinas seeing testimony as a part of the hermeneutic spiral in which no one can claim any absolute. However, it is in "Oneself As Another" (1992) that Ricoeur limits his hermeneutic of suspicion and claims that "naming God" is a manner in which one speaks of God in a non-idolatrous manner and discovers "agape" in terms of love exchange with God that results in a transformation in the person's ethical character. Ricoeur finds a place for theology and biblical faith in the idea of worship. Naming God is an important part of worship in which one draws close to God. Naming God, then, is a type of attachment to God in which the believer signals God for sake of proximity. Ricoeur's theology is existential and personal believing that this sort of encounter with God brings true knowledge of God. In an attempt to expand and connect these ideas, it seems plausible that testimony, that is one's narrative of relationship with God, reveals the "name of God" as well as the *ipse* and *idem* selves in that images of self and God are revealed in the testimony narrative. Testimony gives knowledge of the current relationship with God, whether it is distorted or not. Therefore, testimony is a concept useful for caregivers in that it reveals much about the human-divine relationship.

Second, testimony adds an ethical dimension to the more general life narrative. For Ricoeur, this ethical dimension includes conviction, defined as giving primacy to others (Ricoeur, 1992). As a reminder, it is Ricoeur's paradox of individual/communal aspects of the self that lay the foundation for his ethic of "agape" in which persons are "enjoined to live well with and for others in just institutions and to esteem oneself as the bearer of this wish" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 352). A two fold movement of the self is necessary for this vision to be a reality. The first movement is that a person has to esteem the self as an individual differentiated from others in terms of identity. Enmeshment will

not allow a person to offer agape. The second movement is that a person must acknowledge that others are a part of the self and that an ethical responsibility exists to these others (Ricoeur, 1992). Testimony is a concept that is essentially defined in the theological parameters of Scripture and given greatest clarity in the crucifixion of Christ as a model of ethics. Testimony then has a higher ethic and teleology than does the goals of survival and reproduction in attachment theory.

Third, testimony carries a double connotation that creates a paradoxical and therapeutic potential for its use. The first connotation is that a testimony is one's story of his or her own personal narrative of divine relationship or lack thereof. The term testimony is primarily being used here in Ricoeur's second degree sense in that the story told of the human-divine relationship has consciously and unconsciously undergone a hermeneutic process through interpretive strategies. The retelling of stories engages that hermeneutic process along with those strategies (Gerkin, 1984; Lester, 1995; Cozolino, 2002). The community plays a role in the retelling in that the Christian metanarrative is told and re-told in light of new situations in worship (Ford, 1999). The testimony is a story. It is a noun. The second connotation to the term testimony is that in its telling the noun becomes a verb in that the testified becomes a testifier. The testimony is open to re-interpretation in that it now becomes first degree testimony. It is now an act to be examined by an observer who is given the hermeneutic task of second degree testimony. In soulcare, the counselor is the observer and becomes a part of the hermeneutic process with the speaker. Furthermore, the narrative testifies back to the original speaker for inspection so that the narrative can be re-examined and re-integrated. This is especially important in situations in which persons have insecure attachments to God. The narrative can be re-membered in such a way that it can find greater coherence thus aiding the process of developing greater security with God.

Fourth, testimony calls for an original testifier and a Word by which all other words are measured. Christianity finds such a Word in the metanarrative of the gospel

and especially in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The issue of the validity of a metanarrative is primary for Ricoeur who sees the role of narrative as the interpreted construct of first degree acts resulting in either trust or mistrust. What is the Christian metanarrative of attachment to God? How can the Christian metanarrative be utilized for transformation in a person's attachment to God? Is a metanarrative a viable option in a postpostmodern perspective and in a hermeneutic of suspicion?

The Need for Metanarrative

Lee (2004, p. 222) defines the term metanarrative as “the broader understandings embraced by a culture that form an inherited context for meaning for the more particular stories that individuals and families tell about themselves.” While premodern thinking often accepted metanarratives without much investigation, the modern era was disinterested in metanarratives, and the postmodern era rejects such ideologies (Lee, 2004). What is the reason for such a rejection? Furthermore, is this rejection of metanarrative necessary or even helpful? What is the Christian metanarrative and how does it interact with attachment to God? While Ricoeur and attachment theorists have both expounded upon the idea that identity is represented in the form of life narratives, it is also necessary to understand the nature of transformation of these narratives. Secular narrative therapy has rejected metanarratives and instead sought transformation through reframing narratives in a completely relativistic ideology (e.g., White & Epston, 1990; Anderson, 1997; and Freedman & Combs, 1996). Christianity seems to utilize a metanarrative in the Bible and the story it tells of redemption history which meets its pinnacle in the life of Jesus Christ.

The Postmodern Rejection of Metanarrative

Lee (2004, p. 222) quotes Lyotard's pronouncement that postmodernism entails “incredulity toward metanarrative” (Lyotard, 1984). Watson (2004) points out

that postmodern critique argues that rationality is simultaneously product and producer of power (see Foucault, 1980) which results in a hermeneutic spiral leaving little objectivity. The result of this epistemological view is that the Christian perspective is equaled with that of science to which it once was subservient (in the modern era); however, it is equaled with all other metanarratives as well. The equalization of metanarratives simultaneously makes all narratives valid and invalid (Watson, 2004). The key issue is the use of power and the desire of postmodernism to battle authoritarianism. It seems that postmodernism takes an extreme position when it seeks relativity in order to protect equanimity. Perhaps it is possible to hold to an objective truth but do so in a manner that is not abusive of other positions and is openly critical on one's own position.

Critique against the Rejection of Metanarrative

Lee (2004) offers several points of critique against the postmodern “incredulity toward metanarrative” and insists that metanarratives are necessary for therapeutic means. First, a metanarrative cannot be easily distinguished from narrative. Lee argues that all narratives have layers of stories that are logically *meta* to other stories. Micro layers within a narrative exist in the form of subplots. Narratives are connected to other narratives in chronology, theme, and causation. What makes a story a narrative and what makes a story a metanarrative? Furthermore, at what conceptual level does a narrative become a metanarrative? The main point is that it is difficult to discern the difference between the two.

Second, without a metanarrative, a “transcendent teleology” is impossible to conceptualize (Lee, 2004). The problem with a narrative therapy without teleology is twofold. The first problem is that the process of therapy is subject to emotivism (MacIntyre, 1984). MacIntyre (1984) defines emotivism as a doctrine that equals evaluative judgments and moral judgments to preference, expressions of attitude, and emotions. A metanarrative is essential for a moral context. Postmodernism rejects

metanarratives as authoritarian and judgmental on moral accounts. However, postmodernism carries with it its own moral evaluations, especially egalitarianism as the highest moral goal. The resulting problem is that therapy itself cannot be evaluated as good or bad without a teleological and moral context. The therapist is unable to determine the progress or lack thereof in a client except in terms of emotivism. The second problem is that narratives inherently have a sense of teleology. Rychlak (1994) attempts to show from empirical data that human behavior has a teleological function that acts upon purposes rather than on impulses alone. Narratives are goal oriented and are evaluated in terms of success, failure, comedy, and tragedy.

Third, postmodernism and postmodern narrative therapy espouses a meta-ethic and a metanarrative. In terms of ethics, egalitarianism is lifted up as an ideal. For instance, Lee (2004) gives an example of a therapist working with an African-American client who is depressed. The therapist believes that the experience of racism is part of the problem of depression. The therapist “situates” the conversation by moving it to the social level from the individual level. Lee (2004, pp. 227-28) comments on this therapeutic intervention:

Did this supervisor view her reframing of the problem as merely potentially helpful, or somehow “right”? It seems unlikely that the suggestion of racism was a neutral clinical hypothesis; the reality of oppression is a moral evil in postmodern thought, just as freedom from oppression is a moral good.

There are two issues here. One is the accuracy of her intuition. It is quite possible and even likely that the client has internalized the language games of a dominant white majority that led him to view his difficulties as strictly personal as opposed to social in origin. The other issue is the matter of her implicit moral commitment: racism is wrong. It is her commitment to postmodern ideology that leads her to privilege the metanarrative in the first place, whatever incredulity she may attempt to maintain. The implications are that (a) some metanarratives can have privileged status; (b) therapists can introduce these into the therapeutic dialogue even if they don't arise directly from client preferences; and (c) this can produce a positive clinical effect.

Suspiciousness toward the negative effects of metanarrative can be liberating, but this stance cannot and should not be absolute. The above case study demonstrates that, in point of fact, it is not absolute in practice. One might inveigh against the insidious power of subjugating discourses, but it is illusory to think that

such freedom can ever be ultimate, because metanarratives are inescapable, and we must cede authority to any metanarrative to which ascribe positive truth value.

The power of this illustration is the near universality of the harmfulness of racism in the therapeutic community and yet the clear distinction of such a thought as an ethical evaluation based on a larger social narrative. Postmodernism carries with it its own metanarrative: that no one metanarrative should dominate the others and that all truth is relative to the community and culture in which it derives. These points demonstrate the need for a therapeutic metanarrative that offers a teleological explanation of life and is accompanied by ethical evaluations that do not give in to authoritarianism (Watson, 2004; Lee, 2004). It is suggested that in the Christian metanarrative one may find an ideology that can maintain this balance.

The Christian Metanarrative: Naming God

Two problems exist when one attempts to utilize Christianity as a metanarrative in a postpostmodern framework. The first problem is that a Christian metanarrative must be authoritative without being authoritarian. In other words, it must be truthful and liberating. Lee (2004, p. 230) claims that “the Bible is a profoundly liberating metanarrative, revealing a God who has compassion for those who suffer and are oppressed.” Watson (2004) summarizes Girard’s (1978) explanation of the liberating expression of the Word of God in Jesus Christ. Watson (2004, p. 253) explains: “Christ incarnates the metanarrative of God’s truth that explains all other narratives and metanarratives.” God’s truth had been a mystery until this point. The “murderous intelligibilities” of myth producers ruled in an oppressive manner until God’s Word (John 1.1) was revealed (Watson, 2004, p. 253). If Girard is correct, then the Christian story is one that exposes other stories and therefore complements and evaluates them rather than acting independently. Christ is the truth that sets one free from such delusions by revealing God’s story (John 1.1, 1.14, 8.32, 14.6). Redemption removes condemnation

(Rom 8.1) and the requirements of the law (Gal 2.19-21; Col 2.14). More importantly, redemption allows personal intimacy with God (Heb 4.14-16, 7.19, 10.22; 1 Pet 3.18).

The second problem of using the Christian metanarrative is the hermeneutic conundrum of testimony. Ricoeur (1988) spells out the problem when he describes the three degrees of testimony. The problem is that the second degree observer of the act and the first degree actor have an experiential distance between them. The first degree act occurs on behalf of some belief in God and is influenced by the hermeneutic task of the actor. How can anyone know for certain anything about God with such experiential space between each degree and with each space being subject to interpretation? Of course this is Levinas' question and the reason he rejects theology: he is afraid that God will idolatrously be reduced to the "said." Ricoeur gives his answer: naming God is the act that experientially unites the believer with God and dissolves the space between persons and God (Ricoeur, 1992). The Incarnation of Christ is God's revelation of His name that diminishes the hermeneutic space between persons and God, and simultaneously allows for attachment to God through Jesus Christ.

Christ as the Testimony of God's Name

The claim of the New Testament is that Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). The Christian metanarrative centers upon Christ as the Word of God (John 1.1-5, 1.14). In Christ, the hermeneutic space between first degree actor (God) and the second degree testifiers of the action (prophet) is nonexistent because Christ is both first degree testimony and second degree testimony. Christ is the testified and the testifier. In other words, God acted for the purpose of redemption of humanity and within history through Christ, and at the same time declared the message of that act through Christ. The testimony that is believed is the testimony of Christ who is the actor of redemption and the prophet who narrates it. The divine-human nature of Christ resolves the distance between humanity and God. God has a name through Christ. Is the subjectivity of

interpretation completely abolished? No, it would seem that those who witness the testimony of Christ must believe in it (John 3.16). However, the issue of belief is not merely a cognitive one, but also is influenced by psychological constructs (cf. Sproul, 1974). The hermeneutic task has not ended, but a transcendent source has found an entering place into the hermeneutic spiral when God made his name available within history through Jesus Christ and those who testify of him.

God has not only represented Himself in the first two degrees of testimony but has done so with the third as well. The third degree of testimony is the internal testimony experienced as trust. A person's internal world testifies to itself in a cyclical manner and gives an intuitive sense of truth based on the experience of trust or mistrust. The Holy Spirit is an internal witness that is important to this discussion for several reasons. First, the Holy Spirit is tied to the naming of God (Rom 8.15-16). The Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of Adoption" who empowers a believer to call upon the name of God as "Abba." There is a sense in Romans 8.15-16 that fear would otherwise prohibit a person from being able to name God. Second, the Holy Spirit bears witness (testifies) that a person is a "child of God." The Holy Spirit empowers a person to not only name God, but to name Him an intimate and familiar term for Father. Romans 8.15-16 also contains within it the sense that a person is in need of aid to be able to experience the full repercussions of being a child of God. As mentioned in chapter four, these types of behaviors are attachment behaviors. The Holy Spirit aids in the person's ability to trust God, call upon His name, and experience the fullness of being a child of God.

Clearly a Trinitarian point of view correlates with Ricoeur's three degrees of testimony. The Father is the first degree testimony that acts through the sending of the Son. The Son is a part of the Father's actions as first degree testimony, but also assumes the role of second degree testimony as the prophet of his own actions. The Holy Spirit offers an internal witness that enables trust, the naming of God, and the experience of being a child of God (attachment to God). The primary point is that God has testified to

His metanarrative within all three degrees of testimony and each erases the hermeneutic space between person's and God through the development of an experiential trust in God that displays attachment behaviors. The metanarrative of Christianity is unique amongst religions in that God is given a personal and experiential name through Jesus Christ.

Pathways to Naming God in an Attachment System: Correspondence and Compensation Hypotheses

Unfortunately, many people have learned false names for God. This was God's concern from the beginning when he established a community who would bear his name. The first three of the Ten Commandments are concerned with God being misnamed. The first is that they were to have no other gods before Him (Exod 20.3). God clearly distinguished Himself from false gods and did not want to be confused with them. The second command is that they were not to make an image of Him (Exod 20.4). God did not want to be misrepresented by human creations. The third command is that God's name is not to be taken in vain (Exod 20.7). Clearly God did not want His name misrepresented in any way. However, persons do develop distorted images of God. It is often noted that God not only made man in His image, but Man has returned the favor by making God in his image. Rizzuto (1979) has found this to be true. She reveals four cases of persons who divulge their god-image and compares this image with parental images. Informed by an object relations theory, she offers names of god set forth by her subjects: god without whiskers, god in the mirror, god the enigma, and god my enemy. She clearly found correlation between parental images and images of god. Freud (1962) believed that God was an exalted father figure. Others like Rizzuto find that god-images have more in common with one's mother image (e.g., Godin & Hallez, 1965; Nelson, 1971; Strunk, 1959). Still others have suggested that one's god-image is most similar to the preferred parent (Nelson & Jones, 1957). Attachment to God theory also contends that parental images, or more precisely images of an attachment figure, play a vital role in

one's image of God. However, Kirkpatrick (1992, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2005) thinks that the situation is more complex than mere correspondence of attachments with human figures to attachments with God.

If it is true that the human divine relationship functions as an attachment relationship, then questions should be addressed concerning the correlation of the specific attachment relationship with God, the specific attachment relationships in early childhood, and the more general attachment scheme of the IWM. Kirkpatrick (2005) presents two hypotheses concerning the effects of early attachment relationships upon an attachment to God. The first is the correspondence hypothesis, which Kirkpatrick (2005, p. 102) describes when he notes that "individual difference in attachment styles should parallel, in important respects, individual differences in beliefs about God and related aspects of religious belief." It seems that persons with secure attachment styles would find that security corresponding with the attachment relationship with God and vice versa. Kirkpatrick (2005) gives several corollaries to this definition. First, IWM's are arranged hierarchically therefore the more general scheme found in the IWM should influence specific attachment relationships. Second, the formation of a general IWM also necessitates an interrelation between specific attachment relationships so that a cohesive IWM is formed. Third, the IWM should influence all current attachment relationships meaning that these current relationships would have some degree of similarity.

This hypothesis has received empirical support. For instance, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) tested over 200 adult subjects through survey measurements. One conclusion they found was that attachment styles do correlate with certain images of God. The results may support the correspondence hypothesis:

With respect to images of God, the strongest differences were observed between the secure and avoidant adult-attachment groups: People who classified themselves as secure were significantly more likely than those classified avoidant to view God as more loving, less controlling, and less distant/inaccessible. Avoidant persons were significantly less religiously committed than secure persons, and were more likely to classify themselves as agnostic than the other groups. Anxious subjects generally fell in between the secure and avoidant groups; however they

were the most likely to say they had at least one glossolalia experience in their lives (Kirkpatrick, 2005, p. 106)

Kirkpatrick replicated these results in two unpublished studies at the University of South Carolina (Kirkpatrick, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 1997).

It would seem feasible that those with more secure attachment IWM's would discover a more secure attachment to God than those with insecure IWM's. However, the compensation hypothesis suggests the opposite of its counterpart, namely that persons with insecure attachment styles are more likely to turn to God as a substitute attachment figure in order to compensate for the lack of security they experience with human relationships (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 2005). Those with insecure attachment styles are more likely to have their attachment system activated and thus seek compensation.

Furthermore, Ainsworth (1985), has previously suggested that persons who do not receive the availability and responsiveness that brings felt security from their attachment figures often seek a substitute to meet those needs. While Ainsworth does not mention God as a possible substitute He may very well fit the description (Kirkpatrick, 2005).

This hypothesis would conclude that those with more insecure attachments may be more likely to turn to God as a substitute. Empirical evidence exists for this hypothesis as well.

Religious persons with insecure attachment styles have been found to be more likely to experience sudden religious change (Granqvist, 1998; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999).

Kirkpatrick (1995, p. 455) comments that the idea of compensation and God functioning as a substitute attachment figure holds great potential for therapeutic value:

This observation is important because it means that some people with insecure attachment histories might be able to find in God – but perhaps not in human relationships – the kind of secure attachment relationship (and the provisions it offers) they never had in human interpersonal relationships. . . A perceived relationship with God, then, potentially could be of substantial therapeutic value in helping persons with insecure attachment histories break out of a self-defeating cycle of unsatisfactory close relationships.

Kirkpatrick (2005) also reports that those with insecure attachment styles are prone to religious change in general including apostasy. The key factor is the instability found in those with insecure attachment styles. Furthermore, several contextual factors influence

the process of religious change: separation and loss (bereavement, relationship dissolution, unavailability of attachment figures, adolescence: transition between attachment figures), perceived inadequacy of attachment figures, and cultural factors (Kirkpatrick, 2005).

The complexity of one's relationship with God or lack thereof produces many possibilities concerning pathways or trajectories of attachment to God. The two hypotheses seem to contradict one another. Kirkpatrick (2005, p. 128) claims that they need not contradict:

To the extent that the correspondence and compensation hypotheses lead to contradictory predictions, of course, they cannot both be true – at least within the same people under the same conditions. Moreover, it may seem troubling that the same theory can lead to such mutually exclusive predictions simultaneously, which would seem to suggest that the theory is unfalsifiable because it would not be supported by any set of empirical results (Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999). On the other hand, it is entirely possible that the two hypotheses are both correct, but for different people and/or under different sets of circumstances. Our task is then not one of deciding between them, but rather of identifying which process is responsible when, or for whom.

Kirkpatrick (2005) offers this theory of the reasons behind the two different paths to attachment to God. He believes that the correspondence hypothesis seems to describe socialization based religiosity. In these instances persons with secure attachments early in life tend to adopt the religious practices of the parents. On the other hand, those with insecure attachments tend to score higher on measurements of emotion based religiosity (Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999) indicating that attachment to God is a type of emotional compensation for what has been lacking in other attachment relationships. Kirkpatrick (2005, pp. 134-35) describes this process in very poignant words:

It is easy to see why, from the compensation model perspective, the conversion of these persons would be so emotionally powerful. People with insecure childhood attachments (those most likely to have these experiences) grow up with negative IWM's of attachment relationships, viewing intimacy, closeness, and love as things to be avoided and attachment figures as untrustworthy and unreliable. Indeed, this is what leads most such individuals away from religion or the idea of God as a secure attachment figure in the first place. Among the few who instead experience a subsequent religious conversion, however, something dramatic appears to happen that causes the entire set of conceptualizations to turn around. Converts suddenly come to see God or Jesus as quite the opposite of all this – as someone who loves

them, cares about them, faithfully watches over them, and will be there for them when they need support, comfort, and assistance – in direct conflict with a lifetime's worth of personal experiences with attachment figures to the contrary. For someone who has always had confidence in the reliability and loving nature of attachment figures, the idea that God or Jesus is like this fits neatly with existing schemata (i.e., per the correspondence hypothesis). But for someone with an insecure history, this idea must be emotionally powerful. Perhaps this also explains why such experiences are described as "ineffable": People with long-standing negative IWM's of attachment really do not have the words or concepts at their disposal to describe what is for them an entirely novel experience. It must indeed be, as suggested by many observers cited earlier, similar in many ways to falling in love for the first time.

It should also be noted that those with anxious attachment styles have a greater chance of developing an attachment to God, as one study found this style to claim theism as a belief system more than the avoidant style and they have experienced glossolalia more often than those with avoidant style, who were found to be agnostic more than any other style (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992).

Naming God in Correspondent and Compensation Pathways

These pathways give insight into several factors concerning a person's attachment to God narrative. First, the act of naming God as Ricoeur has set forth is an action that is hindered by the false names for God given by early attachment figures as well as other sources (i.e., culture). These false names are not given in poor doctrine alone, but also in poor attachments that do not reflect the true nature of God as loving, responsive, and accessible. The power of such is in the fact that parents are the first god representatives (Rizzuto, 1979). Second, those on different paths may need different kinds of help from soulcare providers when the goal is developing more secure attachments to God. While those on the correspondence path may seem to be at an advantage emotionally, they may be at a disadvantage in others areas of faith. The first problem those on the correspondence path may find is that they may make idols of their parents and never transition to a personal faith in God. The Bible uses parental images for God but clearly describes Him as the perfectly attuned parent superior to any earthly representative (Isa 49:15-16). The result of this idolatry is that a person may become

spiritually “stuck” in lower forms of faith. For instance Kierkegaard (1988) describes three stages to spiritual growth. The second stage is the ethical stage and it is accompanied by an external form of religion that focuses on laws rather than relationship with God. Fowler (1987) describes a similar phenomenon in the spiritual developmental stage that he calls “mythic-literal” in which faith is understood in concrete and external forms alone. Fowler (1987, p. 61) also notes that this stage finds “its orientation to narrative and story as the principal means of constructing, conserving, and sharing meaning.” It also seems feasible that this pathway would be in danger of performing religion in a type of extrinsic form as Allport suggests (Wuff, 1991). Furthermore, Kirkpatrick’s description of the compensation path is more congruent with the focus in the Bible of love and worship of God and jointly in line with Ricoeur’s proposal of first hand testimony deriving from an intimate naming of God. The person on the correspondence path may be more susceptible to an indoctrinated religion much like that of the Pharisees and may be missing the more intimate relational factors with God.

Therefore, while at first glance, it may seem that those on the correspondence path are in less need of an attachment with God, it would be untrue. The difficulty of attachment to God with those who have insecure IWM’s seems rather apparent: their attachment scheme has hindered their ability to trust and therefore name God and they are in need of experiences with God that offer security. This group finds it difficult to embrace the Spirit of Adoption and a sense of belonging (Rom 8:15) due to life experiences that testify of self and others in such a way to build mistrust. However, it should be clear that the correspondence group may call on the name of God, but they may find it difficult to call Him “Abba.” The term “Abba” connotes a relationship of intimacy and first hand experience. It gives the idea that this is a father that is accessible and responsive. The correspondence group may call on the name of God in vain in that it is used in terms of socialization but not the affections of the heart.

God's Story of Attachment

Before the Christian metanarrative is described a short summary is in order. I would suggest that testimony is described as a person's life narrative with God that carries with it evidence of an attachment style with God. That evidence may be found in the structure of the narrative in terms of the degree of coherence and collaboration as well as the attachment content of the narrative (other indicators will be given later). Ricoeur describes testimony in three degrees and the biblical story seems to be told through the Trinity in all three of those degrees and it has the unique feature of testifying in all three degrees simultaneously through the Incarnation of Christ and the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. Testimony is the mediator between the first hand attachment experiences of the person and the person's internal testimony which is described as the ability to trust. Therefore transforming the person's testimony to a more coherent and consistent form will result in a transformation in God image and ability to trust God. Trusting in God is found in the attachment behavior that signals God by naming Him. Romans 8:15-16 describes the process of naming God "Abba" as signaling behavior that claims the full repercussions of a person's relationship with God as His child.

The Christian attachment metanarrative is God's story of redemption that overlaps with the theme of attachment in two primary ways: it tells a story of the need for proximity with God; and it tells a story of God revealing Himself as the loving, available, and responsive Abba to whom His children can call upon.

God's story of proximity unfolds in the three scenes of creation-fall-redemption (Plantinga, 2000). This tripartite journey is a story of the relationship between God and humanity, and its plot focuses on the nature of the attachment between the two. Scene one opens with God's creation of Adam and Eve who find themselves living in connection to God. The connection between God and the original couple is obvious: God creates them in His image (Gen 1.26), they communicate with God (Gen 1.27), and they inhabit the same territory (Gen 3:8). Proximity to God offers a safe haven in the

utopian garden. Life is peaceful and without anxiety or grief. Scene two offers the antagonist and the conflict within this story. Adam and Eve disobey God and seek to live independently from God believing that they too can be like Him (Gen 3.5). It seems that a more pervasive problem exists than eating the wrong fruit. This greater dilemma is that Adam and Eve want to live independent from God, because in self-sufficiency they believe that they can replace God with themselves. The result of this decision is detachment, that is, they are expelled from the region called Eden (Gen 3.23). Not only are they separated from God, but they are in immanent danger on several planes. First, they are in danger of biological life without spiritual life (John 17.3). Second, they are in danger of death (1 Cor 15.22). Third, they are in danger with one another (Gen 4.1-15). Fourth, they are in danger from themselves (Rom 7.17-24; Jas 4.1-2). Finally, they are in danger from creation (Gen 3.17-19). How would they cope with the resultant anxiety and fear now that their safe place is taken away? Where would they find safety? These questions bring us to the climax of the story, namely that God sought to connect with humanity once again, and to wed the divide experienced by humanity as detachment from God which was caused by sin (Isa 59.2). In the Incarnation of Christ God connects to humanity by "dwelling with us" (John 1.14). Moreover, through redemption, Christ "brings us to God" (1 Pet 3.18). The life of redemption offers several modes that relate to attachment behavior. God's presence is a safe haven that serves as a "refuge" during times of trouble (Ps 46.1-2). The believer offers affections to God (Deut 6.5; Mark 12.30) through worship (Ps 47; Col. 3:16). Prayers are offered as a signal to God and the need for proximity (Rom 8.16-16; Heb 4.14-16). Believers are urged to seek proximity by drawing near to God (Hebrews 7.19, 10.22). Life in relationship to God is characterized by confident exploration due to the assurance of God's presence (Pss 22, 23; Rom 8.38-39; Phil 4.4-7). The attachment must not be anxious due to the believer's assurance of God's availability even when God is not sensed (Pss 22, 55, 61). God is

imaged in the Bible as the available, consistent, and responsive heavenly parent with whom proximity is to be sought (Heb 4.14-16; Jas 1.17).

If God does function as an attachment figure for those who believe, then naming God is a type of attachment behavior that Bowlby (1969/1982) refers to as signaling. Ricoeur (1992) claims that in biblical faith, love is tied to naming God. Naming God in this sense is more than designating a title in terms of a cognitive label, but includes an experiential element of facing God and worshipping God (Ford, 1999). Naming God is more similar to “calling upon” God with His name in a manner that trusts in His presence, availability, and responsiveness. Naming God is faith put into the action of signaling God for the sake of proximity. Thus Christian persons pray “in the name of Jesus.” The existential element of naming God is certainly true of the term *Abba* as it is used in Romans 8.15-16. This term is used in a type of “calling upon” in full familiarity and trust in both the character of God and the nature of one’s relationship with God (Wilson, 1998). The ability to name God is distinctly tied to security with God as an attachment figure. In summary, naming God is a personal, existential, and developmental experience that signals God in a type of attachment behavior for the sake of proximity.

Ricoeur’s thinking on naming God is a helpful addition to what has been summarized. Ford (1999, pp. 97-108) draws several conclusions concerning Ricoeur’s position on naming God:

Ricoeur himself is more tentative in his theological explorations but in his religious writings he does attest to God as named in the Bible. He does not pretend to have no presuppositions: he risks giving preference to the naming of God in the texts of scripture.

The naming is polyphonic, using many genres. He gives a certain priority to the narrative naming, in dialectical relation with prophecy, prescription, wisdom and other genres. But he can also see worship and the Psalms as the principal biblical genre of worship, having a privileged positionThe worship of God is appropriate participation in reality, which is attested through the Bible to be an ‘economy of the gift.’ This operates according to a ‘logic of superabundance,’ which is the logic of love. The primary discourse of love he sees as praise, ‘where in praising one rejoices over the view of one object set above all the other objects of one’s concern.’

What can be concluded concerning Ricoeur's understanding of naming God? First, naming God is an experiential reality that finds its expression in worship and superabundance. Once again, naming God cannot only be cognitive labeling (Jas 2.19), but is trust that is expressed in "calling upon" that name in a sense of security. Naming God is a part of spiritual development that utilizes attachment security to gain proximity to God when needed and exploration with God when needed. Second, the names of God are transmitted in narrative form. Ricoeur "gives priority to narrative naming" Ford says (Ford, 1999, p. 98). God's name has been articulated in the narratives of the worshiping community, and these communal narratives are made of a tapestry of individual narratives. Therefore, it is appropriate to understand the narrative testimony of individual persons as a conduit that expresses the personal names of God one has developed, whether they are distorted or not. Third, Ricoeur gives preference to the Bible as God's gift that reveals His name. He understands the principal genre of the Bible to be worship, in which a person learns love through the naming of God. Fourth, Ricoeur attempts to protect his religious hermeneutic from idolatry in noting that God's name is polyphonic and spoken in many genres. The transcendence that Levinas attempted to protect is important to Ricoeur as well. The vastness of God's name or names protects any one name from reducing God to its meaning, through an equalizing balance with other names for God.

While naming God is a theme found compatible with attachment systems and with the philosophy of Ricoeur, it is also vital that a biblical theology of naming God be included in the discussion. In "The Problem of God," John Murray (1965) presents an exegetical survey of Old and New Testaments and the issue of naming God. The Old Testament exegetical analysis focuses on the Exodus 3.1-15 pericope in which Moses is summonsed by God to lead in the deliverance and formation of a nation. While God had been given names before this time (Gen 22.14; Exod 3.15), it was God's self-identification on Mount Horeb that was unique functionally and linguistically.

Functionally, the name YHWH would become the major identity of the birthing nation. It would identify the people as worshippers of YHWH and that they are YHWH's possession as well (Exod 19.5; Deut 26.18; Pss 135.4). This type of belonging is similar to that of the belonging that derives from an attachment relationship. A bond existed between YHWH and this nation. The nation looked to YHWH for strength and help in times of trouble. In His absence they sought substitute attachment figures in the form of idols. The naming of God as YHWH created a special communal attachment between God and the Hebrew nation.

Murray (1965) focuses on the linguistic uniqueness of the term YHWH. In ancient Jewish culture, to know the name of someone is to know the person, the person's function, the person's power, and the nature of one's relationship to that person. Murray (1965) gives three possible readings of the term YHWH. The first is an ontological connotation which would be rendered "I am who am." This reading understands God as the "Absolutely Existent One" to whom there is no limit of restriction. The second reading is the causative/cosmological connotation which could be rendered "I make to be whatever comes to be." God is the creator and sustainer of nature. The third reading is the intersubjective connotation which could be rendered "I shall be there, with you, in power." Murray points out that this sense is evoked by the entire passage in that the plan set forth is intersubjective: God has heard the cry of the suffering Israelites and is now promising to deliver them. This sense of the term YHWH claims that God saves his people and makes a covenantal relationship with them. Murray (1965) points to three dynamics springing forth from the last connotation of the term YHWH. The first dynamic is that God is immanent in history. The name YHWH gives forth the idea "I shall be there." YHWH is the one who is proximate, available, and able to aid the enslaved nation. This aspect of God's immanent presence through His being named YHWH could be seen as an invitation to connection or even to attach. When they call upon YHWH, they are using a name that promises security in attachment. The second

dynamic is that God is transcendent in history. Murray (1965) points out that YHWH “shall be there as who I am,” thus creating a sense of ambiguity that protects the mystery of God and idolatrous distortions of His name. God is ineffable in the sense that no name can completely contain His character, and to attempt to use any one name to do so is to idolize the concept the name carries. Murray claims that both immanence and transcendence are needed in order to not distort the name of God. The third dynamic that Murray points to is that God is transparent through history. YHWH represents God “As who I am shall be there.” This transparency means that God will reveal His name through His works.

Murray (1965) poses the problem of God for the Old Testament person in four questions. The existential question asks “Is God here with us now?” The functional question inquires whether “The God who is here with us – what is he [towards us]?” The noetic question wonders, “How is this God, who is present as both Savior and Judge, to be known?” Finally, the onomastic question asks, “How is this God to be named?” All four of these questions have much in common with the attachment system. The existential question investigates God’s presence and proximity. The functional question is similar to attachment in that it asks if YHWH is trustworthy to offer security. The noetic question, much like attachment, investigates whether YHWH is accessible and responsive. The onomastic question seeks to find the name by which YHWH can be signaled. For Murray (1965) two possible responses are available to these questions: knowing and ignoring. He (Murray, 1965, p. 21) compares knowing to a relationship that involves the whole self, like marriage it is an affair of the heart “in the biblical sense of the heart as the center and source of the whole inner life in its full complex of thought, desire, and moral decision.” His description of naming God as knowledge has much in common with an attachment relationship especially that it is compared to romantic love which attachment research has deemed an attachment relationship (e.g. Hazan & Zeifman, 1999; Feeney, 1999). Furthermore, Murray (1965, p. 23) says, “To know God

is to recognize that he is here, in the situation of the moment; it is to recognize his action in the situation whether it be a deed of rescue or of wrath, and it is to respond to his action by a turning to the Lord.” Murray’s description correlates with the secure child’s actions during the strange situation test. The child who is deemed secure recognizes the presence or absence of the parent, notices the parent’s mobilization for proximity, and responds to it with his or her own attempts to gain proximity. In contrast, Murray (1965, p. 23) notes that “to be ignorant of God implies an active ignoring of him, a refusal to recognize him as present in the moment.” Thus the primary distinction between knowledge and ignorance is the recognition of proximity to the presence of God.

In the New Testament the problem of deciphering the name YHWH is transformed to the problem of the name of Jesus (Murray, 1965). Jesus was tempted concerning his own name by Satan when he asked, “If you are the Son of God” (Luke 4.3). Jesus asked the pivotal question concerning His identity to His disciples when he asked, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16.14). Much like an attachment relationship and like the corporate identity of the Hebrew Nation, the early church gained its identity from their naming God the name of Jesus. The early church was persecuted for preaching in the name of Jesus, but they refused to let go of their identity centering on that name (Acts 4. 18-20). The early church preached salvation through the name of Jesus alone as the name that correctly identifies God (Acts 4.12). Calling upon the name of the Lord brought salvation (Rom 10. 13). The early church also believed in the lordship of Jesus and that all would one day confess this truth (Phil 2.11). The term *kyrios* which is translated Lord is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word YHWH (Murray, 1965). The confession is that Jesus is YHWH.

Murray (1965) phrases four questions concerning the naming of Jesus within the same categories as the aforementioned questions for the Old Testament person. The existential question asks, “Is God present to his people in the presence of the man Christ Jesus?” The functional question asks, “What is the role of Christ Jesus toward us?” The

noetic question investigates, “How is God now to be known?” The onomastic question seeks to know “How is God now to be named?” Essentially these questions correspond with the other four questions concerning Old Testament revelation, except that they focus on the name of Jesus. Murray (1965) understands the name Emmanuel (God-with-us) as the name for Jesus that creates a Trinitarian perspective of the presence of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The name of Jesus presents God as personally available. The God of the Old Testament is now called Father. The Son bears witness to (testifies) and mediates the divine name. Both are present through the Holy Spirit who is the indwelling Spirit of adoption, who empowers believers to address God by his proper name, “Abba” (Murray, 1965).

Several conclusions can be drawn from Murray’s exposition. First, naming God is an act that seeks proximity to God much in the way an attachment behavior does. Second, the Bible reveals the names of God that are to lead to inner transformational experiences that clear up misconceptions concerning God and that offers felt security to believers in terms of the availability and support that God offers. Third, and related to the second, God’s name gives believers a sense of personal and communal identity like it did for the Hebrew nation and the early church; furthermore, the identity naming God offers is of a child of God that is empowered to call upon “Abba.” Fourth, the name of God is correctly given preference by Ricoeur (Ford, 1999) in that the threefold testimony of the Trinity extinguishes the hermeneutic distance of interpretation that normally exists between the three degrees of testimony in that the Trinitarian testimony occurs simultaneous.

Finally it should be noticed that naming God contains all the elements demanded of a postpostmodern perspective. First, it takes very seriously the subjective experience of the individual. In attachment theory, the individual is in need of proximity to an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969/1982) to experience an inner sense of felt security (Kobak, 1999). The individual is valued by the attachment figure as part of the affection

bond. Ricoeur also views esteem as a necessary part of the development and of a self (Ricoeur, 1992). His self esteem is not one of egocentrism, but instead serves as the foundation of the self that can recognize others as oneself and oneself as another (Ricoeur, 1992). Attachment research seems to support the connection between self-esteem and god images: people who view God as loving tend to have more positive self-esteem and more positive self concepts than those who do not (Kirkpatrick, 2005; Benson & Spilka, 1973; Buri & Mueller, 1993; Spilka et al., 1975). In worship the believer is delighted in by God and inversely learns to value God above the self. From an attachment perspective, the delight of God would give enough security to the individual so that he or she can, without anxious or avoidant defenses, give of his or her self. Naming God is the act of drawing close to God based on trust that has been developed through the love of Christ and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The person is given the confidence to accept the full repercussion of being a child of God. Ricoeur (1988) claims that one's personal identity can be reconfigured through the internalization of new narratives. Learning the revealed name of God occurs through the confession of Jesus as YHWH, and through the gospel story in which this fact is narrated. Because the narrative is the mediating function of attachment (including identity of self, others, and God) a change in the person's testimony through the naming of God, would result in a changed identity.

Second, naming God demands a metanarrative by which the name of God is evaluated as accurate or distorted. The postpostmodern perspective as espoused by Watson (2004) accepts the presence of metanarratives as a valued source of knowledge, but demands self critique and respect toward the critique of opposing systems of thought. The love that Girard (1978) suggested was that the gospel unlocks all other words and thus vivifies all truth rather than opposing it. Added to this limited acceptance of metanarratives is Ricoeur's (1995) idea that the Bible is a gift in the form of narrative that tells and retells the name of God. Therefore, the biblical perspective tells stories that aid

in the formation of accurate names for God, the name “Abba” seems especially important for attachment to God purposes.

Third, naming God supplies an ethic that is largely missing from the postmodern narrative therapies (Lee, 2004). The primary ethic is to esteem others as oneself (Lev 19.18; Mark 12.31). This is the paradox of esteem: only an esteemed self can esteem others better than the self for an unesteemed self will focus too greatly upon gaining esteem to love others. Conviction is the term that Ricoeur gives to the ability to give primacy to the other over the self. Furthermore, it is through the example of He who bears the name of God, namely Jesus, that conviction is most readily seen. The mimetic affects of the selfless act of the crucifixion produce a reflection of this sort of love for others. It was Bowlby (1969/1982) who believed IWM’s of self and others tend to be mutually complementary early in life (Kirkpatrick, 2005) and it would seem that the crucifixion narrative would reflect the nature of Christ as having a secure but altruistic identity that would transfer to those who seek attachment to God through Christ.

Fourth, naming God through Jesus Christ presents a psychological system with a higher order teleology than survival or reproduction (Lee, 2004). Romans 8.15-16 which describes the process of naming God “Abba,” is followed by the following progression: if a person is a child of God then they are a joint heir with Christ to partake in both His inherited reward and His suffering. The teleology for a Christian metanarrative that focuses on naming God through the testimony of Jesus is being conformed to the image (identity) of Christ (Rom 8.29). The story of Christ becomes the master story by which those who trust in His testimony conform (Gormann, 2001). Gormann (2001) refers to this process as cruciformity and understands it to be the narrative spirituality of Paul. Cruciformity is similar to Ricoeur’s term conviction in that both demand giving of the self (Ricoeur, 1995). Such teleology seems to be of a higher order than merely attaching to the others for the sake of fitness and survival, which are

quite selfish motives. What is clear is that in paradoxical fashion the security of the self leads to an ethic of agape toward others.

Therapeutic Application

In summary, testimony is the life narrative of a person that describes the human-divine relationship. This narrative is indicative of one's attachment style with God, of the mediating function of attachment experiences (first degree testimony) and one's internal identity (third degree testimony). Testimony is not only a story (noun) it is also an indicator of psychological and spiritual dynamics (verb) that testify to the soulcare provider for his or her aid in forming more secure attachment narratives, but also testify to the speaker as the telling of the testimony calls for reinterpretation as it is reheard. Change is offered by the soulcare provider in the form of facilitating the process of naming God. The goal is to name Him "Abba" referring to the ability to signal God as representative of a secure attachment and belonging. The Trinity testifies to this invitation to know God as "Abba" in all three of Ricoeur's degrees of testimony. The primary narrative that creates security is that of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as the clearest name of God. Counselors experience in this story the God of sacrificial love and invitation to a relationship.

It is proposed that soulcare providers enter more directly into conversations concerning attachment to God. The Adult Attachment to God Interview (AAGI) is proposed not as a research tool but as a clinical tool for investigating attachments to God. The AAGI is a derivative of the AAI in form but would be a helpful interview process:

1. To begin with, what role did God play in your family – church attendance, intensity, teachings, or traditions?
2. Now I would like you to describe your relationship with God as far back as you can remember.
3. Could you give five adjectives or phrases to describe your relationship with God during childhood/adolescence? I'll write them down, and when we have all five I'll ask you to tell me what memories of experiences led you to choose each one.

4. Which member of the Trinity do you feel closest and why?
5. How did you handle being upset as a child/adolescent?
6. Can you describe the first time you felt separated from God.
7. Have you ever felt rejected by God? If so do you think God knew you felt that way?
8. Was God ever threatening toward you – for discipline or jokingly?
9. How do you think your early experiences of God affect your adult personality? Are there aspects you consider a setback to development?
10. Why do you think God has behaved as he has toward you?
11. Did you ever experience the loss of God or feel that he was absent from you? When was that and why do you think this occurred?
12. Were there many changes in your relationship with God from childhood to adulthood?
13. What is your current relationship like with God?

These questions form a helpful interview to discover specifics about a person's attachment to God. The soulcare provider can listen especially for inconsistency concerning images of God as an indicator of attachment to God style. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the type of discourse could be analyzed according to the scales for interpreting attachment narratives offered above. This process will be further explained in chapter 6 and illustrated in chapter 7. At this point it should be clear that the testimony is a multifaceted construct that may give access to the soulcare provider of a person's attachment to God, and is a pivotal and powerful tool for transformation.

CHAPTER 6

APPLICATION OF AN ATTACHMENT TO GOD THEORY IN CHRISTIAN SOULCARE

Bowlby (1988) communicated his regret that attachment theory had been so little used in diagnosis and treatment of patients in therapy in comparison to its use in research. To this date, the voluminous publications of attachment research overshadow the number of works that focus on attachment therapy, although attachment therapy is receiving a great deal of attention in a variety of areas. However, therapeutic applications of attachment to God are few and far between. Clinton and Sibcy (2002) devote a chapter to attachment with God with their primary focus being spiritual disciplines as a vehicle for increasing security in attachments to God. While spiritual disciplines can certainly play a role in attachment to God, the impact of such practices would seem to be limited due to the fact that each person would approach those disciplines in a manner congruent with his or her IWM. The anxious person would approach prayer anxiously, and so on. The disciplines themselves would simply perpetuate and reinforce the working models of the individual. Furthermore, an exclusive spiritual discipline approach to attachment to God is a behaviorist type of modality that neglects the more complex and deeply integrated factors that influence any attachment relationship, especially working models. New information, emotional experiences, or relational impact is needed along with the disciplines to adjust these working models.

The current criteria for an application of attachment to God in Christian soulcare demand certain parameters guide the presented methodology. The first criterion is that the application must focus on non-pathological population. Attachment aids in meeting this criterion due to its focus on the general population (Bowlby, 1969/1982).

Brisch (1999) offers attachment therapeutic perspectives that relate to adult symptomology and pathology including anxiety, panic, agoraphobia, depression, narcissism, and borderline personality (see Greenberg, 1999; Dozier et al., 1999). Because the use of the current application is intended for Christian soulcare providers, the primary recipients of the method would be the non-pathological community, although knowledge of the relationship between attachment and pathology would be helpful. A therapeutic plan that aids in the increasing of security in the attachment relationship to God for the general populous is greatly needed. Attachment based therapy with adults raises its own dilemma in that adults have consolidated their representation, as functional or dysfunctional as it may be, and these representations are less pliable than those of children who are in the process of consolidating their representations (Toth, Cicchetti, Macfie, Maughan, & Vanmeenen, 2001).

The second criterion is that the application must be unique to attachment theory and it must derive from the best of attachment research. While much of attachment theory correlates to some degree with other psychological theories, there are certain distinctions in the theory that allow for unique approaches to therapy. Bowlby (1988) pointed out the similarities between the attachment therapeutic relationship and Winnicott's concept of "holding" (Sable, 2000), but he was also clear in the distinctions of attachment theory from psychodynamic theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982). A great deal of attachment therapy has focused on the integration of attachment therapy with other types. For instance, Fonagy (2001) attempted to integrate attachment therapy with psychoanalysis. Others seek to combine family systems theory with attachment (e.g. Johnson, 2002). While it is true that attachment therapy will have much in common with other therapies, there seems to also be some possibilities of unique contributions of methodology within the therapeutic process. Attachment research, especially the AAI, has given some keen insights that contain therapeutic ramifications.

The third criterion is that the goal of the application of this theory is a more secure relationship with God. While other goals are necessary and even admirable, this theory will concentrate on ways of enhancing security with God. Therefore other aspects such as depression (Simpson & Rholes, 2004), developmental considerations (Cooper, Albino, Orcutt, & Williams, 2004), trauma and PTSD (Kobak, Cassidy, & Ziv, 2004; Johnson, 2002), and marital disharmony (Johnson, 2004) do not fit this criterion. Once again, these and other symptoms have great ramifications for attachment to God, but do not fit the scope of a therapeutic methodology intent on increasing security in attachment to God.

The first section of this chapter will discuss therapeutic dynamics common to attachment therapy and not specific to soulcare. This section will explore the role of the therapeutic bond, the role of emotions in attachment therapy, and images of self and other as they influence working models. The second section will delineate the goals of an attachment to God soulcare application, many of which have already been alluded to but need further clarification. The final section will attempt to outline a specific methodology for creating more secure attachments with God. The suggestions are that the human/divine relationship is a potent topic for soulcare, narrative is the primary manner in which this can be done holistically and efficiently, the role of the soulcare provider is “narrator,” and the goal is a more cohesive, collaborative, and consistent narrative that results in a transformed image of self and God. Furthermore, illustrations of this methodology are presented in a separate chapter (see chapter 7). The current chapter seeks to set out general theoretical guidelines while chapter seven seeks to apply those guidelines to specific cases.

General Therapeutic Dynamics in Attachment Therapy

While the criteria set forth for the current theory seeks to delineate a methodology that is unique to attachment to God, it is clear that certain factors need to be

stated because they are common to all attachment therapy. Also, debate within Christian counseling (Johnson & Jones, 2000) concerning the role of the therapist, the role of emotions, and the role of psychological or mental representation demands that such issues be clarified.

The Therapeutic Bond

Detachment of the therapist in psychotherapy was once thought to be a necessity. Psychodynamic theories contend that the relationship between the therapist and the client is the vehicle of transformation, especially through transference and counter-transference (Scharff & Scharff, 1995, 1998). Attachment theory agrees that the therapeutic bond is essential for successful counseling. Bowlby (1988) understood the secure base that the therapist offers to the client to be similar to the concept of “holding.” However, several differences exist as well. One difference is that the attachment relationship in therapy is not a reenactment of the attachment bond that clients had with parents early in life (Brisch, 1999). It is important to remember that adult attachment is most easily understood in terms of working models that represent clusters of attachment experiences. The adult has developed an interpretive strategy for integrating these experiences and displays the chosen strategy unconsciously in narrative form (Hesse, 1999). Bowlby (1996/1982, 1973, 1980) believes that new relationships could alter working models as they were integrated into the hermeneutic strategy. Thus, a therapeutic relationship has the potential to transform a person’s internal working model in terms of degree of security. Therefore, the therapeutic relationship is transformative as a new attachment relationship rather than a reenactment of old attachment relationships.

Another difference between the psychodynamic therapeutic bond and an attachment therapeutic bond has to do with the role of reality versus fantasy. Bowlby (1988) believed that the client’s accounts of the past were relatively accurate reflections of real events that occurred, in contrast to a psychoanalytic understanding of persons

being driven by fantasy and instinct. The therapist is not trying to manipulate old fantasies into new realities. Rather, the therapist attempts to offer a new reality through the therapeutic relationship, and to aid in the integration of the new reality into the working model. Unconscious regions are still important in attachment therapy. Brisch (1999) notes that two working models of the same relationship may exist: one accessible to consciousness and the other defensively excluded from awareness. The attachment therapist attempts to access the unconscious working model, but not for the purpose of regression and repair. The purpose for accessing the unconscious working model is to integrate it into the hermeneutic strategy in a congruent and cohesive manner. Bowlby (1969/1982) believed that the attachment system was not driven by fantasy and instinct, but internal processes that attempt to control the environment for the sake of safety. Unconscious regions are accessed for the purpose of integrating all psychological material into a cohesive and balanced strategy for interacting with the environment. Thus the approach of attachment therapists, much like attachment theorists, is prospective rather than retrospective (Bowlby, 1969/1982). The therapist seeks to facilitate new events and relationships that can alter current working models into more secure units that allow greater intimacy, that is, more closeness for the avoidant person and more autonomy for the anxious person.

Greggo (1998) follows the definition of the therapeutic alliance given by Edwin Bordin. Bordin (quoted in Greggo, 1998, p. 3) defines the concept as a collaborative interpersonal process that leads to “a mutual understanding and agreement about change goals and the necessary task to move forward these goals along with the establishment of bonds to maintain the partner’s work.” Greggo also quotes Tournier (1994) when he says,

I know that every patient has a double need: a need for the best possible technical help, and a need for support, for every patient is a person going through a crisis in regard to support. My professional experience has taught me . . . that one can be a support to others despite one’s technical insufficiencies, and that the best specialist

has not finished his task if all he has done is provide the support of his scientific knowledge (quoted in Greggo, 1998, p. 3).

Thus the therapeutic relationship is a vital part of counseling success.

The therapeutic relationship has much in common with an attachment relationship. Sable (2000, p. 332) points to the transformative power of the therapeutic alliance when she says, "Above all, experiencing secure attachment with the therapist offers a reparative relationship that is emotionally healing and can compensate to some extent for earlier painful experiences." Sable notes that three particular functions of a secure base are contained in the therapeutic relationship. First, the caregiver offers a secure environment for the sake of exploration. Together, the client and therapist explore the environment of the client's life including relationships, events, and patterns. Furthermore, exploration also occurs of the client's inner world and greater knowledge of one's self is garnered. Second, the caregiver offers a place of refuge during moments of anxiety overload. This occurs even more often with the pastoral caregiver who finds him or herself available in the midst of crisis at a moment's notice. Scheduled counseling appointments may offer a similar emotional refuge, but it does so with more rigid boundaries and professional distance. Third, the caregiver is a "stronger and wiser" one who offers guidance during times of indecision. Holmes (1997) adds that the structure of therapy, which contain a beginning and an ending, provide an opportunity on behalf of the client to understand and deal with inevitable partings in life.

Individuals are already in distress when they seek help; therefore, the attachment system has already been activated (Sable, 2000). Even with this in mind, the pace at which an attachment is formed with the therapist is informative (Sable, 2000). It would seem that those with anxious attachment styles would be more likely to form attachments very quickly, perhaps too quickly. Persons with anxious attachment styles are more likely to cling to an attachment figure and thus are more likely to form a bond rapidly. However, this may indicate a malfunction in the attachment system. The therapist is a stranger at this point and a bond that forms too quickly may indicate an

anxiety on the part of the client that is expressed in a relationally fused and clinging manner. Persons with an avoidant style of attachment may take much longer to bond with the caregiver. On the other hand, resistance to connect is a sign that others are not to be trusted, or at least not to be easily trusted. Persons with secure attachment styles are free to connect or free to avoid connection and need not do either out of compulsion. After an appropriate time of building trust, secure persons will attach to the therapist.

The caregiver must offer a secure base to the person cared for (Holmes, 2001). This will require all of the secure base elements: availability, responsiveness, and attunement. Holmes (2001) and Byng-Hall (1999) offer several suggestions for secure base functioning on the part of the therapist. First, the therapist provides a secure emotional base through emotional proximity and attunement. The client will develop trust in the therapist as the therapist is able to empathize and connect with the client's emotional state. Second, the therapist and client create a working alliance. Different attachment styles will require different strategies for forming the alliance on the part of the therapist. The avoidant person will be leery of the process, and the therapist must respect this caution and allow the client time to gradually feel safe and move at his or her own pace. A therapist who offers more closeness than the patient can handle may trigger a premature separation on the part of the client with an avoidant attachment style (Brisch, 1999). The person with an anxious attachment style might mask his or her anxiety by accepting the process too quickly, and may need to be helped to find his or her own investment in the process. The person with a disorganized attachment style will lack a consistent attachment strategy and may oscillate, miss early sessions, or even drop out. In this instance the supervisor must be patient and continue to approach the person until a sense of felt security can be formed. It is important to remember that safety comes as the client discovers that the therapist will alarm the student about potential dangers, facilitate exploration, be available during perceived dangerous moments, and be consistent in actions and attitudes. Holmes (2001) refers also to the therapist's ability to tolerate the

state of the client with a sense of confidence that meanings will eventually emerge.

Third, the therapist will challenge the client's inconsistencies, assumptions, and relationship patterns to the degree that exploration can be tolerated. Fourth, the therapist and client seek to maintain a balance being neither too far apart or too close together.

Holmes (2001) describes this as the "freedom of movement." The therapist will resist the anxious client's clinging behavior while taking effort to move toward the avoidant client.

(Brisch, 1999). The therapist serves as a model for dealing with separation (Brisch, 1999).

Two primary reasons exist for highlighting the role of the therapeutic bond in an attachment type of therapy. The first reason is that it is proven to be effective. The quality of the therapeutic alliance is linked to higher satisfaction levels of therapy on the part of clients (Justitz, 2002). It also seems that the client's attachment style has much more to do with satisfaction in counseling than does the attachment style of the therapist (Justitz, 2002). Furthermore, client attachment to therapist is positively associated to the amount of psychological exploration within a therapy session (Porter, 2003). Greggo (1998, pp. 3-4) suggests,

Research over the past 20 years and across six different research groups has investigated the précis conditions, steps, and features of this alliance as well as how to measure it (Horvath & Greenberg, 1994). The conclusion that a significant correlation exists between the development of a 'good enough' relationship and positive outcomes in therapy has been replicated time and time again. I would also suggest that if you were to survey counselors from a variety of positions, the alliance would surface at some point in their description as a useful construct.

Greggo (1998, p. 4) goes on to argue that the lack of an alliance in neuthetic counseling and behavioristic confrontation of sin is one of the reasons that this model lacks "potency."

The second reason for highlighting the therapeutic bond is that its function is congruent with the task of building more secure attachments to God. Greggo (1998) outlines theological foundations that align an attachment to God concept with scripture. He notes that man is made in the image of God for a relationship, that relationship has

been broken through the Fall in the Garden of Eden, God has pursued a relationship with persons, and through Christ a secure base is offered with God. Greggo (1998, p. 9) concludes:

Counselors work in conjunction with a counselee to form an alliance which provides a secure enough bond to activate a supportive experience which allows for risk taking and change in emotional, cognitive, or behavioral areas. The Christian counselor may indirectly or directly acknowledge with the client that the greatest resource for security and care is from a spiritual relationship with our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. The therapeutic relationship becomes the face-to-face encounter which reassures, reawakens or realigns the client's experience of past attachment relationships and attempts to offer a foretaste of, or foster a renewed dependence/attachment on our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ under the facilitative work of the Holy Spirit. Such an alliance provides the therapeutic component to make realization of the tasks and goals of counseling possible.

Thus the relationship between caregiver and client/parishioner becomes a conduit to increasing security in attachment to God. The therapeutic alliance realizes the potential of a helping believer to be the "body of Christ" to others and to take on the function of Christ which was to bring about peace between humans and God (Eph 2.16).

Emotions in Attachment Therapy

Emotions play a crucial role in attachment therapy. This is primarily due to the fact that attachment relationships form through an attachment bond that is fueled by emotion. While not all emotionally significant relationships form an attachment, all attachment relationships are emotionally significant and usually hold the place of being of central importance (Weiss, 1982). In therapy, the proximity that the client experiences with the therapist is primarily in terms of emotional proximity rather than physical (Holmes, 2001). Thus the therapist utilizes empathy and attunement to achieve this emotional proximity, in much of the same manner that it is utilized in therapies guided by other schools of psychology. Thus, emotions play a vital role in attachment therapy (Fosha, 2002).

Specific emotions accompany an individual's appraisal of an attachment figure's availability (Kobak, 1999). Fear, anger, and sadness are three emotions

commonly experienced during an interpretation of a threat to separation with an attachment figure. Kobak (1999) notes that fear holds a dominant role over other activities during separation from an attachment figure and it activates the attachment system. Anger often increases when the attachment figure is perceived to be unavailable. Kobak (1999) summarizes Bowlby's understanding of the two functions of anger when it occurs as a result of temporary estrangement from an attachment figure: it can motivate the person to reunite with an attachment figure, and it can discourage the attachment figure from being unavailable again. However, anger can be expressed in dysfunctional ways as well. Sadness also accompanies attachment separation. While fear and anger motivate reunion with the attachment figure, sadness usually occurs as the attached person accepts the loss of an attachment figure. Reunion with an attachment figure can cause elation on the part of the attached person, though this would also depend upon the attachment style of the person because those with an avoidant style may resist such emotional reactions.

Emotions play an influential role upon the formation of attachment strategies. It was Ricouer who suggested that narratives are emotionally latent. Ricouer also focused a great deal upon the hermeneutic capacity and the processes that this capacity undertakes. Emotions play a large role in the development of narratives (cf. Cozolino, 2002). At this point, two important factors converge and create insight of ultra importance for a Christian attachment to God therapy. First, narrative style is an indicator of attachment strategies that correlate with Ainsworth's strange situation test (Hesse, 1999). Second, emotions function in motivational and self-reflective manners so that they influence the type of attachment strategy created or chosen by an individual (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Attachment strategies are not purely cognitive analysis of a given situation, but rather are emotionally motivated and influenced. Thus affect regulation is both a window into the attachment style of a person as well as a result of it. Affect

regulation and attachment style enjoy a reciprocal relationship and both are major determining factors upon narrative style.

Tompkins (1962, 1963, 1987) claims that humans choose behavioral patterns based on rules that he calls “scripts.” The concept of scripts combines narrative with emotionally latent hermeneutics. Scripts are defined as “sets of rules for ordering, interpreting, evaluating, predicting, and controlling scenes – that is, structures of personality, that affect information processing and behavioral patterns and thus regulate ongoing affect” (Magai & McFadden 1995, p. 23). The terms “script” and “scene” imply a narrative motif. While affect regulation is an outcome of the script, the ordering of the script is influenced by emotions. Tompkins lists five different kinds of scripts that are epitomized by certain emotions (Magai & McFadden, 1995). Affluence scripts are aesthetic in nature and involve things of intrinsic value to the individual. They are associated by positive affects of joy and interest. Damage repair scripts involve good scenes that have changed from affluence to damage but can be repaired. The dominant emotion in these scripts is shame. Limitation remediation scripts are those in which the individual confronts aspects of life that are less than optimal but can be improved. The dominant emotion attached to this script is distress. Decontamination scripts include scenes that have become tainted but can be purified. Disgust, rejection, and repulsion are primary emotions that label these scripts. Toxic and antitoxic scripts bear intolerable punishment that must be avoided, escaped, or eliminated. While a person has many different kinds of scripts, the primary concern has to do with the ordering of the scripts. Scripts are ordered in some type of composite form until a dominant hermeneutic strategy is developed and a life narrative is formed utilizing the chosen strategy. Perhaps the attachment narrative is one type of these interpretations that result from composite scenes and scripts.

Holmes (2001) claims that balance in affect regulation is one goal for attachment therapy. While there seems to be no link between attachment style and

experience of emotions, there does seem to be a link between attachment and expression of emotion (Fonagy, Noller, & Roberts, 1998). Insecure attachment styles carry with them an imbalance in attachment regulation of one sort or another. The avoidant-dismissing category is characterized by over-regulation of emotions. Free expression of emotions, especially negative emotions, is minimal and structures for repressing emotions are entrenched (Slade, 1999). Thus persons in this category tend to minimize affects that would disrupt attachment relationships (Cassidy, 1994). On the other end of the continuum, the anxious-preoccupied category struggles with under-regulating emotions (Slade, 1999). This category is characterized with having few structures to regulate affect. The designation of “preoccupied” is particularly apt in that these persons are preoccupied with dominant emotions that keep their attention away from self-monitoring. The disorganized category is also characterized by affect dis-regulation, but the lack of a consistent strategy prohibits this category from being given a stable place on the affect regulation continuum (Slade, 1999). The secure category is characterized by expressions of emotion that are balanced both in intensity and evaluation (good and bad) (Holmes, 2001). Thus Holmes (2001) gives three separate goals for affect regulation in attachment therapy, designating one for each of the insecure styles. First, avoidant persons are helped to achieve emotional intimacy and generally be more open to expressions of emotions. Second, anxious persons are helped to gain a distance from themselves and to gain greater perspective concerning their emotions. Third, the goal for disorganized persons is to gain coherence. Thus the therapist dually seeks to foster intimacy and autonomy and may foster one or the other depending upon which attachment style the client has chosen (Holmes, 2001).

It should be noted that persons may attempt to use different attachment strategies in different situations. In fact, Brisch (1999) suggests that two working models of the same relationship can form at the same time, with one being conscious and the other unconscious. This does explain the tendency in marriage for one spouse to choose

a non-dominant approach to the relationship when his or her spouse chooses to take an opposite behavioral pattern from the usual. Therefore, it is more helpful to think of patient's attachment styles in terms of a continuum rather than category (Holmes, 2001; Slade, 1999). The continuum model describes persons as having dominant attachment styles and it allows for degrees of (in)security. Even with this in mind, the attachment categories are very helpful as metaphors in clinical listening (Slade, 1999; see Lichtenberg, 1989). Therefore, affect regulation is a primary indicator of attachment dynamics that open a window into the attachment system of the patient as the therapist listens to the emotional content of the patient and experiences the emotion transferred in the therapeutic relationship.

Cognition in Attachment Therapy

While the attachment system is motivated by emotional organization, beliefs and thoughts play a crucial role as well. The IWM contains beliefs concerning self and others that influence the attachment system. In fact, Bowlby borrowed some concepts from Piaget (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999) in his own thinking about IWM's. The IWM then has much in common with the schema concept found in cognitive science (Bucci, 1997). The IWM is the mental representation of relationships that derives from an amalgam of attachment experiences that are ordered and integrated by a hermeneutic process that utilizes one of the attachment strategies. While IWM's do contain affect, they are ordered and integrated by generalized beliefs. Thus, these beliefs are instrumental in the relational patterns that any person develops. For instance, research indicates that maltreatment of children likely results in negative representations of self and of others (Toth et al., 2001)

IWM beliefs center upon two categories: beliefs about self and beliefs about attachment figures. Bartholomew (1990) has developed four categories of self and other images that relate to the four attachment categories as they are defined in the AAI. The

secure style created through both a positive model of self and others is characterized by comfort with intimacy and autonomy. The preoccupied pattern is characterized by a negative model of self and a positive model of others, and thus clings to others in a frantic need for esteem. The dismissing pattern is characterized by a positive model of self and a negative model of others, thus these persons avoid others as not trustworthy enough for connection. The fearful pattern is characterized by a negative model of self and other, thus it creates a situation of social isolation.

While at first glance it may appear that selfish affirmation is the focus of repairing such beliefs, this would not be accurate. An ethical dimension of care for others is included. Bretherton and Munholland (1999, p. 91) sum up the nature of the reciprocal relationship of self image with images of others:

A working model of self as valued and competent, according to this view, is constructed in the context of a working model of parents as emotionally available, but also as supportive of exploratory activities. Conversely, a working model of self as devalued and incompetent is the counterpart of a working model of parents as rejecting or ignoring of attachment behavior and/or interfering with exploration. Thus the developing complementary models of self and parents, taken together, represent both sides of the relationship.

Thus, models of self and other integrate together to form an attachment strategy that is primarily derived from an interpretive process that examines these different models and the nature of the relationship between these models. The result of this process is a secure, preoccupied, dismissing, or disorganized attachment strategy displayed in narrative accounts of attachment relationships and in attachment behaviors. Ricoeur (1992) offers the reminder that the ethical stance of a person is partially determined by the nature of the relationship with self and other. He urges persons to see the “self as other” and the “other as self.” He also notes that conviction, the stance of placing others before the self, is impossible without a proper amount of self esteem, thus solidifying the reciprocal nature of the model of self with the model of others.

The result of this type of thinking concerning IWM’s is that beliefs about self and others are of primary importance for attachment therapy. In fact investigating images

of self and others is a primary task of the attachment relationship (Byng- Hall, 1999).

While a cognitive approach by itself will not be affective due to the need for new attachment relationships, this approach is important as beliefs reciprocally influence the attachment system and vice versa.

Conclusion

A therapy that is truly in line with attachment concepts will be multifaceted and holistic. Relational, affective, and cognitive factors are taken into account. While certain psychological theories find one of these three aspects to be the dominant factor in human development and behavior, an attachment therapy will seek to encounter all three dynamics. Furthermore, it will seek to understand the way that these three aspects interact with one another to form, maintain, and transform IWM's. Attachment relationships are the crucible for human development. This crucible contains within it emotional experiences that cause the child to sense danger or safety at various times. The attachment figure's repeated presence, availability, and responsiveness or lack thereof creates patterns in the mind of the child who eventually comes to expect certain outcomes. These expectations eventually develop into mental models and are mediated by an interpretive process that integrates these experiences into working models. Attachment therapy will utilize the therapeutic relationship to form an attachment so that the attachment system is activated and malleable. New experiences with affect in the therapeutic relationship and the consideration of new models of self and others results in an alteration in the IWM. All of these factors apply to an attachment to God therapeutic technique as the environment in which this technique is to be used.

Hermeneutics and Attachment

Much of what has been stated has much in common with other therapeutic models. For instance, psychodynamic theory will utilize the relationship for transformation (Scharff, 1995, 1998). Emotion focused therapy will seek to activate

systems of affect and to offer new emotional experiences that are more functional (Greenberg & Paivio, 1997). Finally, cognitive behavioral theory will seek to explore mental schemas and to transition psychological models (Bucci, 1997). However, it is in the area of hermeneutics, especially as the hermeneutic account of attachment as represented in a life narrative, that one finds the most original and unique form of attachment therapy. The hermeneutic process is complex containing several tasks: interpreting attachment experiences, integrating those experiences into a strategy, and behaving within the interpretive rules one has set for him or her self. This process is influenced by relational, affective, and cognitive factors and is an ever changing construct due to the appearance of new relationships and experiences. It is this hermeneutic process that is the pivot point of the attachment system and it is accessible to care-givers through the availability of attachment narratives. In fact, changes in coherence of narrative have been shown to predict changes in symptoms (Vail, 2003). Thus, a truly unique attachment therapy will focus upon the hermeneutic task.

It is important to remember that it is not the types of experiences with attachment figures that are most significant to the attachment system, but rather it is the interpretation of those experiences that is most vital. In chapter two it was pointed out that some persons with traumatic experiences in childhood are able to develop secure IWM's and vice versa. Thus it is not the raw experience alone that is determinant of attachment style. Holmes (2001) claims that raw experience plus meaning equals narrative, thus noting the importance of the interpretation of events through memory.

The AAI has given empirical evidence to this point, noting that it is in the construction of attachment narratives that unconscious attachment styles are revealed (Hesse, 1999). It is important to recall that it is not the content of the attachment experiences, whether they were good or bad, that is most determinant of attachment patterns, but rather it is the type of construction of narratives that is most determinant, especially as to whether the narrative passes Grice's (1975, 1989) principles of rational

discourse: quality, quantity, relation, and manner. Add to this evidence Ricoeur's (1981, 1988, 1992, 1995) understanding of the hermeneutic self, which understands the primary function of human development to be interpretive, and a solid case is built for the centrality of hermeneutics as interpretation of attachment experiences in attachment therapy. Attachment styles are then general strategies for understanding relationships based on memories of past relationship experiences. Therefore, hermeneutics is the mediating force between attachment memories and current attachment behavior.

It is suggested that the most unique and potent contribution of attachment theory to therapy is the role of narrative style. While narrative therapy seeks to form new realities of content in old narratives in a social constructivist manner (see White & Epston, 1990), an attachment approach to narrative therapy seeks to alter interpretations of events through the development of a more cohesive and coherent narrative (Holmes, 1998).

Two concepts seem particularly apt in understanding the skills required to develop coherent and cohesive narratives. Main (1991) speaks of the capacity for "metacognitive monitoring" of memories and language as the ability to "examine the evidence afresh, even while the interview is in progress" (Main & Goldwyn, 1998, p. 161; quoted in Hesse, 1999, p. 401). Slade (1999, p. 580) notes that "Main suggests that coherence and the capacity to collaborate with the listener are the sequelae of the adult's having formed a single, internally consistent working model of attachment; such a model allows for the integration of all attachment-relevant information and memories." The secure adult has access to all attachment information and memories and can integrate them into a coherent and consistent narrative. The AAI classifications are helpful to discern what the laps may be in metacognitive monitoring. The preoccupied classification speaks of monitoring lapses due to preoccupation of certain attachment memories that dominate other attachment memories resulting in a lack of consistency in narrative. The dismissing classification speaks of monitoring lapses due to a dismissal of

attachment related memories and information that results in inconsistency due to missing materials. The disorganized classification does not have a strategy for monitoring attachment memories and information. The secure classification is represented by consistent narratives that take all information into account and make realistic and balanced appraisals of that information. Main's primary concern is not what story is told, but when, where, and how the story breaks down (Slade, 1999). Incoherence arises in a number of ways: in breaks and disruptions in the story, inconsistencies, contradictions, lapses, irrelevancies, and shifts in person (Slade, 1999). Slade (1999, p. 582) calls these mechanisms of incoherence "linguistic efforts to manage what cannot be integrated or regulated in experience or memory." The therapist is involved in discourse analysis of the story, and seeks to view the story from a semantic level rather than a content level alone.

The second term that aids in understanding the construct that therapists need to tap into is the concept of "reflective functioning." Fonagy and colleagues (Fonagy, Steele, Moran, & Higgitt, 1991; Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Leigh, Kenedy, Mattoon, & Target, 1995; Fonagy & Target, 1996; Target & Fonagy, 1996) have developed this concept from Main's idea of metacognitive monitoring. These researchers suggest that metacognitive monitoring and coherence of narrative indicate the capacity of a person to "reflect" upon "internal dynamic experience in a complex and dynamic fashion" (Slade, 1999, p. 581). Fonagy (1997) coined the term "mentalize" which refers to a person's ability to perceive and understand oneself and the behavior of others in terms of mental state. The reflective function has several purposes. First, it allows a person to make sense of his or her own psychological processes. Second, it allows a person predict the psychological state of others. Third, it allows a person to adapt to new situations. Slade (1999, p. 581) claims that the "development of the reflective function allows the child to make other's behavior meaningful and predictable, and permits him or her to respond adaptively in a range of interpersonal situations. It permits a more developed, complex,

and affective representation of the self, inner experience, and intimate relationships.”

Insecure attachment styles indicate an adaptation to the environment that has hindered a person’s reflective functioning by forming defensive modes of reflecting upon the state of oneself and the state of others. Although the process is largely mental, it is not purely cognitive. In fact, Fonagy and his colleagues (1995) claim that coherence is a manifestation of the capacity to reflect upon one’s internal emotional experiences. Therefore, reflective function is a cognitive maneuver of organizing and integrating one’s own emotional states and seeking to discern the states of others.

Holmes (1998) lists three components of a securely attached reflective self functioning. The first component is the ability to distinguish one’s feelings and experiences from others. Winnicott (1969) suggests that the “capacity to be alone” is the psychological skill necessary to distinguish self from others. If this is true then it is during the times of separation from an attachment figure that one develops this ability. Perhaps it is safety in the absence of an attachment figure due to assurance of that figure’s reliability and availability if needed that is most fertile for this skill. The second component is the ability to tell a story of one’s feelings. The preoccupied person cannot tell a complete or a concise story due to the dominance of certain feelings and memories. The dismissing person cannot access feelings to the degree that a vivid story latent with affect can be told. The third component is the ability to restructure narratives so that are kept up to date. In the therapeutic context a client is asked to spontaneously reflect upon his or her life in ways that ask for a summary of life events as well as new insights that may be important to integrate. Therapy offers opportunities for a person to hone all three of these skills (Slade, 1999).

Holmes (1998) adds that the therapeutic task for these narratives is “story-making” and “story-breaking.” Story breaking includes indicating inconsistencies and seeking more consistent patterns. Story making involves offering more coherent patterns for the story so it can be told in a new light. Holmes (1998) believes that both skills are

necessary: to make coherent stories and to be able to break those stories in light of new experiences. Furthermore, Holmes (1998) identifies three dysfunctional narrative patterns: clinging to rigid stories (dismissing pattern); being overwhelmed by unstoried experiences (preoccupied pattern); and an inability to find a narrative strong enough to contain traumatic pain (unresolved pattern). Holmes' suggestions (1998, 2001) will aid as guiding principles to be applied to therapeutic application for attachment to God.

Developing More Secure Attachments to God

If Kirkpatrick (1992, 1997, 2005) is correct in his suggestion that a relationship with God functions as an attachment relationship, then all of the above information is relevant to a method of helping parishioners and clients develop a more secure bond with God. However, it is necessary to establish a working and flexible protocol for soulcare that is specifically directed toward the human-divine relationship. Accomplishing such a task will require several steps. First, goals of this method need to be articulated. Second, assessment tools need to be established. Finally, attachment to God interventions need to be delineated.

The purpose of this protocol is to offer a procedure or method for developing more secure relations with God; however, the goal is not a comprehensive counseling method. Biological, psychosocial, and ethical categories of anthropology are helpful in guiding therapeutic content, because spiritual categories are not the only concern in Christian counseling. However, the human-divine relationship is one vital part of Christian counseling and should be explored, assessed, and transformed. Counseling as a field has struggled to define the role of the human-divine relationship as a subject within therapy. Perhaps Freud (1939, 1962) would allow conversation about God, but would deem it as fantasy and a crutch of dependency. His colleague Carl Jung found spiritual matters to be a vibrant source of psychological energy and transformation as he synthesized Christianity with Eastern religions (Wulff, 1997). Freud's atheistic trajectory

made spiritual matters unfashionable in psychology and in therapy. However, it seems that a shift in secular therapy has begun to take place. Richards and Bergin (1997, p. 6) suggest that it is time that spiritual matters are explored and that “recent professional literature suggests that many clients can be successfully treated only if their spiritual issues are addressed sensitively and capably.” The evangelical movement has struggled with the issue as well as Christian counseling has searched for an identity (Johnson & Jones, 2000). The battle in Christian counseling has primarily been over the nature of the use of the Bible in counseling. Unfortunately this debate has overshadowed the progress needed in developing ways in which the human-divine relationship is explored and applied to other counseling matters. While some have focused on moral counseling that uses the Bible as a corrective device to change behavior, others have been hesitant to mention spiritual matters at all.

Lost in all of this is the need for a dynamic experience with God and the way that counseling can be a vehicle for this experience. Wayne Oates’ (1986, 1962) plea for pastoral counseling to include the Holy Spirit as Counselor in models of therapy needs to be heard. However, it is not enough to simply add God to the conversation of therapy. Rather it is suggested that several factors be practiced in Christian counseling. First, counselees can be given an intake interview concerning his or her relationship with God. The questions from the AAGI, which are listed in chapter five and adapted from the AAI, can be used. If biological, psychological, and social issues are important subjects for the intake of initial information of a client, then spiritual issues would seem just as important especially if the counseling is deemed “Christian” by both the counselor and counselee. Second, general assessments about the person’s attachment relationship with God can be made through this interview (Hodges et al., 2001). Third, the assessments concerning the person’s relationship with God can lead to direct interventions within that relationship. Fourth, the relational pattern discovered in the human-divine relationship can become a

source of comparison for other relationships and other modes of operation. In other words, the attachment relationship with God can give insight into the more general IWM.

Goals of an Attachment to God Therapy

Three goals are set forth for an attachment to God therapeutic method. These goals are seen as outcomes (Holmes, 2001, p. 42 for definition of outcome goals versus process goals) of assessments and interventions in the human-divine attachment relationship. They are observable and offer clear direction for the counselor.

The first goal is the ability to signal God in times of perceived danger. In chapter four, Romans 8.14-17 was highlighted as a goal for attachment to God in that the believer is given the security to call God “Abba,” which is a term of intimate belonging that connotes the idea of security and belonging. Ainsworth (1963, 1967) categorized the ability of the child to signal the attachment figure when in need as a behavior of attachment. A failure in ability to signal the attachment figure indicates either a lack of an attachment bond or avoidance of attachment by the child. Calling upon God as “Abba” is a metaphor for the ability to approach God due to the secure foundation the believer has with God (Heb 4.14-16). The male representation of God should not hinder attachment but might serve as a powerful transforming agent (Page & Bretherton, 2003). Perhaps the pivotal role of father in attachment could be understood as substitute attachment in a compensatory manner because fathers are most often secondary or substitute attachment figures. Various behaviors could represent signaling: authentic prayer, approaching God without shame, approaching God in the midst or after sinning, expressions of worship, and sensations of closeness with God. It should be noted that those with anxious attachments will be able to signal God; however, this signaling will not be out of security but will derive from fear that God might abandon him or her. While this may have the appearance of a healthy attachment, the key is the behavior of that person when reunited to God. Ainsworth (1963, 1967; Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969)

believed that the ability to explore once again after reuniting with attachment figure is an indicator of secure attachment. The person anxiously attached to God will be unable to explore even with God in the background, but will seek to cling to God out of fear in a type of incessant signaling.

The second goal is to establish a healthy emotional life with God. This goal has several subcategories that help to explain what a healthy emotional life is. First, there should be a range of emotions with God. Slade (1999) points out that a healthy emotional relationship is able to express a range of emotions, specifically distress and pleasure. Distress could refer to distress about life, self, or even God. Distress expressed to God can be a proven manner of coping when done in a healthy manner (Pargament, 1997). Those with avoidant or anxious attachments to God may disown unpleasant emotions when it comes to their relationship with God and only express pleasant ones. Much of this may be caused by socialization within Christian circles that finds the expression of unpleasant emotions taboo. At certain times the distress will be toward God. While some Christian thinking has little room for distress with God, it seems to be an important part of the relationship with God. The presence of the “flesh” in the lives of believers means that part of the self is contrary to God (Gal 5.17) causing distress. Furthermore, John of the Cross (1959, 1987, 1993) suggests that the “dark night of the soul” is a type of distress with God due to God’s limitation of the sensations or blessings of His presence for a season for the purpose of spiritual growth. John emphasizes a range of emotions from distress to ecstasy. Thus distress with God is necessary for an authentic relationship that leads to spiritual growth. It should also be noted that God is perfect in terms of nature, but He is not perfect in experience when perfection is defined by the pleasure principle, and this imperfection in the eyes of humans leads to distress. The expression of such distress is vital to the attachment relationship as an indicator of secure attachment. Kobak (1999, p. 37) states, “Negative emotions serve as signals of the child’s goals and needs, and open communication and confidence in caregiver

responsiveness and become self-maintaining features of a secure attachment relationship.” When the reflective function is active, such distress can be regulated and will not lead to preoccupation or dismissal of attachment experiences (Slade, 1999). Therefore, the healthy expression of distress in life is an important moment for discovering God’s responsiveness and care. Furthermore, discontentment with God can be an initial stage to coping and bring about constructive change without disintegrating the relationship with God (Pargament, 1997). The range of emotions also includes pleasure (Slade, 1999). Many with insecure attachments with God will be unable to experience pleasure, joy, celebration, and gratitude with God. Experiences that foster such encounters with God will be particularly apt. Thus, the expression of every type of emotion indicates a level of security in the attachment relationship with God.

A healthy emotional relationship with God will not only include a range of emotions but regulation of emotions. Regulation does not mean that all intensity is lost. In fact the child securely attached to a parent is ecstatic in the parent’s presence (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Regulation refers to the self-management of emotions and the external influences of that process (Magai, 1999). Over-regulation of affect with an attachment figure can be the result of shame that leaves a person feeling unsafe to express certain emotions (Magai, 1999). Under-regulation refers to the inability to contain emotional experiences. While there is a vital place for ecstatic and intense emotions in the human-divine relationship (Edwards, 1959; cf. LeShan, 1974; James, 1958 for descriptions of positive ecstatic experiences), regulation allows those highly pleasurable experiences to be contained to the degree that they can be internalized and integrated into the self once the experience is complete (Fauteux, 1994) and keeps religion from its more chaotic expressions (1 Cor 14.33). A lack of affect regulation with God can lead to a toxic kind of addiction in which a person clings to God out of fear of potential abandonment rather than security in His responsiveness and availability (Arterburn & Felton, 1991)

The third goal is to contain and catalyze the paradoxical relationship between self-esteem and ethical conviction for others. The dialogue partner for this goal is Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur (1992) sets forth the goal of human development as a concept that he calls “conviction.” Conviction is defined as giving primacy of the other over the self. Christianity is very much in favor of the same human goal, that is, that believers would exemplify the act of Jesus Christ on the cross of agape that thinks of the benefit of others even at the expense of oneself (Phil 2. 3; 1 Cor 13.5). Attachment theory has been critiqued in chapter three as lacking teleology beyond survival. Humans seem to have a higher order of functioning as the intended goal in Christianity, namely the expression of sacrificial love or agape (Lewis, 1971). Conviction comes from the part of the self that Ricoeur (1992) calls the *idem* part of the self. As a reminder, the *idem* self asks the question “what am I to do” and “why should I do it.” The *idem* question is an ethical one. However, in great paradox the *idem* is dependent upon the *ipse* portion of the self that asks the question “who am I.” Ricoeur (1992) concludes that the *idem* part of the self cannot respond in ethical effacement unless the answer to the *ipse* portion of the self is given so that the person garners enough self esteem to be able to sacrifice of the self. In different words, those who have not found enough security in a healthy degree of self-esteem are unable to sacrifice, most likely because they are preoccupied with self-esteem deficits and the compensation of such, or they are avoidant of attachment due to the perceived incapability to receive the esteem they desire. Ricoeur (1992) links this process to the act of “naming God,” believing that in this act of signaling attachment behavior, the believer is paradoxically challenged to conviction and embraced with esteem. In the same way God acts as an attachment figure that offers enough security to a person that the person is able to give of the self rather than compensate for insecurity.

Ricoeur claims that a worship relationship with God as a discourse of love paradoxically builds self esteem through love received from God, and challenges a person toward conviction in that worship defers to a greater object (Ford, 1999). The

attachment relationship does the same thing. It is suggested that in developing greater security in the attachment relationship with God, a person will be freed to sacrifice of the self in imitation of the love of Christ through the crucifixion. The preoccupied person will be able to see others as a part of oneself (Ricoeur, 1992) rather than obsessing about narcissistic wounds. The dismissing person will be able to trust others to the degree that he or she will no longer need to be defensive but rather can reach out to others as the self (Ricoeur, 1992).

Assisting Storytelling

All persons have a religious story to tell. Whether a person is a theist, atheist, or agnostic he or she has reasons for such a stance and events that have occurred that have led to these beliefs. In Christian counseling, the counselor is sought because of his or her Christian perspective and so these clients assume that the Christian story is a vital part of the process. It is suggested that the AAGI questions listed in chapter five can serve as a good foundation for this story for several reasons. First, it is adapted from the AAI questions (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1984, 1985, 1996; and reprinted in Hesse, 1999, p. 397). This keeps the method of assessment closer to the AAI instrument protocol and therefore more accurate to its intent. However, it should be noted that the AAGI is a useful clinical tool and has not been tested in research. Second, it is comprehensive and gives many opportunities to explore the human-divine relationship. These opportunities serve as assessment potentialities in that it gives opportunity for cohesiveness or inconsistency. Third, it focuses on attachment kinds of dynamics. Fourth, the interview is spontaneous and therefore it can “surprise the unconscious” (George et al., 1984, 1985, 1996; quoted in Hesse, 1999, p. 397). This surprise initiates the person’s metacognitive monitoring or reflective functioning so that this important skill can be examined.

It is suggested that this story be called “testimony” in that the person is bearing witness to current and specific relationship with God. The testimony comes forth in narrative form and in its retelling it gives opportunity for the person to update and reinterpret attachment events anew (Ricoeur, 1995). The story is “bearing witness” of the events and as such it includes a hermeneutic function of interpreting attachment experiences. The therapist is a co-witness to this testimony. In bearing witness to attachment events, the person must monitor (Main, 1991) the narrative including emotions that arise, semantic choices, content chosen, and organization of the narrative. Furthermore, in the reinterpretation of attachment events, the reflective function (Fonagy et al., 1991, 1995; Fonagy & Target, 1996) is initiated and the person must use interpretive skills in the telling of the story. In the telling of the narrative to an empathic and wise hearer, the person has the opportunity to hear his or her own words and transform them. Therapeutic dialogue itself is helpful for the process of transforming narratives (Slade, 1999; Holmes, 2001). The therapist begins to make assessments as the interview takes place, and summarizes and tracks the person to elicit narrative material.

Narrator: The Role of the Soulcare Provider

The image most helpful for the identity of the caregiver is that of narrator. The drama that is told is primarily told by the person seeking help. It is his or her story. The caregiver is not in the drama except as a guiding voice occasionally interjecting. The goal of eliciting the story of the person’s relationship with God is to make available the narrative construct so that assessments of coherence and consistency can be made. Holmes (2001, p. 86) points out that the therapist and client are “joint authors of a new story.” The term narrator is chosen for several reasons. The first reason is that a narrator is a voice in the background rather than a main player. Holmes (1999) compares the role of the therapist to that of Winnicott’s (1965) concept of the child playing alone in the presence of the mother. The mother’s presence gives the child confidence to explore, but

the child does not fade away into the background because the mother is not present in a dominant manner. Sable (2000) suggests that the therapist provides a quiet background presence. The main actor in the drama is the person who tells the story in first person, but added to this voice is the narrator who interjects. The second reason is that the function of the narrator is quite similar to the function of the therapist in the telling of the attachment story. The therapist “tracks and reflects key interactional events and patterns, and summarizes these patterns into a coherent drama” (Johnson, 2002, p. 95). The therapist is the voice that tracks the story and summarizes its most recent happenings. The therapist names what has been unnamed, and seeks to fill in missing information. Like a narrator, the therapist seeks to tie loose ends for the purpose of developing a more coherent narrative. The person telling the story is clearly the main actor in the narrative, and the interjections of the therapist act as the glue that unites the material in the narrative and challenges inconsistencies.

Assessing Attachment to God

Assessments are to focus on several key areas. First, the narrative form is to be assessed. Second, the regulation and range of affect is to be evaluated. Third, beliefs about self and God are to be tracked. Fourth, facial expression and tone of voice offer vital clues concerning attachment to God.

Assess the narrative form. Is it possible to assess a particular relationship according to the type of attachment it contains? It is suggested that the answer is an affirmative for several reasons. The first reason is that persons may fluctuate in attachment behaviors within a continuum, with anxious and avoidant being on two extremes, making observations of individual relationships vital (e.g., Holmes, 2001). While one style of attachment may be dominant, certain situations may move someone to a new location on the continuum. Slade (1999, pp. 584-85) is adamant that “It simply does not make sense to think of patients in terms of a single, mutually exclusive

attachment classification that presumably remain stable within the clinical situation.”

The second reason is that persons may shift on this continuum accordingly in different relationships. This is the reason individuals in marriage dyads shift in functioning when the partner shifts in relational stance (Byng-Hall, 1999). God is a unique attachment relationship due to lack of physical presence and varied opinions about Him. God may bring out specific emotions and relational stances that are rarely found in other relationships. Third, research indicates that current and specific relationship dynamics can be tapped into (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999). Fourth, it has been demonstrated that narrative assessments can be made in clinical settings (Hodges, Steele, Hillman, Henderson, & Neil, 2000).

As the therapist listens to the attachment to God story, he or she is acutely aware of not only the story but the style (Holmes, 2001). Attachment research has clearly demonstrated the link between coherence in narrative and attachment style. Main and Goldwyn (1998, p. 44; quoted in Hesse, 1999) define coherence as “a connection or congruity arising from some common principle or relationship; consistency; [or] connectedness of thought, such as that the parts of the discourse are clearly related, form a logical whole, or are suitable or suited and adapted to context.” Once again, the failure to form a coherent narrative is not due to a lack of intelligence (Hesse, 1999) or gender (Iris, 2001) but due to dismissed or preoccupied psychological material that upsets the balance of the narrative. Because Grice’s (1975, 1989; see Hesse, 1999) principles of rational discourse are so closely tied to the protocol of AAI scoring, then it is very natural to assess narratives by these four principles.

The first principle states that narratives need to have quality, that is, they need to be truthful, and have evidence for what is said. This maxim is often violated due to a dismissing attachment style that describes attachment figures in positive terms that are unsupported or contradicted by other statements (Hesse, 1999). For instance, if a person

speaks of a parent only in positive terms, and yet the parent abandoned or abused the person when he or she was a child, then the principle of quality has been violated.

The second principle states that narratives need to have proper quantity, in that they need to be succinct yet complete. The therapist listens for the length of the answers to the questions in the interview. Those with dismissing (avoidant) attachment styles toward God will be excessively brief. They will struggle to think of answers and cut off the conversation with phrases like “I don’t remember,” or “I don’t know” (Hesse, 1999). One study indicates that avoidant adults initially encoded less information than those with other attachment styles when listening to an interview (Fraley, Garner, & Shaver, 2000). Those who are preoccupied (anxious) with certain aspects of their relationship with God will violate the principle of quantity by offering excessively long answers. The preoccupation is seen in the amount of thoughts they have about the subject, and the distraction these thoughts have from the subject at hand.

The third principle states that narratives are to be relevant to the topic at hand. While those with dismissing styles tend not to break this rule, those who are preoccupied tend to shift the conversation to material that does not relate to the question asked (Holmes, 2001). This is most likely due to the fact that they are compelled to move to thoughts that they are preoccupied with due to the dominant and intense nature of the emotions connected to these thoughts.

The fourth principle states that narratives are to have proper manner, that is, they are to be clear and orderly. Once again, errors concerning this principle primarily occur by preoccupied speakers. Violation of this principle is indicated through the use of vague speech (“sort of, sort of – and that”), excessive use of psychological jargon (“my mother had a lot of material around that issue”), and use of nonsense words (“didididid”) (Hesse, 1999, p. 404).

Violations of these principles indicate lapses in metacognitive monitoring and reflective function. The therapist should not only notice that these violations occurred,

but should also track and record when they occurred and what the topic of conversation was when they did occur. This is primarily due to the fact that these errors may be caused by the lack of integration of the topic at hand and therefore those topics are of prime importance in the intervention stage. For instance, a client may lapse when talking about a particularly religious shaming incident. A violation of any of these principles may indicate that the event contains emotions and thoughts that have been dismissed or obsessed upon (preoccupied). The therapist will want to remember this event as being a powerful one in the person's mode of relating to God.

Main (1990, 1991, 1995) suggests that not only is coherence a predictor of attachment style, but collaboration or lack thereof is as well. Collaboration is seen in the ability to answer a question in relevant and succinct ways and then "relinquish his or her conversational turn" (Hesse, 1999, p. 404). Coherence and collaboration are not mutually exclusive. If a person abides by Grice's principles, then collaboration will occur.

Holmes (2001, p. 8) summarizes the narrative patterns of each of the four attachment styles:

Secure: Coherent, collaborative discourse. Valuing of attachment, but seems objective regarding any particular event or relationship. Description and evaluation of attachment-related experiences is consistent, whether experiences are favorable or unfavorable.

Dismissing/Avoidant: Not coherent. Dismissing of attachment-related experiences and relationships. Normalizing ('excellent, very normal mother'), with generalized representations of history unsupported or actively contradicted by episodes recounted.

Preoccupied/Anxious: Not coherent. Preoccupied with or by past attachment relationships or experiences, speaker appears angry, passive, or fearful. Sentences often long, grammatically entangled, or filled with vague usages.

Unresolved/Disorganized: During discussions of loss or abuse, individual shows striking lapse in the monitoring of reasoning of discourse. For example, individual may briefly indicate a belief that a dead person is still alive in the physical sense, or that this person was killed by a childhood thought. Individual may lapse into prolonged silence or eulogistic speech.

Holmes (1998) categorizes not only the style of narrative but the types of stories told. One of these pathologies of narrative capacity is clinging to rigid stories

which relates to the dismissing pattern. These narratives indicate a lapse in reflective functioning that prohibits new updating of the narrative. Another narrative pathology is being overwhelmed by unstoried experience. These narratives indicate lapse in reflective functioning in that certain stories are not integrated into the whole narrative (or not integrated properly) due to the intensity of negative emotions connected to these stories. The third pathology of narrative capacity is being unable to find a narrative strong enough to contain traumatic pain. These types of narratives represent the dismissing attachment style in which a consistent narrative cannot be formed due to the intensity of pain and trauma in one's experiences. Christianity has much to offer in the form of a metanarrative in the story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as a container and absorber of one's shame, sin, and pain (Lee, 2004). These three types of stories will be effective assessment tools for discovering a primary attachment style with God.

Track affect regulation. It is important for the caregiver to track and record the level and type of affect that is expressed in the interview as an important clue to attachment style with God. Much has been stated in this chapter concerning emotions and attachment. It is important to remember that those who lean toward the avoidant extreme of the continuum have difficulty accessing and expressing emotions. When they do express emotions their expressions are imbalanced and extreme and the caregiver often feels disconnected from the person. Those that lean toward the anxious end of the continuum cannot contain their emotions and the therapist often feels overwhelmed by the intensity of emotions. The disorganized style will offer emotions in a confused manner with many inconsistencies as if they do not know how to feel (Slade, 1999; Kobak, 1999; Holmes, 2001).

The caregiver seeks to track expressions of emotion according to range and regulation and also records the topics that occur while these emotions occur. Whether preoccupied or dismissing, the person's insecure attachment strategy indicates dissociated

psychological material that has not been integrated into the relational hermeneutic system, and thus carries great power with the person (Holmes, 2001). The kind and location of these emotions become indicators for types of interventions.

Track tone of voice. Holmes (2001) suggests that tone of voice is an indicator of attachment style. He states:

The AAI takes narrative style and translates it into attachment patterns. In the clinical setting, the patient's narrative style – in particular, her tone of voice – provides a similar clue to the state of their object relations. Tone of voice, together with facial and bodily expression, is what the patient brings into the room – an invaluable clue to the transference attachment pattern. (Holmes, 2001, p. 36)

He notes particularly that patients with avoidant styles characteristically have harsh unmodulated voice timbres, often at variance with an “imploring pleading look in the eyes” (Holmes, 2001, p. 37). The tone of voice of the anxious style is monotonous and rambling and “the therapist wonders when the patient is going to come to the point and finds it hard to facilitate genuine dialogue” (Holmes, 2001, p. 38). Tone of voice is another clue to the manner in which the person is attached to God.

Listen for images of self and God. As stated previously, Bartholomew's (1990) four-category model of self and other images as they relate to attachment styles indicates that mental images play a vital role in attachments. Clinton and Sibcy (2002, p. 96) break these four categories down into beliefs concerning the self and others that persons may hold in each category. The therapist can listen for these beliefs in assessment and seek a healthier transformation of these beliefs as an intervention. Those persons with a secure attachment style have self beliefs that might state, “I am worthy of love,” and “I am capable of getting the love and support I need.” Those persons in the secure category generally have beliefs of trust in others that, “Others are willing and able to love me.” The ambivalent attachment style is characterized by beliefs of the self that state, “I am not worthy of love,” and “I am not capable of getting the love I need without being angry and clingy.” The other dimension of this category states, “Others are capable

of meeting my needs but might not do so because of my flaws,” and “Others are trustworthy and reliable but might abandon me because of my worthlessness.” The avoidant style holds to self beliefs that state, “I am worthy of love,” and “I am capable of getting the love and support I need.” The other dimension of the avoidant category believes, “Others are either unwilling or incapable of loving me,” and “Others are not trustworthy; they are unreliable when it comes to meeting my needs.” Finally the self beliefs of the disorganized attachment style state, “I am not worthy of love,” and “I am not capable of getting the love I need without being angry and clingy.” The other dimension beliefs of the disorganized category state, “Others are unable to meet my needs,” “Others are not trustworthy or reliable,” and “Others are abusive, and I deserve it.”

The therapist can listen for these types of messages, especially when the word “others” is replaced with “God.” Furthermore, it is important to record any names or metaphors that the person offers concerning self or concerning God. Especially vital are distorted self or God images. Arterburn and Felton (1991) list several “toxic” beliefs concerning God that could be considered distorted God images: spiteful, vindictive, impersonal, conditional with love, and a God who only issues love for those who deserve it by their works. These and other distorted images can hinder intimacy with God. They also list several “toxic” beliefs that distort images of self: a self that must earn esteem through works, grandiose or shameful in comparisons to other Christians, entitlement (for money, happiness, or to gain wishes) with God, or penance for forgiven sins. These distorted beliefs indicate the behavioral paradox of narcissism, in that narcissism can expose itself as grandiosity or shame (Capps, 1993) and that both come from an insecure attachment. Avoidance is a type of grandiosity that understands the self to be valuable while others cannot be trusted, and anxious attachment is a type of shame that understands that others can be trusted but the self does not deserve love (Bartholomew, 1990; Clinton & Sibcy, 2002). Disorganized attachment trusts neither self nor others.

Distorted images of self or God is noted by the caregiver as important areas of intervention. The Bible will have a central place in replacing distorted beliefs with more accurate and balanced views from God's word.

Interventions: Creating More Secure Attachments to God

The primary goal of an attachment to God therapeutic methodology is to create more secure attachments to God. Clearly, coherence of narrative is significantly related to degrees of security in attachment (Hesse, 1999; Iris, 2001). It stands to reason that creating more coherent narratives will result in more secure attachment and a diminishment of attachment related symptoms (Vail, 2003). The role of the therapist is narrator. The narrator helps to tie loose ends, summarizes what has been unclear, connect parts of the story, and offer commentary that brings a sense of cohesiveness. In more distinct attachment terminology, the narrator interjects what has been dismissed, releases the power from what has been preoccupied upon, and organizes a hermeneutic strategy for what is disorganized. The therapist models the reflective function of the hermeneutic task that comes with telling life stories. The therapist aids in advancing reflective functioning skills.

Unlike other narrative therapies (see White & Epston, 1990), the goal of attachment narrative therapy is not to socially reconstruct new content in old narratives. Rather, the goal is to forge a new interpretation of the events that occurred, which is what Holmes calls the storytelling function (Holmes, 1999). The testimony of one's attachment experience has undergone a hermeneutic process in which a strategy has been chosen to interpret self, others, and relationships. This strategy can be discerned through testimony analysis which analyzes the discourse of the sacred narrative. Defensive strategies are those that seek to protect the self from further harm, but simultaneously hinder full relational intimacy. Defensive narrative strategies include preoccupation with emotionally powerful stories that are not fully integrated into the general narrative

scheme, dismissed stories that have not been integrated into the general narrative scheme, and disorganized stories that have not ever found an interpretive strategy due to the level of trauma that they include. Holmes (2001) declares that the function of the therapist is story breaking and story making. Story breaking is the act of deconstructing poor interpretive devices. Allender (2005, p. 49) refers to a similar concept of “denouement,” which he defines:

A denouement is not a complete or fully resolved ending but a satisfying closure to a story. It means in French “an untying, a relaxing or a knot of complexity.” Denouement is the rest that comes when all the disparate plot lines of a story, gnarled and taut, have been untied, and an order has come about that brings a new moment of shalom.

It is not the events themselves that are restructured in story making, but rather it is the interpretation of events. Holmes (2001) claims that balance is needed in stories if they are to be functionally interpreted. All three styles of insecure attachment are lacking balance in that each have adopted a strategy that neglects some narrative material, along with the concepts and affect connected to that material. The preoccupied style neglects all material that has been overshadowed by the material that is obsessed upon. The dismissing style neglects attachment material as unimportant. The disorganized style is unable to integrate any material due to a lack of an interpretive strategy. Story making seeks to alter the hermeneutic function, and in this instance it seeks to do so for all narrative material that includes experiences with God. The following is a list of strategies for breaking and making stories.

Challenge discrepancies in narrative structure. Grice’s (1975,1989; Hesse, 1999) principles of rational discourse are helpful in aiding the therapist to discern incongruous narrative style and content. These four principles can serve as a guide for areas of challenge. First, the caregiver can indicate when the principle of quality has been violated. If a person says, “God always gives me what I ask,” but has no evidence of such a statement then a violation has occurred. The therapist could reply, “But didn’t

you say that you have prayed for a better job but haven't gotten one." The person could be helped to revise his or her statement to "God has given me some things that I have asked for, but some things he has not." Evidence could be supplied for this statement. Second, the caregiver can seek to adjust the quantity of the narrative. When a person is rambling incessantly, which is a sign of preoccupation, the therapist can interject and summarize to aid in making the narrative more succinct. When the narrative seems to be missing major details, then more content needs to be elicited. The caregiver may comment, "It seems to me that much is missing from this story, what is your earliest account of understanding God," or "tell me about a time when you were very close/distant with God." Third, the caregiver seeks to stay on task to the topic at hand to not violate the principle of relation. This is especially important for those who lean toward the preoccupied part of the continuum. These persons may transition to the topic of preoccupation no matter what the current topic is. The therapist seeks to return to the topic at hand and to set boundaries around that topic. Fourth, the caregiver seeks to help the storyteller have proper manner in that the story be clear and orderly. When chronology is mixed up or details seem unclear or vague, then the therapist inquires about such ambiguities so that they are cleared up.

It is important to remember that the attached person is testifying according to his or her interpretation of attachment to God. Simultaneously the person is hearing this testimony and adjusting its organization as he or she rehears it. Not only does this cause a shift in narrative structure, but it also increases skills in metacognitive monitoring (Main, 1991). Whether the image of God is biblical or unbiblical is not the issue at this point. Interaction with the biblical metanarrative will occur later in the process. The point of this intervention is to develop a consistent view of God, self, and the relationship between the two so that cognitive transformations can occur.

Access and contain preoccupied narrative content. This is a strategy particularly apt for those who are preoccupied with certain narrative material. The preoccupied content may be a particularly shaming moment at church, a time when the person felt abandoned by God, or some tragedy that they wanted God to prevent. Whatever the content may be, the key factor is that some events or experiences are so emotionally overwhelming that they cannot be integrated into the narrative as a whole and consequently overshadow all other narrative content. When these preoccupied memories are accessed, the next step is to find ways to capture the confusion of the overwhelming feelings (Holmes, 2001). Focusing on preoccupied narrative materials may seem counterintuitive; however, it is important to remember that preoccupied memories have never been integrated into the whole of the narrative. The therapist begins to find themes in order to take the overwhelming nature of this content and mitigate the intensity of emotions they carry (Holmes, 2001). Therapy offers a secure base setting to explore painful memories, and to express and normalize the emotions connected to those memories (Brisch, 1999) so that they are not as dominant as in previous times. The therapist contains emotional expressions, and offers cognitive structures through narration.

Search and access dismissed material. This intervention is primarily used with the dismissing style of attachment to God. The defense of the dismissing style is to avoid attachment related memories, especially painful ones, and to idealize attachment figures (Hesse, 1999). The idealization is a way of neglecting disappointment and to repress unpleasant emotions. Because of this, the dismissing narrative will be overly brief and missing many details. The caregiver asks the question, “What’s missing in this story?” What is missing may be as important as what has been included. Where are the disappointments with the attachment figure? Where are the negative emotions toward the attachment figure? Where are the details about significant life events? As previously

stated in chapter four, disappointment seems to be a part of maturing in a relationship with God (cf. John of the Cross, 1959; Ps 22). The manner in which conflict with God is handled is vital to an attachment to God therapy and clearly related to narrative style (Wampler, Shi, Nelson, & Kimball, 2003; Pietromonaco, Greenwood, & Barrett, 2004). Any description of a God that has always been present and granted what has been asked for may indicate the dismissal of more negative religious experiences. The therapist investigates gaps in timeline, ambiguous details, one sided appraisals, and dismissing comments of important life events in order to access what has been dismissed.

Track and summarize the narrative at key points. Johnson (2002, p. 95) says that the “therapist tracks and reflects key interactional events and patterns and summarizes these patterns into a coherent drama.” She claims that the sense of self is expanded by “contacting marginalized or disowned emotions and integrating them into ongoing experience” (Johnson, 2002, pp. 102-103). Like a narrator, the therapist tracks the story and summarizes the content at key points. For instance, the therapist might say, “So it sound like your childhood was filled with many pleasant moments connected to church and God, but your adolescence was filled with several experiences with shaming religion.” The key is to name what is disorganized and ambiguous so that it can be integrated into the story. Oates (1985, p. 56) speaks of the power of naming:

The gift of the ability to speak, to use language to name the animals, symbolized the man’s power over them. The power to name the animals is only the beginning. We are given the ability to name actions and thoughts with verbs and ideas, to put feelings into words and pictures. In the process of doing so, we make decisions as to who we are, to whom we belong, what we are doing, and where we are going in life. We make covenants, and we remember covenants with the words we have used to describe them.

Tracking and summarizing has several functions. First, as Oates (1985) notes, naming emotions gives some degree of power over them and can aid in affect regulation. Second, tracking and summarizing helps to build a more cohesive narrative. Third, as the therapist tracks and summarizes, metacognitive monitoring is being modeled.

Indicate non-verbal communication to increase awareness. It was Holmes (2001) who gave indicators of attachment patterns according to non-verbal factors. The caregiver can comment on volume, pace, modulation of voice as well as body language to the person he or she is caring for. Non-verbal communication is often unconscious and greater awareness of these emotional expressions can aid in accessing and integrating emotions into the narrative. The caregiver will point out congruence or incongruence of non-verbal communication with the content of the story and note the connection between the two. For instance, if a person speaks of God's absence during a tragedy, but smiles the whole time, then the caregiver may wonder and investigate why a smile is covering up other emotions.

Encourage expressions of emotions to God. Clearly the attachment bond is given its intensity through emotions (Kobak, 1999). The caregiver encourages expressions of emotions toward God especially as they are connected to "nodal memories." Nodal memories are those that "represent a concentration of the assumptions, fantasies, or working models about the self in relation to others The individual usually 'reads' a particular meaning into them which acts as an organizing principles around which they organize their present-day experience" (Holmes, 2001, p. 88). Nodal memories are emotionally latent. Some have adopted a preoccupied stance concerning the powerful emotions connected to these memories in which these emotions run amuck in such a way that they are not classified, organized and integrated into working models and thus gain more power to unconsciously control the person. Some have adopted a dismissing strategy in which painful emotions are dismissed as unimportant and then guarded through a dismissing defensive structure. In the first case the person can access the emotions but cannot integrate them, and in the second case the emotions can be controlled but not integrated. Integration of a balanced emotional working model seems to be the primary issue. Accessing and investigating these

emotions is a vital factor for three reasons. First, adjustments of emotion schemas have been shown to be linked to patient improvement (Greenberg & Paivio, 1997). Second, emotion range and regulation is a pivotal element of secure attachment (Fonagy et al., 1995). Third, an emotional connection to God is pivotal for authentic religious attachment. Edwards (1959) believed that all authentic spiritual transformation included the “affections.” Ricoeur believes that worship is an emotional experience that grants both self-esteem and ethical conviction to set oneself below others in praising and rejoicing over God as an object of worship (Ford, 1999). In fact, without access and expression of emotions, these two Christian thinkers doubt that any person can experience the true power of the Christian faith.

The caregiver seeks to access such worshipful emotions as joy, gratitude, and awe. Only a secure self can lose itself in the presence of one greater. One key obstacle to these expressions of worship is shame. Shame is self centered in that it is so aware of self identity in the eyes of others that it prohibits freedom (Manning, 1996). Shame prohibits the full expression of affection, delight, and gratitude. Shame is the partial result of insecure attachment (see chapter 4).

The expression of painful emotions is vital as well. The avoidant person dismisses his or her pain and does so by repressing painful emotions (Hesse, 1999). Accessing these emotions, even when they may be directed at God, is vital to affect integration.

Greenberg and Paivio (1996) identify three phases of emotion transformation: bonding, evoking and exploring emotional experience, and emotion restructuring. Furthermore, they note the importance of eliciting emotions so that they are pliable. In an attachment to God therapy, the caregiver asks the person being helped to access emotions and aids this process by naming emotions expressed as well as wondering about emotion possibilities (“ I wonder if that made you feel angry, frustrated, or ashamed”). Nodal memories evoke emotions and the caregiver explores these emotions. The

preoccupied style of attachment is aided by giving structure and cognitive categories for emotions. The dismissing style is aided in moving through the defensive cognitive maneuvers that hold emotions at bay for the sake of greater expression. The therapist uses the following techniques: name the emotions, compare the emotions to other experiences within the human-divine narrative, encourage expression of emotion to God through times of prayer and guided imagery, and integrate the emotion into a tapestry of emotions felt toward God, self, relationships and life for the sake of greater balance (“It sounds like you were disappointed with God in this instance, but previously you were grateful to God”).

Offer a meta-narrative that can contain traumatic pain. Holmes (2001, p. 88) claims that those with disorganized attachment are “unable to find a narrative strong enough to contain traumatic pain.” Of course without a meta-narrative this task of finding a narrative strong enough is simply a task of hermeneutic skill. It has been suggested in chapter five that a metanarrative is needed that can define central meaning and personal identity (Lee, 2004). The goal of this theory has been to contrast a postpostmodernism that takes the construction of reality seriously in the hermeneutic process of life, but that also allows for an “ideological surround” that allows ideological influences (Watson, 2004). Such a stance calls for a metanarrative that can enlighten all other truth rather than compete against it. Christianity offers such a metanarrative that grants greater security in an attachment to God as well as in other relationships.

Allender (2005) utilizes the term shalom as a concept through which the Christian metanarrative can be told. He describes Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as a state of shalom, that is peace and wholeness. Shalom is shattered through sin, tragedy, and separation from God. Humans are in search of recapturing shalom through a relationship with God through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Allender (2005, p. 45) suggests that the primary question of this search for shalom is “Will I trust in God’s

goodness to protect me and provide for my needs, or will I trust in myself?" This question is similar to the hermeneutic question raised in developing an attachment interpretive strategy.

God's metanarrative found in the Bible serves as a parable, that is it is a story that comes along side of each individual's story and reinterprets its events, the roles of self and other, and the functioning of relationships. This metanarrative is a story of relationship with God, that is, when relationship is experienced with God then "felt security" (Kobak, 1999) is experienced in the form of shalom (Allender, 2005).

This story does not change the events of one's life, but re-interprets them. Central to the story is Jesus as he proves God's goodness and sufficiency as an attachment figure. Jesus is not a hireling that abandons the sheep when trouble arises (John 10.10-13). Instead, Jesus gives up his life for the sheep and remains with them when danger arises. The Incarnation and the Crucifixion prove God's nearness and His responsiveness to the human plight. Furthermore, a secure base is created in relationship to God as peace exists between believers and God through the work of Jesus Christ so that persons can be near to God (Eph 2.11-18).

The Christian caregiver tells and retells this metanarrative as the key that unlocks the true identity of God, the person being helped, and the relationship between the two. As the story is told destructive images of self and God are replaced with edifying images and the Bible is the guide and resource for this process. Redemptive resources of adoption, justification by faith, and belonging to Abba, clearly stated in chapter four, are used to reinterpret the person's "God story." Cognitive elements are vital at this point. The assessment of the attachment style with God has named His false images created by painful experiences: whether it be a cold and unresponsive God, a harsh and belligerent God, a disappointing God, or a shaming and unavailable God. Tearing down these idols and experiencing the God represented by Jesus Christ as one of love (John 3.16) and availability (John 1.14) is vital to developing secure attachments.

God image is a vital factor in healthy self image and a vital link seems to exist between the two (Kirkpatrick, 1992).

The presence of the metanarrative as a key to one's own narrative (Watson, 2004) offers several positive influences on personal narrative structure. First, it gives a cohesive concept in which a person can organize his or her own attachment experiences around (Lee, 2004) and develops a more cohesive personal narrative. Second, it offers an image of God as an attachment figure that can offer security. The God of redemption is available, responsive, and loving. Third, the metanarrative addresses both *ipse* and *idem* (Ricoeur, 1992) quests for self identity. It answers the "who" question in that the person is an object of God's love and has been separated from a saving relationship with God, but is being pursued by God. This metanarrative offers a healthy self esteem through God's love demonstration on the cross (Rom 5.8) that is necessary for ethical conviction and worship (Ricoeur, 1992). It answers the "what" and "why" question in that God's love shown on the cross is an example for others to immolate through sacrificial love of others (Gorman, 2001).

The Christian caregiver compares and contrasts the metanarrative interpretation of self, others (God), and relationships with the interpretation of the person and seeks to create a more secure base with God through the integration of the metanarrative of shalom.

CHAPTER 7

CASE ILLUSTRATIONS

Overview of Case Illustrations

Counseling theories tend to be ephemeral and ambiguous without examples or illustrations. A theory must do more than intuitively project generalities about human beings. For a therapeutic theory to be useful it must be illustrated in the context of persons' lives. For this reason several interviews were conducted using the proposed questions of the AAGI, which was adapted from the AAI, in order to display the way that this narrative tool can be used to assess a person's level of security and type of attachment to God. Beyond this, these assessments serve as guides to specific interventions in specific situations. It must be clear that the five interviews presented do not represent an attempt to give empirical evidence of the validity of this method. The AAI has clearly been shown to be an accurate instrument (cf. Hesse, 1999). The method proposed in this Christian soulcare application gains much of its strength from the accuracy of the AAI. The purpose is to give illustrative guidance of the manner in which these assessments can be made for the benefit of Christian soulcare providers.

Essentially, the questions in the AAGI allow a person to give a personal testimony in which his or her story with God is told. The story divulges a person's image of God, the way this image has changed, and the experiences that changed it. It allows an opportunity for the storyteller to be surprised by the content and structure of his or her story. The questions give opportunity for both congruence and discrepancy between specific aspects of one's relationship with God. Furthermore, the interview gives several opportunities to maintain or break the rules of narrative discourse (Grice, 1975, 1989). The rule of quantity is clearly displayed in the length of the given answers. The rule of

quality is noted in the presence or lack of evidence. The principle of manner is based upon the order and logic of the answers including the ability to think circumspect and chronologically. Finally, the principle of relation guides the interviewer as an indicator of emotionally latent, preoccupied experiences as well as emotionally repressed, dismissed experiences.

An assessment sheet was used that included a place to track the four principles of narrative as stated above. Furthermore, the assessment sheet includes space to record preoccupied or dismissed materials that indicate areas of importance for future therapeutic encounters. Special note is given to both images of God and images of self throughout the interview as a clue to the self and other dimension of the person's relationship with God.

While much of attachment research categorizes persons into secure or insecure groups, these interviews follow theorists who understand attachment to have degrees (Sable, 2000; Holmes, 2001). For instance, Holmes illustrates the degrees of security of attachments on a continuum with the middle representing security and scales to the left and right that represent avoidant and anxious attachment (Holmes, 2001, p. 10) Perhaps IWM's can be understood to be categorical, but this assessment seeks to understand a specific relationship. Specific relationships may bring out specific aspects of one's attachment style that other relationships would not. Level of security is primarily assessed through the interviewee's ability to maintain a coherent narrative and to follow the narrative principles. Attachment style is assessed through several factors: length of interview, rate of speech, amount of preoccupied material inserted into answers, amount of dismissed material glossed over, ability to access and express emotions, and interaction of self images with God images.

The five interviewees represent a broad demographic range in terms of gender and age. However, all are Caucasian. Furthermore, all five are Christians and active members of an evangelical church. The participants range slightly in theological

perspectives from conservative to moderate but probably no broader than these designations. It should not be surprising that all five display some ability to piece together their spiritual narrative in that all are active in church and have found some benefit in their relationship with God. None of the five represent a person with nominal faith and therefore each have discovered in God some value in an attachment relationship. Furthermore, all five accepted invitations for the interview and all five have a comfort level with the interviewer due to previous soulcare events.

With all of this in common, one may think that little divergence in attachment to God would exist between the five interviewees. Nothing could be further from the truth. The outcome of the interviews indicate that each interviewee has a very personal path to God, key transformations of image and relationship to God along the way, and different uses of compensation as well as correspondence between God image and early attachments (see Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2005; see Granqvist, 2002). The interviews were video taped with written permission for the sake of recall. Also, each person was given a brief assessment at the end of the interview. Furthermore, a general information sheet was completed by each participant with demographic information and general family background questions. Finally, each participant is given a pseudonym in the writing of these illustrations.

These illustrations were conducted and now are written with several assumptions. First, all people have degrees of security and insecurity in their attachment systems. Second, all believers have degrees of security and insecurity in their relationship with God. Third, even secure individuals rely on avoidant, anxious-ambivalent, or disorganized defenses during times of stress and danger.

Katherine: Making Peace with a Belligerent God

When asked to describe her early childhood memories of her thoughts of God, Katherine had little difficulty doing so. Her memories were vivid and emotionally

powerful. She gave little hesitation as if she had direct access to such memories without much rummaging through the files of her mind. The description of God that was presented to Katherine as a child was spiteful and belligerent. When asked to come up with adjectives to describe the way she thought about God in her early years she chose fear, powerful, invisible, and mean. While none of these characteristics illicit a sense of closeness, each amalgamate to form a picture of a distant yet strong God who is “against” persons. Katherine had a constant fear as a child that she would be sent to hell for any infraction, and understood God’s primary role to be punishment and threat.

This image came from two primary sources: her mother and her early religious experiences at church. Katherine describes her relationship with her mother as frightening, unpredictable, and threatening. In fact, her description of her mother and of her early image of God are quite similar. It seems that her primary source for developing an understanding of God came from her mother. In fact, her mother used the belligerence of God to control Katherine and her siblings. One vivid memory that Katherine recounts is a time in which Katherine took a toy from her sister and was spanked as her mother told her she would “go to hell” for such an act. In fact, going to hell was a periodic threat of a controlling mother. She was told that she would “go to hell” for talking back to her mother. Katherine remembers as a child an instance in which a little boy drowned who was a member of her church. Her mother’s interpretation of the event was that the drowning was punishment from God. God was a device used to control through threats.

Her mother always emphasized the need to be a “good girl” which primarily consisted of sexual chastity. Out of fear Katherine attempted to meet these requirements but never felt “good enough” for her mother or for God. To this day Katherine struggles to gain acceptance from her mother although she claims to experience more freedom from her rejection than she used to. When asked about God’s current goodness toward her, Katherine attributes it to her own behavior in that she has listened and followed God.

She understands now that God loves her but a residue of the need to earn His love still exists in her experience of God as it corresponds from her mother-image.

Katherine's church experiences solidified this image of God. Her church experiences as a child focused on tactics of shame in order to control its members. Although Katherine's family attended church, she does not remember God to have been talked about at home other than as a means of control and punishment. Church was not a completely bad experience as she found in a Sunday School teacher a person who loved and accepted her. However, the sermons and activities primarily focused on threats from God to be issued upon a person if that person made any mistakes. Clearly the image of God primarily came from her mother, but was greatly reinforced by her church. In fact, as an adult Katherine and her family were excommunicated from a church due to some wrongdoing. These experiences only confirmed to Katherine that God must be belligerent, and although He is powerful he uses His power for punishment and not for blessing. There was little ability through much of Katherine's life to sense proximity to God or to experience God's presence. Her self image was largely negative as God was idealized as a distant and all-powerful being.

With such experiences it is hard to imagine Katherine experiencing any degree of security in her relationship with God. However, her narrative proves otherwise. Katherine told her story in a chronological and orderly fashion. She indicated an awareness of memories in a circumspect fashion and had few lapses in the telling of the story. She gave evidential memories of her answers. In fact, when asked for adjectives concerning her childhood images of God, she named "powerful." Her evidence was a memory of a storm that caused trees to fall. Someone told her that God caused the storm and she was struck by the idea of His power. She also named "invisible" as an aspect of God's character and cited the title "ghost" which was used of God in her church. She associated God's ghost-like quality with the shadows in her dark bedroom. Katherine gave evidential memories of her answers throughout the interview thus displaying a

strong ability to not break the principle of quality. When it comes to quantity, Katherine's answers were at times lengthy indicating some degree of preoccupation, but her time was just under fifty minutes, nowhere near the extreme. Finally, Katherine generally offered answers to the questions that related to central aspects of the question. Although she became preoccupied at some points, she primarily focused upon the topic.

How can it be that Katherine displays a degree of narrative coherence with such poor attachment experiences? The answer is that Katherine has re-imagined God in her adult years through counseling, Christian support, and a church that promotes God's love and nearness. Furthermore, Katherine's story seems to display Kirkpatrick's (1992, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2005) compensation hypothesis in that Katherine's new image of God has compensated for her mother's belligerence to a certain degree. Furthermore, it is possible to have "earned security" (Hesse, 1999, p. 401) even though early attachment experiences were poor. For instance, when asked which member of the Trinity she feels closest to, Katherine refers to the Holy Spirit because of the Spirit's sense of closeness. Furthermore, she notes that "God has not given up on her" through the difficult times in her life. God's consistency was attested to by provisions, a newfound intimacy with God, and other people who represented God in a very loving manner when they could have done otherwise. Furthermore, she describes herself as "more authentic" and gives much of the credit to a greater awareness of herself and God through counseling. Katherine also displayed a sense of security with God through a balanced view of God. She freely spoke of disappointments with God and times when the sensation of God's presence was absent. Although she spoke of God in high terms, she was able to also speak of God in negative terms, thus showing that she is not dismissing her spiritual struggles as unimportant which would result in an over idealization of her experience with God.

While Katherine displayed a sense of security with God, she also indicated that she leans toward the preoccupied scale on the continuum of security. She showed few signs of dismissing narratives. For instance, her accounts of her memories were vivid

and full of detail and she rarely used vague language. Her answers were lengthy and full. Her emotions were expressed in the telling of the narrative at an intense level. Her preoccupation with certain aspects of the narrative was indicated by several factors. First, her self image was negative and her God image was highly positive. This self and other dimension indicates a belief in God's ability to love, but a disbelief in her own ability to be loved. Second, her answers were long, which was indicated by a lengthy interview. Added to the length of the interview was the rapid pace and high intensity. Third, preoccupation was indicated by breaches in the principle of relation. Although her answers mostly related to the questions, one subject kept appearing in places it did not belong. That subject is Katherine's mother. Katherine's relationship with her mother clearly holds much emotional weight. The topic arose time and time again due to the emotions attached to her memories with her mother which then brings those memories to consciousness (see Greenberg & Paivio, 1997). This preoccupation indicates the power of Katherine's mother to invade her thoughts about God in that questions about God would often lead to her memories of her mother whether the memories were relevant or not. It seems that the full weight of her mother's impact on her spiritual relationship with God has not yet been integrated into her narrative of her relationship with God.

A plan to increase Katherine's security with God would include several vital points. First, the preoccupied material needs to be brought into greater awareness in terms of impact and integration into the rest of the story. Katherine's relationship with her mother is the topic of highest preoccupation. Katherine also included the story of her experience of excommunication at a point that was not relevant, thus indicating the powerful yet dissociated aspect of this event. The therapeutic task is not simply to gain awareness of these events, but to increase understanding of the impact these events have had upon Katherine's image of God and self.

Second, cognitive discussions would center upon God's love and grace as it relates to justification by faith and adoption. These are concepts that Katherine has

knowledge of, but an increase of that knowledge would aid in her security with God.

Katherine indicated that her current model of God included gaining his blessing through her own goodness. Such a thought indicates some degree of insecurity concerning God's ability to love her in the midst of her imperfections. As a whole, Katherine would do well to perceive God in more nurturing and proximate terms and less distant and power-oriented terms.

Third, Katherine should be encouraged to express her full range of emotions toward God. Prayer times in which Katherine practiced sharing her emotional state with God could aid in helping her sense a degree of emotional proximity between the two and to give the freedom necessary to approach God. At certain points, Katherine would need to be coached in containing her emotions that have not yet been integrated into her relationship with God.

Sheryl: Sensing Closeness with a Neutral God

Sheryl describes her earliest memories of God as "neutral." Although her family was religious in terms of church attendance, she heard very little spoken about Him otherwise. Sheryl has few childhood memories of God and struggles to access and express these memories. She does recall having a positive image of God when she received a little pink Bible given to her as a child. This object evoked sweet and tender thoughts about God. She has kept this Bible up to the present time due to its ability to foster a sense of the tender presence of God. Bowlby (1969/1982) believed that objects like these could serve as devices of proximity to an attachment figure. Sheryl's earliest description of God is "big" and the memory connected to this description is the song "He's got the Whole World in His Hands." This description fits her primary image of God as big, distant, and neutral. In fact, the word neutral connotes ideas of distance rather than proximity. The avoidant child is apathetic during the reunion with parents and thus has a sense of neutrality toward them (Bowlby, 1969/1982).

Sheryl had one feature in her interview unique from the others. She answered question number three, which asks for five adjectives to describe one's relationship with God during childhood and adolescence, as a chronological description of the transformation of her relationship with God. She listed the five adjectives in this order: big, unfair, strong, faithful, and loving. Sheryl outlines a journey of attachment with God from neutral to sensing closeness and she does so in a way that describes these adjectives as stages in her life. "Big" represents the neutral God who is big enough to hold the whole world, but not a proximate God who holds her.

The next two adjectives describe her thoughts about God when she was eleven and twelve. During these years she imaged God as "unfair" and "strong." The unfair aspect is highly connected to her parent's divorce which was quite combative. God's strength was less of a comfort to Sheryl during this time and more of an indictment on God in that He was unjust to "be so strong and let this stuff happen." She recalls feeling rejected by God during this time and thinking "why has God put me in this family?" God's unjust character was also felt in the form of pressure to uphold family stature through high expectations even though the family was disintegrating. These expectations did not derive from her family and Sheryl is uncertain of their origin claiming that she put those expectations upon herself. It could be that these high expectations of herself were an attempt to compensate and clean up the family mess. Perhaps Sheryl avoided her painful situation through her attempts to save her family through her own accomplishments.

When she was fifteen years old, Sheryl remembers thinking of God as "faithful." God's faithfulness was experienced through several means. First, it was experienced through God's protection from pitfalls and temptations that could have harmed her during her parent's divorce. Second, her survival of the debacle of her parent's divorce was a sign that God did not leave her. Third, the presence of loving, supportive people compensated for her parent's deficiencies. It is quite important that it

is this age in which Sheryl begins to feel safe enough with God to become more proximate with Him. Designating God as “faithful” is another way of speaking of trust that leads to security with God. Supportive, loving people compensated for parental deficiencies in much of the same way that God does. It would be interesting to discover how much of Sheryl’s image of God comes from these compensators.

Finally, at the age of eighteen and nineteen, Sheryl discovered God as loving. The message that God loves her was a new one. From “big” and “neutral” to “loving” and “near,” Sheryl’s journey has been one of re-imagining God.

Sheryl’s narrative allowed for few lapses or inconsistencies. She gave clear evidence for her answers, answered the questions completely without giving too much information, and she related her responses to the questions. All of this indicates a degree of security with God. The origin of this security is interpreted as coming from her understanding of God to be present and trustworthy through the difficulty of family turmoil, and from the people who compensated for what she lacked from her parents. These two factors converged to solidify a sense of security with God as a faithful and compensating attachment figure. She discovered a proximate God who can compensate for the danger of family difficulties. While it might seem that an adolescent’s individuation is contrary to the need for attachment, Allen and Land (1999) argue that it is a period of time that is in great need of a secure base attachment due to the intensity of the exploratory system during this age. Thus, family disruption became the medium through which Sheryl discovered an attachment bond to God that shifted from neutrality.

Although Sheryl has a degree of security with God, she also indicates in her interview her primary manner of defense during times of stress or danger. Sheryl seems to lean toward the avoidant or dismissal scale of attachment. Several indicators give evidence to this fact. First, her lack of memories concerning God as a child is startling. She struggled to access childhood memories indicating some degree of dismissal especially for a child who attended church. Was this a time of turmoil and difficulty?

The answer to that question isn't clear, but for some reason this whole era of her life is difficult to access. The word "neutral" seems to be the best description of this time period. It seems that God's neutrality would be interpreted in terms of distance. Neutral is a term associated with the apathy of the avoidant attachment. Sheryl's difficulty connecting the influence of childhood upon her adult life speaks of this tendency to dismiss. Second, Sheryl speaks of her protective function in avoidant terms. She notes that she distances herself from relationships during conflict or disruption. When describing a time when she felt absent from God, she noted that she became "distant and rude" to Him. Third, her interview was just under thirty-five minutes and thus one of the shorter ones. While this time does not violate the principle of quantity in a profound way, it does speak of a tendency to abbreviate or dismiss emotionally powerful memories. Fourth, Sheryl's greatest fear in her relationship with God is His unpredictable plan that might ask more of her than she is willing to give. It isn't that her dedication is low, but rather, it is that God is unpredictable. An erratic God is not one that brings security. When God asked her to move to a new location, she interpreted Him to be absent. Was this sense of absence a defense from an unpredictable God?

Interventions to increase Sheryl's security with God would include several factors. First, accessing emotions, memories, and thoughts that have been dismissed would be quite important. The act of asking for childhood memories and connecting them to adult patterns would be a helpful intervention. Furthermore, these patterns need to be applied to Sheryl's relationship with God.

Second, it is important to discover the full ramifications of Sheryl's pattern of dismissing close relationships when they are interpreted as distant or neutral. It seems that Sheryl's defense from abandonment is to distance herself before other persons have the opportunity to reject her. In attachment terms, she perceives danger lurking and interprets the attachment figure as too neutral or ambivalent to come to her aid. In this instance, neutrality is interpreted as rejection. To keep from getting hurt by the

attachment figure, Sheryl dismisses the figure's importance and isolates from that person. How and at what times does she avoid intimacy with God? Helping Sheryl remain proximate to God when she cannot sense Him is a vital area of transformation. This will include a continued dialogue with God that expresses emotional content in the midst of God's apparent absence, especially emotions directed toward God.

Third, it seems that Sheryl has a tendency to dismiss painful events by attempting to fix them. It seems more than coincidence that the high expectations she placed on herself came simultaneously with the most painful era of her life. While preoccupied persons might have fragmented enduring such stress, dismissing persons might ignore the power of the painful events by trying to fix the situation. It seems that this was the case for Sheryl. It is uncertain whether this tendency continues to the present time. However, this tendency could be interpreted as an attempt to overcome pain and failure through achievements. In a subtle way, this behavior indicates a type of "works righteousness" in which Sheryl seeks to be good enough or to project the right image to gain God's acceptance. Sheryl has already been freed from much of this as she is discovering God's constant love for her that can offer her safety enough to discover her authentic self.

Peter: Seeking Consistency from an Unpredictable God

Peter was unique apart from all the other interviewees in that he displayed a great amount of both preoccupied and dismissed narrative material. While others told their stories in such a way to indicate the presence of both categories, they did so with one dominant mode and one much less dominant mode. Peter gave a large amount of material for both modes. The primary interpretation taken from this is that the inconsistency of Peter's defensive structure is an indicator of Peter's struggle with the inconsistency of parents that has corresponded to a questioning of God's consistency.

Peter's family went to church, but he notes that they were not fervent in their faith. During Peter's childhood and adolescence, he experienced an "ebb and flow" of closeness and distance from God although he points out that God never left him. The closeness he experienced with God gave great sensation of God's presence. In fact, Peter speaks of feeling an immediate gratification from praying and other religious behavior. One powerful event in these years was a church event in which a speaker at the event "touched" Peter in a profound way. This event is remembered with vividness. Peter heard God speak to him in this service and God's "voice" became a primary mode of proximity signaling between the two.

Peter generally maintained the principles of discourse. He speaks in a logical and chronological fashion. Most of his answers related to the question at hand and his answers were appropriate in quantity. Although the time of his interview was one of the longer ones, lasting fifty minutes, it was a reasonable time. Peter gave evidential memories to support his answers, although the evidence conflicted itself at times. For instance, Peter struggled to present his father in a balanced and consistent manner. At times his father is spoken of very highly and at other times with great disdain. Moreover, Peter chose the term secure for his family setting however his narrative indicated the presence of abuse and strife.

The inconsistency of God is primarily seen in the oscillation between preoccupied and dismissing styles of narrative defense. Several topics preoccupied Peter's storytelling in that these events intruded his story in places they did not belong. The most powerful of all of the preoccupied material in Peter's story is his relationship with his father. His father is described as "very good when he was a good father," and "very bad when he was a bad father." It was later revealed that the father was abusive or at least semi-abusive with Peter. It is certain that the father was physically rough with Peter and verbally spiteful. Peter's father pushed and threw him against things. Once, his father discouraged Peter from going to college believing that Peter would "do better

using his hands than his head.” Peter’s anger toward his father is intense even to the point that he fantasizes of physically retaliating. It should be noted that Peter is reluctant to use the word “abuse” concerning his father’s behavior toward him. In great irony, the subject that Peter preoccupies upon is dismissed by discounting its severity. Another irony is that this mistreatment has become the setting in which Peter has discovered closeness to God in that God has compensated for his father’s deficiencies. However, aspects of Peter’s father have corresponded to God, especially inconsistency.

Other subjects preoccupied Peter: first marriage, friend’s murder, and being picked on as a child. Peter’s friendships are described as inconsistent and as having an ebb and flow. Finally, Peter describes his relationship with God as being “off and on.” This evidence would suggest that Peter’s primary attachment mode is preoccupation.

However, Peter’s narrative took upon a dismissing mode as well. Peter dismissed events from his childhood and adolescence through the use of vague language. He describes these as “some experiences” and “some things.” The use of such language is a way of glossing over the event in a dismissing fashion. Also, when Peter spoke of God he had more difficulty describing his current relationship with God than his memories. Peter also shared relational aspects that seem to be avoidant: not wanting to expose himself, feeling “the world closing around me,” and hiding in his “human turtle shell” in times of extreme stress.

The inconsistent use of these narrative tendencies is indicative of Peter’s inconsistent relational dynamics especially as he relates to God. Several conclusions can be formed concerning this narrative inconsistency as it relates to Peter’s relationship with God. First, Peter’s interpretive strategy is inconsistent and this is a sign of his feelings of inconsistency in his relationship with God. Peter understands this inconsistency to be his own fault, but has often felt rejected and threatened by God. Peter’s feelings of rejection are connected to his financial and career situation, his feeling out of place, and body-image shame. Furthermore, Peter fears that God’s plan for his life is “scary.” In fact,

Peter fears that following God will bring about such satanic attack that it might cause the people he loves to die. While no one can predict the actions of any attachment figure, certain aspects of the figure must be fixed if security is to exist. In a similar fashion, no one can predict all of the actions of God, but God's consistency is based upon certain fixed realities like God's availability, ultimate protection, and responsiveness.

Second, Peter's image of God derives largely from his relationship with his father. It is not as if Peter has made a conscious decision. However, the power of his father-relationship is evident. The father's inconsistency seems to be the primary aspect that Peter has corresponded to God. However, God has also been the source of compensation for Peter's father's deficiencies. Peter has been drawn to God by intense feelings that seek what he always wanted from his father. Peter's description of the "ebb and flow" of his relationship with God describes two forces. The force that pulls Peter to God is the compensation force. The force that repels Peter from God is the correspondence force. The result is that Peter desires closeness with God in the form of hearing "God's voice" and at the same time he fears that closeness will result in satanic attack and harm. The force of compensation has been high for Peter as he has discovered that the joy of receiving love from God is greater than his fear of being close to God. This compensation force has resulted in a greater degree of security with God than Peter has ever experienced in the past.

Peter's lack of a consistent narrative style indicated the possibility of abuse. While Peter did mention anger toward his father during the interview, he did not mention abuse. After the interview was complete, the interviewer wondered if abuse was a missing part of the story. This was indicated by the difficulty of placing Peter in one dominant category. The discussion led to Peter speaking of the abuse he endured from his father, both physical and verbal. The disorganized category seems to apply here and is an indication of some sort of trauma (Bowlby, 1969/1982)

When offering care to Peter, several dynamics are important. First, Holmes (2001, pp. 52-64) speaks of disorganized attachment in terms of “basic fault.” Basic fault refers to the deficiency in parenting that leads the child to attempt to meet his or her needs through strategies, only to find that no strategy works. The result is that no consistent strategy is used by the person to bring about proximity to attachment figures. For those who have experienced trauma from parents who should have been the fount of security, confusion exists concerning how to approach relationships because of the impotency of relational strategies. The primary need for such person’s is consistency. Therefore, aiding Peter to become aware of his multiple strategies exposes the insufficiency of these multiple approaches is a key step to transformation. Furthermore, challenging inconsistencies of Peter’s view of father and of God can help to create consistent images of each. This will require an awareness of both the disappointing and satisfactory aspects of each in such a way that they do not contradict even in ambiguity.

Second, Peter should be encouraged to experience God’s compensatory nature. While cognitive efforts of presenting God in doctrinal form will be helpful, it is primarily an emotional deficit that has been left by Peter’s father. Peter describes himself in solely negative terms: he can’t be good-enough, he can’t achieve what he wants for God, he punishes himself, he questions whether others could love him, and he is calloused from his childhood. An experience of the love and grace of God are necessary to fill this void. Eliciting the emotions connected to hurtful childhood experiences makes those emotional schemas pliable. Once the emotions are activated the care of the counselor and images of a loving God can be expressed.

In conclusion the counselor must have a double movement to counter Peter’s double movement. The counselor challenges the inconsistencies of images of self, important relationships, and God as well as inconsistent interpretive strategies. However, all of this happens in the context of proximity that offers the security needed for Peter to receive such challenges.

Greg: Experiencing Emotional Proximity with an Intellectual God

God is a concept that is absent from Greg's memories from the first eleven years of his life. Before this time, his family had little affiliation with church, and God was not a subject of conversation. Lack of opportunity is one reason for this absence. However, it is startling that Greg cannot think of a memory before this age concerning God. His memories beyond this age are vivid and full of detail. Greg notes that he and his brother have very different memories of their childhood. An absent God lacks proximity of any sort and thus prohibits attachment formation.

Greg became involved in church at the age of eleven and quickly developed an intense desire to grow in knowledge of God and the Bible. He sees his faith at this time in his life to primarily be intellectual. His story attests to this as well. For instance, when asked for five adjectives to describe his relationship with God in these years, he chose awesome, caring, all-knowing, in control, and strict. The "caring" connotes the idea of a near and attentive God. When asked to supply a memory connected to this adjective Greg said that he knew "God loves people through Jesus dying on the cross" but that he approached it from an "intellectual" perspective. Greg uses the term "intellectual" in the sense of a logical thought separated from emotion. The "all-knowing" aspect of God was less a comfort in God's constant care and more of a frightening thought associated with descriptors of deceased loved ones looking down on the world. If they could see all that happened, then God definitely could see and know all. Greg's description of God in these adjectives is power oriented with few relationally oriented descriptions.

Greg's narrative generally holds to the cohesive criteria and thus indicates a degree of security with God. The primary lapse in the story is his inability to access early memories of God. However, Greg gives evidence of his answers, does so in a succinct manner, arranges the material in a logical and chronological manner, and gives answers that relate to the questions given. Greg has clearly discovered a sense of security with God through the years and this is evidenced by his current relationship with God.

Greg's narrative structure, while mostly cohesive, indicates a tendency to dismiss some of life's events. Furthermore, the content of the narrative indicates an avoidant relational stance in many of Greg's relationships. Several dynamics give evidence of this assessment. First, the lack of childhood memories before the age of eleven is a substantial sign of a dismissing narrative. Did something tragic occur during this period? Was there some event too painful to process and thus memories have been stalled? It seems unlikely that even a child who does not attend church would have a complete absence of memories of God, whether positive or negative. Whether Greg has dismissed memories or not, it is clear that during his formative years God was non-existent and thus absent. Perhaps He was not absent in a rejecting way, but clearly in a way that prohibited an attachment bond. Therefore, when Greg's cognitive abilities were emerging at the age of eleven, he discovered Christianity, but did so without emotional proximity. It is unclear whether an attachment had formed at this point, because Christianity may have been more of an interesting subject to study than anything else. It has only been in Greg's adult years that his emotions have been mobilized concerning his faith and this occurred through a time in which his attachment system was activated. For instance, it is the memory of the birth of Greg's first daughter that he recounts God's comforting presence. His daughter was in peril right after she was born, but Greg was able to keep his wits about him in the midst of the chaos. Greg attributes this calmness to his sense of God's presence and the trust he placed in God to determine the outcome of the situation. God's presence served as a coping mechanism (cf. Pargament, 1997) to relieve Greg's stress enough to remain emotionally stable throughout the time of danger until his daughter was safe. It seems that it is this event and others like it that has mobilized Greg's emotions toward God. Another memory that Greg mentions concerning God's near and caring presence is his proximity to God during and right after his divorce. During this difficult time Greg was especially close to God, in fact, he claims that he was closer during that time than at the current time. From an attachment

perspective, it seems that difficult moments have created opportunities for Greg's attachment system to be initiated and thus through these times he has experienced emotional proximity to God.

Another item that attests to Greg's dominant avoidant defense is the idealization of attachment figures. Greg labels his family environment as secure. However, in his telling of his story it became clear that his parents struggled with alcoholism and a combative relationship. It is easy to understand the way in which a child of an alcoholic dismisses painful events and masks them with achievements, image, and in Greg's case choosing to approach life intellectually rather than emotionally. Greg had trouble speaking of his disappointments with God and may over-idealize that relationship. Although he does mention feeling rejected by God, this rejection is due to his own lacking and not God's. Greg continues to struggle with feelings of inadequacy that prohibit nearness to God.

Finally, Greg's avoidant characteristic is seen in isolation from relationships. Greg admits that he keeps distant in relationships to "protect" himself. Even as a child Greg isolated and "pouted" when upset.

Working therapeutically with Greg upon his level of security with God would require several interventions. First, Greg can be encouraged to gain access to childhood memories and to explore the emotions connected to them. If his over-regulation of emotions (see Magai, 1999) was learned as a child, then unlocking these memories may be a key to greater emotional balance.

Second, Greg would be invited to express his emotions in the counseling setting. If regulation of emotions is too great, then the starting place may be emotions felt toward the counselor. However, eventually Greg needs to be able to express a full range of emotions without over-regulating them and do so toward God. Open prayer time in which Greg is encouraged to think freely about his emotions and to express them

to God may aid in this process. Although this is an area that Greg has grown in, it is wise to encourage further growth.

Third, Greg needs to be challenged in his inconsistent views of parents and then helped to understand how this inconsistency is indicative of the inconsistency he experienced from them as a child. It seems that Greg needs to come to a full awareness of the ramifications of his parent's alcoholism and the influence this has upon him as an adult. These ramifications are currently dismissed and little connection exists between the two.

Melody: Bearing Separation from a Sensational God

Melody's earliest memories of God include the ability to sense God's presence. Her first memory of God is repeating a child's prayer that begins "Now I lay me down to sleep." This prayer was a nightly habit into her adult years as a reminder of the proximate presence of God. She speaks of herself as being affect-centered throughout her life and this has been an important aspect of her relationship with God. Thus God is sensational, that is, He elicits emotive sensations for Melody so that she is aware of His presence. In fact, the moments God has seemed absent from her coincide with moments when she has "wrong feelings" rather than wrong behaviors or thoughts. Melody describes God as "looking at her like a child and loving her no matter what." She also recalls fighting with another girl in high school and immediately feeling God's presence as a comfort and warning in that moment. Melody's relationship with God is one of potent emotions.

There are two main sources for Melody's image of God through her formative years. The first and least dominant of the two is her church environment. Melody describes her church as "judgmental" and pressure filled. The threat of hell for sins was constant and the need to prove spirituality through expressions was great. In a very balanced manner, Melody is able to see both the blessing and curse of this religious

background. The curse is that it associated God with shame. This has affected Melody in moments of her perceived failure, causing her to feel that she cannot approach God. This seems to be a type of correspondence between her childhood religious environment and her relationship with God. However, Melody understands that her religious background emphasized emotional experiences of God. This has blessed her in that it has made her more “in tune” with God and able to sense Him. The second source of her God-image is her mother. Her mother compensated for her shaming religious environment by offering an available, caring, and responsive figure that gave Melody great security. Although her mother was a part of the same religious establishment, she often veered from the fused consensus and approached life differently than her church. One memory Melody speaks of centers upon the issue of divorce. Melody’s church was quite harsh upon those who have been divorced. Melody asked her mother, “will you go to hell if you are divorced?” Her mother responded that God can forgive divorce. This moment became a beacon for Melody during her own divorce several years later. Furthermore, moments like these gave Melody the courage to question her church’s judgmental attitude. Melody describes her relationship with God in similar terms as her relationship with her mother. Both were “constant” and “always there.” Both placed a great deal of trust in her and found pleasure in her. It is reasonable to think that the emotional proximity Melody enjoyed with her mother corresponded to the emotional proximity she enjoys with God.

Melody’s narrative indicates a level of security with God in that it is consistent and cohesive. Furthermore, she has a very balanced view of herself as having both limitations and worth and understands God to see both as well. In fact she notes that God “trusts” her and “enjoys” her. Melody does seem to lean toward the preoccupied dimension of insecurity with God. Her high level of emotion is one factor. At times her emotions overflow in pleasant and unpleasant ways. Her pace of speech is moderately fast and her voice gets louder at times. One of the times that her voice got louder coincided with her saying, “that might not make sense.” It seems that she raises her voice

in moments that she does not feel heard as a signaling device for others to recognize her presence. This is a typical attachment behavior in that not being heard can be interpreted as absence or rejection. Furthermore, her mother's death seems to find its way into the narrative at points in which it may only slightly belong. This may indicate that Melody is still grieving her mother's death even though it was many years ago. While this does not indicate a malfunction, the greater Melody can become aware of this grief, the greater will be her ability to integrate this aspect of her life into the rest of her story.

Although she leans toward the preoccupied dimension, she does dismiss one pivotal event. She dismisses her divorce noting that she felt separated from God during this period because of God's disappointment in her. Her dismissal is seen in her ability to speak of it in ambiguous terms. Furthermore, she consciously notes that "if I don't bring it up it is not there," and that she wants to "skirt the issue." It seems that the pain surrounding these events still lingers with her. The most dangerous aspect of this dismissal is that her shame connected to these events may be given more power in their unconscious state than it would in a more conscious state. It could be that the anxious mode of dealing with insecurity is Melody's more conscious level and this dismissing strategy has formed at a more unconscious level (cf. Brisch, 1999 for the possibility of a person forming two working models in the same relationship). The shame latent in the memories of Melody's divorce may prohibit fuller experiences of intimacy with God especially during moments of perceived failure and sin.

A treatment plan for Melody would focus on several aspects. First, Melody has self-admittedly become more balanced in her relationship with God as she has added cognitive dimensions to her keen ability to sense God at an intuitive level and this should be further encouraged. Cognitive categories may be a resource for Melody to regulate her emotions and to give them broader, more stable meanings.

Second, the dismissed divorce narrative needs to be explored for several reasons. One reason is that it will have greater power in her life, especially the way that

she handles moments of shame with God, in unconscious regions. A second reason is that it is a pivotal part of her story and of God's redemption in her life. A third reason is that this story seems to carry much of her shame, and thus it is an opportunity to discover a new level of God's love in the midst of shame. It is plausible to think that moments of shame are most fertile for discovering God's grace due to the doubts in God's love caused by shame. Experiencing God's love during times of success proves little. Being loved in times of shame creates a greater level of security.

Conclusions

A few conclusions can be drawn from these interviews. First, security with God largely comes from representatives of God that display his safety. Everyone interviewed spoke of someone who compensated for attachment deficiencies or corresponded with the safe, responsive, and available presence of God. Second, when God compensates for the deficiencies of attachment figures, an intense bond forms. This does not mean that a residue of poor attachment does not continue to correspond to the attachment relationship with God, but rather that compensation is a powerful emotional experience that aids in overcoming negative correspondence. Third, cognitive messages and emotional experiences both play a vital role in the attachment to God and its transformation. Thoughts about God, especially as a child, played vital roles in most of these interviews. However, emotional experiences with attachment figures and then with God solidify and give strength to the attachment position any person takes. Fourth, transformation of attachment to God can take place. These stories indicate that these persons started with one type of relationship with God and ended with another. Each of these stories indicates improvements in security with God. It is important to remember that these individuals are active church participants. Interviews with those who have dropped out of church or never been interested in church may prove that security can decrease with God. Finally, life's difficult events are often the pivotal moments when a

person truly learns to trust God and find security in Him. The life crisis is the pivotal point in which persons sense God's caring presence. The person's interpretation of God's proximity subsequent to the crisis may be the determining factor. The result of this is that pastoral care during times of crisis plays a crucial role in the attachment security level of persons with God.

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ABSTRACT

THEORY AND APPLICATION OF ATTACHMENT TO GOD IN CHRISTIAN SOULCARE

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While Christian counseling is a burgeoning field, it seems to lack clear philosophical and methodological definitions. This is particularly true when it comes to the human-divine relationship in that few theories or models exist that can guide practitioners in assessment and intervention of the human-divine relationship in order to improve it. Attachment theory offers relational concepts that can be applied to a person's relationship with God thus offering guidelines for soulcare providers. Attachment theory describes the relationship between God and persons in similar fashion with the Bible. Adoption is understood to be the central doctrine that relates to attachment, but it is aided by justification by faith, union with Christ, naming God "Abba," and the testimony of the Spirit. While attachment theory holds much in common with biblical principles, it also has several deficiencies including biological reductionism and limited teleology. Attachment theory is most applicable to Christianity in a post-postmodern ideology that allows for metanarrative but also takes seriously the subjective elements of experience as these experiences form narratives through a hermeneutic function in which persons interpret reality. Paul Ricoeur's concept of testimony aids in explaining the way in which life experiences form a narrative that fuels concepts of self, others, and relationships and the manner in which this process is transformed. Ricoeur's ideas have much in common with the

Adult Attachment Interview in which adult's state of mind toward attachment is revealed through the type of narrative they produce about attachment. The primary indicator of such is the level of coherence in the person's narrative.

It is proposed that a similar narrative interview, entitled the Adult Attachment to God Interview (AAGI), could produce indicators of a person's level of security and primary attachment strategy. Through testimony analysis, the soulcare provider can discover the level of coherence of a person's narrative concerning life with God and thus encounter the type of attachment a person has with God. Furthermore, the interview process will give insights into types of interventions that will aid the person in developing a more cohesive narrative and thus a more secure relationship with God.

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