A Critical Evaluation of John Robert Stevens' Theology of Spiritual Formation
in Dialogue with Søren Kierkegaard

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A dissertation submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Theology
at the South African Theological Seminary

April 2019

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any institution for a degree.

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Abstract

John Robert Stevens (1919-1983) was a Pentecostal/Charismatic minister whose teachings emphasize Christian maturity. In his dozens of major published works, he describes a Christian lifestyle of "a walk with God", which stands as a uniquely holistic and relational model of spiritual formation. Utilizing the existential voice of Søren Kierkegaard as a dialogical partner, this dissertation identifies, synthesizes, systematizes, assesses, analyzes, and critiques John Robert Stevens' teachings on a walk with God.

Stevens' holistic model is described and measured along four axes: goal, paradigmatic concept, theological foundations, and activities. Stevens' concept of a walk with God includes the primary interrelated topics of Christlikeness, the Kingdom, and the believer's relationship with God. Christ and His Lordship are the center of this formative walk with God. Further, Christian maturity reflects the internalized Kingdom, as well as the transformation of God's Kingdom citizens. True spiritual formation results from an ongoing, obedient relationship with God, who is the only source of genuine transformation. According to Stevens, Christian formation is an existential and relational endeavor. It naturally arises from a daily focus of relating to God in the course of life, and consistently moving in the direction of God's will. The dialogue with Kierkegaard—the father of existentialism—highlights and sharpens Stevens' view of Christian spiritual formation.

In the course of engaging with Stevens' teachings, particular aspects of his model are critiqued exegetically, while others are critiqued theologically. Contemporary biblical scholarship and works on spiritual formation supplement missing elements of Stevens' theo-philosophical foundations. The result of this systematic study of John Robert Stevens' concept of a walk with God is this summary proposition: *Christian spiritual formation is a relational endeavor in which ontological maturity toward Christlikeness is realized via an interactive, obedient, and holistic relationship with three persons of the Trinity in an ongoing walk with God, who is the only source of true spiritual transformation.*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Scholars of Christian spirituality often identify the goal of spiritual growth as holiness or maturity (Aumann 1980:9,13; Carson 1994:382; Cunningham and Egan 1996:7; Downey 1997:15; Conn 1999:86; Boa 2001:16-17; Issler and Houston 2001:25-26; Schneiders 2005:5-6; Wilhoit and Willard 2008:15-17; Schneiders 20011:16; McGrath 2013:2-4). The popularization of the concept of spiritual formation in the last half century has spawned a robust genre of Christian literature which seeks to detail the transformational aspects of the Christian spiritual life (Demarest 2012:n.p.). While the concept has a long and varied history, spiritual formation as a topic of Christian study has steadily grown in popularity since the 1970s. For many believers, especially among Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Charismatics, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with a static Christian life. This has caused a resultant exploration of the theological dynamics of spiritual growth in Christ (Smith 1996:83; Willard 1998:101; Moon and Benner 2004:7). The popularity of works by Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, and Henri Nouwen, as well as the introduction of *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* (the first journal wholly dedicated to this arena of scholarship) reveals the widespread hunger for exercisable principles of spiritual formation.

Due to the youth of the academic study of spiritual formation, there are not yet firmly established criteria by which we might critique any particular paradigm. However, this dissertation proposes that four primary axes must be detailed and critiqued in order to adequately examine any theory: (1) the stated goal or purpose of spiritual formation, at times found in the author's definition of spiritual formation; (2) the paradigmatic concept

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which frames the theory; (3) the theo-philosophical principles which form the foundation of the paradigm as a whole; and (4) the resultant activities, keyed to these first three aspects, which cause spiritual growth. The following is a short review of the various approaches to these four aspects of spiritual formation in current literature.

Goals of Christian formation range from mere self-improvement (Vondey 2015:202) to the deification/glorification of the believer (Nassif 2012:n.p.). More centrist positions include conformity with the character of Christ (Willard 1990:9-10, 14; Boa 2001:16; Dawson 2007:Loc.79-80; Howard 2012:n.p.; Willard 2014:Loc.344-346), conformity with God's ideal for humanity (Smith 2010:Loc.156-162), discipleship with Jesus (Bowers 1995:78; Nouwen 2010:Loc.566-569), the establishment of love of God and neighbor (Driskill 2012:n.p.), the development of ethical and moral character as representatives of God's Kingdom (Wright 2010:Loc.1164-1169), moving from human worry to an internal change of heart (Nouwen 1981:21-23, 28-29, 42-43), the attainment of the true self (Pennington 2000), the improvement of society through community engagement (Dempster 1993:53-54; Johns 1993:22-23; Vondey 2015:205), and the achievement of authentic Christianity (Keefauver 2000:Loc.74-77; Naidoo 2008:131). While growth is a consistent component to the goals of these various paradigms, there is variation in the stated *telos* of that growth.

Spiritual formation theorists often use images, metaphors, or concepts which guide their theories. Such paradigmatic concepts of spiritual formation range from the practical (such as educational models) to the metaphorical (e.g. formation as a journey). Educational models include the addition of spiritual instruction to preexisting forms of Christian education (Johnson 1989; Palmer 1993; Smith 1996:83-91; Anderson and Yust 2006; Naidoo 2008:128-146; Westerhoff 2012), the link between pedagogy and ontology (Johns 1993), and discipleship as a model of education (Bowers 1995:55-86; Willard 2009a). Guiding concepts and metaphors include that of a journey (Mulholland 1993; Palmer 1993; Nouwen 2010; Warner 2010; Willet 2010:88-102; Mulholland 2013), God as potter and humans as His clay (Smith 2010), "seasons of the soul" (Demarest 2009), the transition from slavery to sonship (Frost and Frost 2016), and the death to the self (Idleman 2015). Other concepts which frame paradigms of spiritual formation include the spiritual disciplines (Foster 2002; Willard 2009b), "lived conversion" (Howard 2012), Christian virtue (Wright 2010), the emulation of the model of Jesus (Dawson 2007), and unending formation (Nelson 2012). Another popular guiding concept is that of the workbook format in which the reader is guided into spiritually formative experiences (Keefauver 2000; Smith 2007; Duvall 2008; Roller and Foster 2009;

Warner 2010).

The theological and/or philosophical frameworks of Christian spiritual formation range from being primarily anecdotal and personally experiential in nature (McManus 2015) to detailed systematic biblical theology (Willard 2009a; Wright 2010). Other approaches include practical theology (Steele 1998), Christian mysticism (Thomas 2000; Dreyer 2005; Valantasis 2005; Barton 2006; Ashbrook 2009; Benner 2012), a mix of biblical teaching and personal anecdotes (Idleman 2015; Frost and Frost 2016), a mix of psychology and biblical theology (Crabb 1993; Sandford and Sandford 2007), investigations into denominational theology (Bowers 1995; Vondey 2015:201-216), a combination of mystical and psychological approaches (Benner 2003), and historical theology (Foster 2001).

The activities of spiritual formation seem to have greater uniformity than the first three aspects. The most common activities are often referred to as the disciplines, which include prayer, meditation, reading of Scripture, solitude, silence, fasting, repentance, service, community, worship, communion, and celebration (Mulholland 1993; Bowers 1995; Peterson 2000; Boa 2001; Foster 2002; Dawson 2007; Willard 2009b; Nouwen 2010; Wright 2010; Benner 2012; Nelson 2012). Other authors include activities such as reflection and the *lectio divina* (Nouwen 2010), stories and examples (Wright 2010), work (Vondey 2015:201-216), self-examination (Smith 2007), and spiritual direction or guidance (McMahan 2002; Moon and Benner 2004).

The majority of the various approaches to these facets of spiritual formation conforms to the bedrock concerns of Evangelicalism, being rooted in Scripture and centered in Christ. However, there is a broad range of approaches and foci amidst this general conformity to Evangelical thought. In reviewing these works on spiritual formation, two issues of deficiency emerge.

Firstly, most of these works do not offer complete theories of spiritual formation, through the integration of goal, paradigmatic concept, theological foundations, and activities. This is not a negative criticism, for many authors do not state an intention to put forward a complete theory of spiritual formation. Some prioritize theology, with less attention paid to practice. For example, Dallas Willard—a strong voice for sound theology in this arena—notes that he believes there is no precise formula for effective activity in spiritual formation (2009a:Loc.1805), which accounts for the sparseness of his discussion of concrete activities which lead to maturity. Some prioritize methodology over theory,

notably Richard Foster, whose landmark work *Celebration of Discipline* (2002) is dedicated primarily to describing the activities of Christian formation with cursory explanations of the foundational theology underlying such methodology. Perhaps the unique example which best represents a complete paradigm is N.T. Wright's *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (2010), which progressively moves from goal to theology to methodology under a unified paradigmatic concept of Christian virtue. All authors have the prerogative of determining the focus and scope of their projects, so acknowledging a general lack of holistic paradigms is certainly not an indictment of the field or the workers in it. Even so, this lack of holism remains less than satisfactory for students in the field.

A second general deficiency is in theories of spiritual formation which are fundamentally relational in nature. Such a theory would integrate the believer's relationship with God as an ongoing concern throughout goal, paradigm, theology, and activities. Boa (2001:25-33) provides a rare discussion of relational spirituality as a central paradigm in spiritual formation. Foster (2010:23, 133-148) also treats the relationship with God as a major concern in his work *Life With God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation* —although it is but one aspect of Foster's guiding concept, which he terms the "with-God life" or the "Immanuel Principle" (v-vi). However, most other references to the connection between spiritual formation and the believer's relationship with God fall into three main categories. First, the mention of relationship arises in the various definitions given for spiritual formation (Bowers 1995:78; Peterson 2000:5; Foster 2002:4; Nouwen 2010:Loc.204-210, 566-569). Second, it is discussed in explaining the result of spiritual formation (Smith 2010:Loc.88-93; Wright 2010:Loc.3569-3574). Third, the believer's relationship with God is given as a sort of presupposition for the prospect of spiritual formation (Keefauver 2000:167-163; Newton 2004:14-15; Packer 2005:10; Dawson 2007:Loc.645-651; Driskill 2012:n.p.; Willard 2014:Loc.179-184). Yet another compelling example of this deficiency is seen in the lack of individual entry for anything similar to relational Christian formation in *The Upper Room Dictionary of Christian Spiritual Formation* (Beasley-Topliffe 2017). This lack of deep academic examination regarding the proper functionality of the Christian's relationship with God in the context of spiritual formation leaves many questions unanswered and is an opportunity hanging unaddressed in the current literature.

I propose that a systematic analysis and critique of the writings of John Robert Stevens (1919-1983) on spiritual formation will address both of these missing elements. Developed over the course of roughly 30 years and in 50 major published works,

Stevens' approach to Christian spiritual growth integrates goal, paradigmatic concept, theology, and activity, and also heavily emphasizes the centrality of the believer's relationship with God in the process of spiritual maturation. Stevens utilizes the term "walk with God" to encompass the active, transformational relationship with God which stands at the heart of his approach to Christian spiritual formation. The concept of a walk with God was central to Stevens' ministry and teachings (1976:420), and numerous times he explains that he views it as the very purpose of human life (1971:81-82; 1987:694). Interestingly, Stevens' theory of spiritual formation functions in ways which could be characterized as existential.

Existentialism involves the interrelated points of searching for personal authenticity and commitment (Crowell 2012:5; Golomb 2012:1-5), addressing questions of religious faith as they relate to the individual (Kauffman 1975:50; Barrett 1990:17; Aho 2014:4) and the focus on lived truth, i.e. prioritizing the process of becoming over the process of gaining knowledge (Kauffman 1975:51; Barrett 1990:19; Flynn 2006:2-3; Walsh 2009:1-2). These existentialist issues express the commonalities between the philosophers of existentialism, although there is wide variety in how these issues are addressed (Barrett 1990:17-18). Grant's (1977:24) exploration of existentialism's impact on the theology of faith also resonates in the arena of spiritual formation: "The concern with the living reality of faith made existentialism attractive in its insistence that the fundamental issues of life are not issues of thought but of existence, not susceptible to the detached analysis of the spectator but available only to the involved participant." Stevens' approach to spiritual formation emphasizes involvement, becoming, and commitment as fundamentals to maturity in Christ, all of which relates him to the overarching existentialist project.

This mode of research—using existentialism as a tool for examining Christian theology—is not new. Particularly, there have been recent efforts to express Pentecostal and Charismatic theological thought and experience through the dialogical use of the philosophical concepts of existentialism. This is of note because Stevens comes from a Pentecostal background and was involved in the Charismatic renewal. Some examples of these kinds of approaches include the following. Nichols (1984:71-72) references existentialism as a means to explore and define spiritual ontology. Brake (1984) utilizes Kierkegaard's concepts of experience and individuality in order to bring into relief the Pentecostal view of such matters. Cross (2009:22-23) utilizes Kierkegaard's concept of contemporaneity with Christ as the basis of divine encounter. Wariboko (2011) uses Tillich's Protestant principle as a model for formulating a Pentecostal principle.

Williamson and Hood (2011:553-554) examine the existential issues of experience and identity in relation to Spirit baptism. Yong (2015:3) investigates pneumatology through a dialogue between the writings of Paul Tillich and Pentecostal theology. There is, therefore, precedent in using existentialism as a framework by which Pentecostal and Charismatic theology might be better defined and analyzed.

However, in the spacious arena of existentialism it is Søren Kierkegaard who stands as the most fitting dialogical partner for exploring Stevens' approach to spiritual formation. While Kierkegaard is often viewed primarily as a philosopher, some recent scholars have asserted that neglecting his theological bent is a mistake (Barrett, et al. 2015:94). After a thorough review of Kierkegaard's personal notes, Pattison (2012:n.p.) explains that "by the start of his self-styled 'authorship' he had a substantial knowledge of biblical, historical, and doctrinal theology, including extensive study of the most up-to-date scholarship in philosophy of religion and systematic theology." The validity of reading Kierkegaard as a Christian theologian is further established in recognizing the centrality of Christ in his answer to the fundamental questions of human existence.

Kierkegaardian thought has been referenced in studies on spiritual formation, although the literature in this respect in not as robust as one might expect. For example, Leonard (1990:23-25, 54) references Kierkegaard in his discussion of the immediate importance of the human relationship with God, the significance of the human will, individuality, the relation between subjective truth and spiritual knowledge, and Christian liturgical worship. Anderson and Yust (2006:19-29) use Kierkegaard's *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing* as a basis for discussing self-discovery in teaching and prayer, which leads to devotion to God. Thus there is scope for employing Kierkegaard as a dialogical partner in conversation with Stevens in order to sharpen and illustrate Stevens' unique contributions to the subject.

In addition to the general commonalities between Stevens and Kierkegaard—such as the topics of commitment, authenticity, and becoming—the productive compatibility of Stevens and Kierkegaard is found in that they both place a relationship with God at the center of the human quest for spiritual maturation (Kierkegaard 1985:26-36; Gouwens 1988:17; Stevens 1989:430-431, 533; Kierkegaard 1990:325-326; Moore 2007:xxi-xxvi; Stevens 2007:163-164). For these reasons, I suggest that the analysis of Stevens' concept of a walk with God as the model of spiritual formation is best conducted in partnership with Kierkegaard's existentialist relationalism.

1.2 A Biographical Sketch of John Robert Stevens

The late John Robert Stevens (1919-1983) grew up in Iowa in the United States. Around the age of eight, he experienced a miraculous healing from a mastoid infection, a miracle performed through a traveling Pentecostal preacher. This early personal encounter with the tangible Jesus Christ had a strong influence on his theological outlook.

This event also prompted Stevens' father to enter the ministry (Stevens 2007a:118). In 1929, Stevens' father enrolled at LIFE Bible College (Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism), one of the first Pentecostal seminaries in the United States. The institution had been founded by McPherson in 1923 (Liardon 1996:255), and continues to function today as Life Pacific College. At the precocious age of ten, John Robert Stevens often attended college classes with his father. While there, he enjoyed the ministry of several original participants of the Azusa Street revival (Stevens 1988:602).

Stevens also had hands laid on him by Smith Wigglesworth, an influential preacher in England who had a ministry of healing and miracles prior to 1900, yet also experienced a baptism of the Holy Spirit after seeking the Lord in response to the news of events at the Azusa outpouring (Liardon 1996:204-209). Wigglesworth had a powerful influence on the development of Stevens' ministry, both as an exemplar of ministry, and in the laying on of hands (Stevens 1973a:131; 2007:84; Hargrave 2016:150).

At the age of fourteen, Stevens wrote "To Be a Christian," (1933) a short description of the genuine Christian life. In this writing, he was clearly inspired by a sermon from George Herron (1892:22-25). Stevens borrowed heavily from Herron in this statement of faith, and Stevens said that it guided the rest of his life. Stevens' document begins with the following paragraph:

> To be a Christian, as I understand Christ, means the acceptance of the absolute authority of Jesus in all of my life. It means that in everything I am and do—when I eat and drink, when I buy and sell, when I work and play, when I read and think—that I look to Jesus as my Master. It means that I enthrone Him as King in my affections; that I subject my friendships to His dominion; that I conduct my business and my intellectual and social life under His inspection and direction. It means that my ruling passion— the passion that shall absorb all other interests shall be to live my whole

life under the sovereignty of Jesus. It means that I honor His name above every other name, and place obedience to Him above every other obligation.

After a few years of itinerant preaching, Stevens eventually returned to the Los Angeles area to follow in his father's footsteps and attend LIFE Bible College. He graduated with a G.Th. (Graduate in Theology) degree in 1947. Stevens soon settled in the Los Angeles area, where he pastored an Assemblies of God church. However, in 1949, Stevens began to preach about the need for a further restoration of Christianity to the original anointing of the early Church, which caused conflict between Stevens and his denominational overseers (Hargrave 2007). This rift prompted him to start a non-denominational church in 1951, called Grace Chapel of South Gate, which was the first church in what would eventually become a worldwide fellowship of churches.

Although Stevens emerged from a Pentecostal upbringing and education, his ministry also grew concurrently with the Charismatic movement. In the early 1960s, Stevens regularly met with a group of ministers from various denominational backgrounds who had experiences in the Charismatic revival (Stevens 1976m:103). This group included Larry Christenson, a leader in the Lutheran Charismatic movement, who recalls that Stevens was the unofficial leader of this group (Christenson 2014:n.p.). Stevens would teach weekly on biblical topics that were new to these pastors due to their denominational upbringing, particularly about the gifts of the Spirit. Further, Christenson recalls that Stevens had an "astonishing" gift of the word of knowledge and word of wisdom. Christenson (2014:n.p.) stated, "when I think of the people that influenced us [in the emerging Charismatic movement], John Robert Stevens was certainly one of them."

Stevens' ministry particularly flourished in the 1970s, when he preached eleven times a week in a number of churches throughout the Los Angeles area. Many of these messages were printed as his weekly publication, which collectively exceeds eleven thousand pages. That most of Stevens' books remain in print, particularly in Logos Bible Software format, is a testament to continued interest in his biblical teachings.

In the 1970s, Stevens' emphasis on the individual's relationship with God struck a chord with the hippie generation in the United States. They were hungering for genuine spiritual experience, and Stevens' spiritually formative approach to lived Christianity was attractive to many. At the height of his ministry, there were more than one hundred

churches functioning under his ministry (Stevens 1976f:n.p.). Up until 2018, a number of these churches continued to actively function in Stevens' legacy under the title The Living Word Fellowship, which included branches in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Brazil. However, plans to dissolve the connecting oversight of the Fellowship were announced in late 2018. Although these churches still exist, their future connection with Stevens' ministry is undetermined. However, another of Stevens' visions—the creation of a seminary for those looking for biblical education and spiritual growth—was realized when Shiloh University was founded by Stevens' successor in 2007, and accredited in 2012 (Shiloh University 2017:n.p.).

Riss, an expert in the history of the Pentecostal and Renewal movements, states that "In my opinion, John Robert Stevens was one of the most gifted preachers of the twentieth century" and that there was an "unusual degree of revelation flowing out of the teachings of John Robert Stevens" (Riss 2015:n.p.). Visiting several services led by Stevens in 1976, Riss recalls: "The presence of God in each of those services was nearly incomparable to anything else I have ever encountered." McKendricks (2014:n.p.), a former dean and professor at The King's College and Seminary in Los Angeles, states that Stevens' teachings make great contributions to such theological topics as community, discipleship, spiritual direction, ecclesiology, and eschatology, and that "he had a theological mind that was downright brilliant." McKendricks states that Stevens had an influence on such ministers as Francis Frangipane, Paul Cain, and Bob Mumford.

Chavda (2014:n.p.)—a leading U.S. Spirit-filled evangelist and teacher—characterizes Stevens' teachings as being particularly effective in creating divine experiences for the reader/hearer. He maintains that while much of theology looks at God from the outside, Stevens discussed the Word of God in such a way that it escorts the listener into the presence of God. According to Chavda, Stevens' greatest legacy is that of believers under his ministry who committed themselves to walk out the teachings of Jesus in a balance of practical, spiritual, and relational ways.

1.3 Stevens and Kierkegaard: A Brief Comparison

While John Robert Stevens would certainly not have considered himself an existentialist, and there is no evidence he ever read Kierkegaard, elements of his theory of spiritual formation closely correlate to important points of Kierkegaardian existentialism—such as relationship, commitment, personal authenticity, the interaction

between religious faith and the individual, and the emphasis on lived truth and the process of becoming. Understanding the ways in which Stevens' teachings overlap with these basic points of Kierkegaardian existentialism is an exceptional tool with which to uncover Stevens' unique theological contribution. What follows is a brief introduction to some major commonalities between these two figures, and the way these commonalities interact in bringing forward Stevens' approach to spiritual formation.

Firstly, Kierkegaard and Stevens both warn against equating genuine Christianity with strictly intellectual doctrinal propositions. Both use the term "doctrine" to refer to the reduction of lived faith to a set of written declarations which lack the power of true Christian belief. Kierkegaard considered practiced Christianity in his Danish homeland to be overly intellectual, restrictively formal, and unwittingly hypocritical. These factors caused him to feel personal responsibility to "reintroduce" Christianity to Christendom (Moore 2007:x). For Kierkegaard, Church dogma is a distraction from the individual's seeking of his or her true self in God, which "cannot be mediated by the clergy or by human artifacts" (McDonald 2016:n.p.). Kierkegaard writes, "Christ did not establish any doctrine; he acted. He did not teach that there was redemption, he redeemed. Christ's relationship to God, nature, and the human situation was conditioned by his activity. Everything else is to be regarded only as introduction" (Kierkegaard 1967:168). For Kierkegaard, Jesus is the ultimate model for humanity, so we should follow His example and focus on actions of faith over the understanding of doctrine.

Stevens assumes a similar stance regarding the over-emphasis on theoretical Christian doctrine, characterizing it as being an intellectual distraction from the true experience of God. For example, he asserts that Christ's sacrifice, Christ's resurrection, and communion are primarily spiritual realities and therefore should not be reduced to doctrines which substitute mental assent for true lived experience (Stevens 1980:ix; 1982:758; 2007c:483). Stevens (2007a:775-776) writes that "in order to walk with God, you must have a living experience of the Word. Whenever a doctrine becomes dead, it is still easy to assent to it; and you will be in fine company: The demons also believe— and tremble (Jas 2:19)." Further, Stevens places doctrine in opposition to a walk with God, for Christians might often acknowledge the biblical truth of doctrine without responding with corresponding activity (Stevens 1974d:52). This focus on lived knowledge is distinctly existential.

Kierkegaard's effort toward leading his readers into self-authenticity is another commonality shared with Stevens. Golomb (1992:70) summarizes: "Since authenticity is

a function of passion, to be authentic Kierkegaard requires an object that arouses the greatest possible passion. For him, this object is the Christian God." It is this inward passion for God that causes the individual to become his or her authentic self (Moore 2007:xxi, xxvi). Stevens similarly addresses authenticity in his treatment of a Pharisaic "religiosity", which attempts to look holy without living in genuine honesty before God (2007a:768–769). Stevens' quest for authenticity is characterized primarily by maintaining a true, living relationship with God while eschewing empty forms of worship (Stevens 1986:424-428). Further, Stevens sees authenticity as being a necessary component of spiritual maturity (Stevens 1987:554-555). Therefore, Kierkegaard's concept of the authentic individual brings further detail and clarity to an integral component of Stevens' spiritual formation project.

Both Kierkegaard and Stevens prioritize the process of "becoming" over the process of gaining knowledge. This is the fundamental reason why mere agreement with doctrine is rejected as a viable means of true Christianity. "Becoming" is also the process by which authenticity is achieved. Kierkegaard writes: "The subjective thinker is continually striving, is always in the process of becoming. How far the subjective thinker might be along that road, whether a long way or a short, makes no essential difference (it is, after all, just a finitely relative comparison); as long as he is existing, he is in the process of becoming" (1989:91-92). For Kierkegaard (1989:203), truth must be appropriated inwardly to mean anything, and this effort is what he means in his use of the term "subjectivity." He asserts that truth must be related to existence to be meaningful, and that "for the truly existing person, passion, not thought, is existence at its very highest: true knowing pertains essentially to existence, to a life of decision and responsibility" (Kierkegaard 1989:193). For Kierkegaard, a meaningful existence is achieved in the process of growth and becoming, and this requires the subjective reality of inner passion.

While Stevens did not use the term *subjective* with the same definition, he certainly argues that the process of transformation and growth (becoming) is the result of making God's truths personal. Stevens writes: "In this walk, it isn't what you know, it's what you're becoming; it isn't what you're doing, it's what you're becoming in yourself" (1972a:217; cf. 1981a:43). This process of becoming occurs through continual exposure to God through His Word (2007b:820) and exposure to His presence (1989:479, 540). As a specific example of this process, he maintains that the believer is meant to find a transformative personal experience of identification with Christ and His death (2007c:507; Phil 3:10; Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 4:7-1). This goes beyond an objective

understanding of Christ's sacrifice and becomes a life changing experience. This is the kind of subjective, personal knowledge that Stevens advocates in the process of becoming.

Relatedly, Stevens (1982:805-813) maintains that any experience in God is meant to be expanded in an ongoing relationship with Him, thereby asserting that subjective experiences must be guided by God and understood by the believer through further successive encounters with Him. However, Stevens' inclusion of the subjective reality of the individual's relationship with God is tempered with the admonishment that the believer should not focus on experiences with God to the exclusion of understanding the Scriptures. He criticized the Pentecostal movement of his day as being "experience-oriented" to such a degree that they lacked a depth of understanding the Scriptures (Stevens 2007a:756). Stevens was not against a rational knowledge of the Scriptures or of Christian belief. However, he emphasized that such knowledge and understanding cannot be a replacement for active participation in the Christian life through a relationship with God. For Stevens, Scripture is the source of all theological truth, and it must be studied and understood by every believer. However, the understanding of Scripture without the lived experience of it does not constitute a true Christian experience (Stevens 1972a:178; 2007b:813).

Both Kierkegaard and Stevens regard a relationship with God to be the key to achieving authenticity in the process of becoming. The human relationship with the divine is required in order to "solve" the existential issues of humanity. This relational understanding of the means of transformation is central to Kierkegaardian thought, and to Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. For Kierkegaard, true Christianity requires "following Jesus in self-denial, sacrifice, suffering, and by seeking a primitive relationship with God" (Moore 2007:xi). Kierkegaard writes, "In short, the self is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity. The self is the conscious unity of these factors, which relates to itself, whose task is to become itself. This, of course, can only be done in relationship to God, who holds the synthesis together" (Kierkegaard 1989b:59). Kierkegaard sees the relationship with God as the only means by which humanity can find a complete existence. Further, he sees Christ as the embodiment of the paradox of God and man, and maintains that our relationship with Christ is key to lived truth and inward authenticity.

Stevens would agree, for he also sees the believer's experiential relationship with Christ as the basis of identity, growth, and transformation (1982:816). After quoting Hebrews

10:20, Stevens sums up many of the points addressed here as they pertain to the believer's walk with God: "Pray to walk closer to the Lord. The more we concentrate on Jesus Christ as Lord, seek to relate to Him and for His life to flow into us, the quicker we will come into all the experiences and into the realization of all the doctrine" (Stevens 1982:78). The believer's focused relationship with Jesus brings alive the doctrinal and experiential realities of Christianity. Relatedly, Stevens sees the presence of God as the foundation of true human existence: "When you learn to practice His presence, everything, every moment, every act takes on significance. The humdrum existence disappears completely when you practice His presence and come into an awareness of Him" (1983:23-24). For Kierkegaard and Stevens therefore, the relationship with God is the foundation of meaningful human existence, which results in growth and maturity. Thus a dialogue between these two theorists is likely to sharpen Stevens' theory and yield significant dividends in situating its contribution.

1.4.1 Statement of the Problem

What unique contributions does Stevens' theology of a "walk with God" make to our fuller understanding of the nature of Christian spiritual formation?

1.4.2 Sub-Problems

- What theory of spiritual formation emerges from a systematic study of John Robert Stevens' writings surrounding his concept of a walk with God?

- In what way does Kierkegaard's existentialist theology shed light and enhance deeper understanding of Stevens' theology of spiritual formation?

- How does Stevens' paradigm of a walk with God integrate the goal, concept, theology, and methodology of spiritual formation?

- In what ways does this theory detail the believer's relationship to God through Christ in specific spiritual, transformational activity?

- How do Stevens' writings on a walk with God conform to, expound on, or conflict with scriptural teaching?

1.5 Hypothesis

Stevens uses the biblical term "walk with God" as the guiding concept for a theory of spiritual formation which integrates the believer's active relationship with God as the existential center of the goal, theology, and activities of Christian maturity. Stevens' unique contribution to spiritual formation is found in his recognition that true change and maturity comes directly from God, and therefore true change and maturity only arise when the believer establishes, maintains, and lives out a relationship with God. All other aspects of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation fall in line with this core concept.

Søren Kierkegaard is an excellent dialogic partner in examining Stevens' views on Christian formation. Kierkegaard was also relationship-oriented in his pursuit of existential issues, positing that a person can only be his authentic self when standing in relation to God. This aids in explaining Stevens' stance that the believer's relationship with God must be addressed directly if we are to formulate an approach to formation that is adequate to the task. The believer's relationship to God, therefore, must be seen as completely embodying the maturing process. For Stevens, this relational component is not a presupposition, but is the conspicuous center of theory and praxis for all Christian growth. This emphasis reorients the current study of spiritual formation toward a new theory which prioritizes basic spiritual principles constituting the foundation of a daily relationship with God.

Consequently, the adherence to this core concept makes Stevens' approach holistic. For Stevens, the relationship with God in Christ embodies the unified goal, theology, and activity for Christian formation. The four axes of spiritual formation are thus unified in Stevens' conception of the believers' walk with God. First, it expresses the goal of spiritual formation as a journey with God toward the Kingdom (1974a:89; 1976d:14, 106; 1976e:19). This goal is at once relational and teleological. Second, the walk with God itself is the overarching metaphor which embodies the totality of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. Third, Stevens' concept of a walk with God encapsulates his relational theology—the believer must stay close to God, constantly looking to him for guidance and assistance in this lifelong journey (2007a:344-345; 1981b:32; 1983:507). Fourth, walking with God is in itself an activity, for the concept is grounded in a verb denoting common physical human action. Therefore, the activities of spiritual formation are continual, in that they must be consistent and ongoing, for the walking does not cease until the destination is found (1986:338; 2007b:1423). These activities are also directional, in that their orientation is toward Christ's Kingdom. They are progressive, in

that any journey requires advancement. And they are relational, in that the walking must be with God (1975a:34). Stevens' writings on a walk with God contextualize spiritual formation in its proper place: as a product of the believer pursuing, establishing, maintaining, and growing a relationship with God toward his purposes.

1.6 Value of This Study

John Robert Stevens' concept of a walk with God embodies a unique theory of spiritual formation which is at once both holistic and relational. Value is found in its holism, representing a rare theory which integrates goal, theology, and activity under one guiding concept. Further, it is also valuable in that it adds to the relational understanding of Christian spiritual formation, an approach that is only sparsely discussed in the current literature. There is also merit in highlighting the important roles of Christian existentialist principles that are biblically grounded in fashioning a holistic view of spiritual formation.

A study of John Robert Stevens' paradigm of Christian formation is uniquely positioned to shed light on Pentecostal and Charismatic theology as it existed immediately following the emergence of the Charismatic movement. There has been a strong interest in academic circles in establishing and defining Pentecostal and Charismatic theology (Williams 1996; Macchia 2006; Duffield and Van Cleave 2008; Warrington 2008; Cartledge 2012). These theological paradigms are still in the process of development, and there is a variation of approaches among scholars in these arenas (Thomas 1998:3-5; Chan 2000:7-16; Yong 2015:1). This study contributes to this developing field. However, this study has further value in adding to the emerging discussion of Pentecostal and Charismatic approaches to spiritual formation. Vondey observes: "Pentecostalism is a socially, economically, and politically diverse phenomenon. Proposals on the factors contributing to and identifying Christian formation in the movement are rare" (Vondey 2015:202). This dissertation makes a contribution to the rare field of examining spiritual formation from a Pentecostal and Charismatic perspective.

Further value is found in the interaction between the theological viewpoints of Kierkegaard and Stevens. Examining Stevens' writings in the context of Kierkegaardian thought will not only bring Stevens' paradigm of spiritual formation into sharper relief, but will formulate a new understanding of Christian spiritual formation suited for contemporary theological reflections. Further, very little attention has yet to be paid to

the usefulness of Kierkegaard as a dialogical partner in the exploration of spiritual formation. The pairing is fitting, and this dissertation aids in remedying the current scarcity in repurposing Kierkegaardian theoretical constructs in the attempt to elucidate principles of Christian formation.

There is real, concrete value in the potential applications of the findings of this study for Christians of all stripes. However, this is particularly true for the pastors, ministries, and thousands of congregants of the churches in The Living Word Fellowship. A detailed look into the theology of its founder—which has never been investigated on a rigorous academic level before—is of tremendous value for those whose lives were affected by his ministerial influence.

Finally, there are a number of valuable aspects to this research for me on a personal level. My father, a music ministry and worship leader, found his relationship with the Lord through John Robert Stevens. Much of what my father taught me about the Lord has stemmed from this experience. For a number of years I was a pastor at Grace Chapel of Honolulu, a church founded by Stevens in Hawaii. Much of my preaching and teaching there was informed by the writings of John Robert Stevens. Further, I have personally pursued the study and application of Stevens' scriptural teaching in my own life and have found them to be of great efficacy. This study of Stevens' approach to spiritual formation therefore has personal value to me both for my own continued maturity in Christ, as well as in establishing a deeper understanding of the theological paradigm which has shaped my understanding of Christianity.

1.7 Methodology and Research Design

This dissertation aims to identify and evaluate John Robert Stevens' relational theory of spiritual formation through a close, systematic study of his writings on a walk with God in conjunction with a dialogical use of Kierkegaard's writing. While the Bible will serve as a foundational source in determining valid theology, the literary investigation into John Robert Stevens' writings on a walk with God will serve as the pivotal source of theology to be systematized.

Smith (2008:185) writes that "[t]he task of the systematic theologian is to construct a model that accounts for what all the relevant scriptures teach about a topic." This process begins with the identification of all passages of Scripture which relate to a given topic. It continues with the biblical exegesis of those Scriptures. Relating together the

findings of such exegesis results in the forming of defining propositions which accurately describe the biblical teachings. The process then culminates in the formulation of a theory which incorporates all biblical data.

While Smith rightly focuses on systematic theology as being primarily concerned with the text of the Bible, the process of theological systematization has been applied to the reflections of major Christian scholars and philosophers (Thorson 2005; Partee 2008; Lohse 2011) and to denominational schools of thought (Carter 1983; Duffield and Van Cleave 2008; Yong and Anderson 2014). The foundational source of truth for such ventures into systematic theology remains the same—the Bible. Similarly, the systematization in this dissertation functions primarily within the biblical teachings of John Robert Stevens, but his views on Scripture must still be held accountable to proper rules of systematization such as the identification of relevant Scriptures, detailed exegesis, and the assertion of definitive propositions based on the synthesis of relevant biblical data. These basic components of systematic theology must then lead to the formulation of an overarching theory of spiritual formation "that accounts for all the biblical evidence in a unified manner, making the relationships between the individual data clear" (Smith 2008:194). Stevens' writings will be used as the guiding voice regarding the identification, interpretation, and synthesis of Scriptures regarding spiritual formation. However, I further analyze and critique his views according to the evidence of Scripture.

The choice to utilize Kierkegaard in this study is based on the effective nature of the tool of comparison when aiming to provide description and analysis of a complete theological theory. The act of comparison aids in the sharpening of accurate characterizations of theological concepts. Comparisons of this nature have become an important tool in the theological disciplines, particularly in the process of systematization. The drawback of this approach is the potential conflation of thought between Stevens and Kierkegaard. However, when serious attention is paid to their respective contexts, and distinctions are intentionally addressed, the act of comparison yields fruitful insight into the unique aspects of both protagonists' viewpoints. Further, it reveals how similar ideas are applied in different arenas of inquiry. For these reasons, the tool of comparison is apt here, particularly when focusing on the existential aspects of Stevens' paradigm.

There are currently no scholarly secondary or tertiary sources on Stevens' writings, although there is no shortage of primary sources. In addition to his thirteen volumes of

collected weekly messages, John Robert Stevens published around fifty books. These were all published by Living Word Publications, the publishing company associated with the Living Word Fellowship, and their authenticity and accuracy is certain. Further, these works have all been released as e-books for the Logos Bible Study program and are easily searchable by keyword.

The monumental task of translating the writings of Søren Kierkegaard into English has been successfully undertaken by Howard and Edna Hong. Their work has been published by Princeton University Press and is widely available. Ascertaining the passages in Kierkegaard's writings that are most relevant to Stevens are initially pursued through forays into the various published selected works of Kierkegaard, as well as in topical research on Kierkegaardian scholarship.

The exegetical tasks of this research are performed inductively according to the general principles outlined by Smith (2008:169-182) in his chapter "Biblical Exegesis". These principles include contextual analysis, lexical and grammatical analysis, and literary analysis. Resources such as lexicons, dictionaries, historical and geographical volumes, as well as works on biblical theology—such as commentaries and journal articles—were referred to throughout the exegetical process.

1.8 Structure and Outline

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. The systematic inquiry into John Robert Stevens' theory of spiritual formation occurs in the following steps.

1. *Introduction.* This first chapter discusses the questions the dissertation aims to address, the methodology employed, and the structure of the dissertation.

2. *Review of Relevant Literature on Spiritual Formation.* The study proper begins with a review of current literature on spiritual formation. The objective of this chapter is to lay out the positions of key authors on this subject in order to establish a broad overview of the field. The strengths and weaknesses of these views are assessed. Particular attention is paid to the various approaches to the four aspects of spiritual formation: goal, paradigmatic concept, theo-philosophical foundations, and activities.

3. *A Synthetic Systematization of Stevens' Theory of Spiritual Formation.* This chapter identifies, summarizes, and synthesizes the elements of John Robert Stevens' concept of a walk with God, using Søren Kierkegaard's existential concepts as clarifying agents.

The discussion is keyed to the four aspects of spiritual formation: goal, paradigmatic concept, theology, and activities. The purpose of this is first to describe Stevens' theory —recognizing the main elements of his theory and achieving an accurate description of them in synergy with Kierkegaard. Close attention is given to identifying and reviewing the biblical passages which inform Stevens' position. However, in this stage of study, these Scriptures are discussed on Stevens' own terms in order to accurately convey his position.

4. *Exegetical Engagement with Stevens' Theory of Spiritual Formation*. The study then first analyzes and critiques Stevens from a biblical perspective, focusing on two important foundational principles of his theory: the terminology of "a walk with God", and biblical anthropology. Such exegesis first pursues an objective analysis of the biblical texts. Propositions are then constructed which summarize the key biblical truths which arise from this study. These propositions are compared with the corresponding facets of Stevens' theory as explored in the chapter three. This stage of study culminates in the harmonizing and summarizing of these key texts and propositions as they relate within Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. The objective of this step is to confirm, clarify, adjust, and expand the conclusions of Stevens based on exegetical analysis.

4*. Theological Engagement with Stevens' Theory of Spiritual Formation*. Further analysis and critique of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation are accomplished in chapter five through a wider theological engagement, primarily with authors in the field of Christian spiritual formation. The purpose of this chapter is to address areas of weakness in Stevens' approach to spiritual formation through the reconciliation of Stevens' views with Christian scholarship. The topics which require such theological engagement will depend upon the findings of chapter 3.

6*. Summary and Conclusion*. The sixth chapter serves as a final conclusion, summarizing the key findings of the study and examining the significance of the theory which emerges from the systematic study of John Robert Stevens' writings on a walk with God.

Chapter 2

Review of Relevant Literature on Spiritual Formation

2.1 Introduction

This overview of the current conversation on spiritual formation will provide a foundation for the discussions to follow. This review identifies, describes, and assesses the major aspects of Christian spiritual formation as they are presented in contemporary literature.

Spiritual formation is the study of the process of Christian growth and maturity. The definition of the topic has wide variation in the literature. While there is general agreement today that spiritual formation is an important Christian consideration, among Evangelicals, and Protestantism in general, there is a rather broad range of views on "the primary aims, agents, and means of spiritual formation" (Howard 2012:n.p.). Not only is there a wide variation in approaches, but the extensive literature on many attendant topics exacerbates the unwieldiness of its study. For example, competent research on spiritual formation requires forays into such disparate subjects as Christology, pneumatology, sanctification, and discipleship. The disciplines of spiritual formation include foundational topics such as prayer, worship, meditation, and the reading of the Bible. Each of these could easily sustain their own literature review. Further, many works may not use the term "spiritual formation", but nevertheless deal with the process of growing in Christian maturity. Such works cannot be ignored in this context.

From an academic point of view, spiritual formation can sometimes be an awkward subject, for it is often written about by scholars in non-scholastic ways. For example, the

major contributions of scholastic authors such as Willard (2014a, 2009b) and Wright (2010), are founded on strong biblical and theological foundations, but are written in styles accessible to the average Christian. That academics choose to discuss this topic in this way is yet another difficulty in ascertaining the appropriateness of any particular work for a review such as this.

The reason for this common choice of style is a simple one, and speaks to the universal relevance of spiritual formation: it is essentially applied theology on an individual level. Smith (2013:33) writes of theology in general: "Although some theological research is purely theoretical and may stop short of investigating the practical implications for God's people, that should be the exception, not the rule. The norm is that we do theology to help us live and act in ways that please God". From this standpoint, nearly all theological ventures end up contributing to both the understanding and realization of spiritual formation. Steele (1998:9) states this poetically: "Theology is practical divinity". Spiritual formation can be seen as the pursuit of an internalized godly nature, the most personally practical of all fields in the study of divinity. Further, the subject holds great promise for practical application in ecclesiology as it exists "on the ground". As Waggoner (2008:xiii) states: "Many leaders measure the 'success' of churches by common metrics such as the number of people who attend worship on a weekly basis, or the size of the budget, or the quality of the buildings, or the number of programs. While these metrics are not unimportant, they fall short of the most crucial issue: spiritual transformation". The various views on this topic should therefore not only be understood as applicable on the individual level, but also on the level of the Church, both local and universal.

This review primarily focuses on works that are representative (of common ideas or approaches), notable (by being influential or providing unique contributions), or relate to the two areas of deficiency (holism and relationship). It is important to note further that this review has attempted to find a proper balance between quantity and quality—that is, addressing as many authors and works as possible while still providing sufficient detail on their positions. Regardless of these delimitations and exclusions, however, this review has endeavored to display a representative cross-section of the relevant literature.

These works are assessed from the following components of this author's worldview, which is generally Evangelical, but from a Pentecostal/Charismatic background. The Bible is the authoritative and inerrant Word of God, and therefore all Christian theology must be founded primarily upon the text of Scripture. Proper theology must be relationally

Trinitarian in that it accounts for the believer's relationship with the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. Experiential and phenomenological aspects of Christianity are viable when founded on and confirmed by biblical truth. Christian theology is complex and nuanced, and therefore must be presented with clarity and precision.

This literature review will present scholarship on the subject of spiritual formation according to the four main aspects of assessment mentioned in the introductory chapter: goal, paradigmatic concept, theo-philosophical foundations, and activities. These four aspects have large areas of overlap, and therefore each section will naturally include at least minor discussions of each of these facets. Each section will provide an introductory discussion, summarize and assess formation literature, and finally give a concluding assessment. The later part of this review will discuss the issue of holism in works on spiritual formation. Finally, some concluding thoughts will be provided.

2.2 The Goal of Spiritual Formation

The first aspect of spiritual formation literature to be discussed is the stated goal. The goal encapsulates the purpose or *telos* of spiritual formation. Howard (2009:20) suggests "vision" as a similar term for this aspect of formation. The goal is the ultimate measure by which we might recognize the efficacy of any particular theory. Corresponding theology and activity should offer the knowledge and means with which to accomplish the stated goal. Further, a clear goal has the potential to provide motivation in the engagement of formative activities.

It should be noted that some authors do not directly identify the goal of spiritual formation. For example, Peterson (2000) gives only hints of what he considers to be the goal of spiritual formation. The reader is therefore left wondering whether it is simply to have a "life worth living", discipleship to Christ, getting closer to God, or perhaps all three (17-18). Hayford (2001) similarly does not directly state the goal, although it is easy for readers to recognize his reliance on Colossians 1:27 and 2 Corinthians 3:18 as foundational in that regard. Koessler (2003) offers evangelism and true Christianity as general visions for the direction of spiritual formation, but does not adequately define the specific *telos* of his theory. To be fair, the reader is often able to infer most authors' position even when the goal is not stated directly. Even so, any theory of spiritual formation which lacks clear articulation of its goal(s) will be less accessible, intelligible, and motivational. It is instructive here to recognize that the goal of spiritual formation is at times thought to be

self-evident. This perhaps reflects the notion that spiritual formation is an end in itself. However, works which forego enumerating the goal of spiritual formation miss the opportunity to describe what's at stake in the believer's choice to pursue the process of Christian growth.

The goals found in literature on spiritual formation are presented here in three categories: Christotelic, personality and character, and universal.

2.2.1 Christotelic Goals

Christotelic goals include any which uphold Christ as the embodiment of the purpose of spiritual formation. It seems there are three distinct categories of Christotelicity in current literature: emulation, growth into Christlikeness, and union with Christ.

The first category is the emulation of Christ's personality and behavior (see Frye 2002; Smith 2010). Kendall (2015:n.p.) discusses the qualities of Christ that we should emulate in great detail, hoping to provide a clear picture of the ideal we should be imitating. Dawson (2007:Loc.117-118) similarly focuses on recognizing the specific nature of Jesus' words and actions as the "plumbline" by which Christian maturity is measured. The goal here is to mature to the point wherein the believer naturally emulates Christ in all words and deeds. However, this goal naturally leads the works of both Kendall and Dawson into a lopsided focus on the identification and description of aspects of Jesus to be imitated rather than concrete methodology or activity by which we might emulate those qualities. If transformation were primarily dependent upon a knowledge of Christ's deeds, Christianity as a whole would be much more mature than it currently appears.

Perhaps the most nuanced of these views is given by Packer (2009:Loc.395-404), who offers holiness as a goal, and equates ultimate holiness with the model of Christ. For Packer, the complete emulation of Christ—the state of true holiness—results in being wholly consumed by the motivation to please God (Loc.279-280). He frames the "good works" of Eph 2:10 as the outward manifestation of Christ within the believer (Loc.967-973). In presenting the process of growing into holiness to achieve a complete emulation of Christ, Packer includes the impact of salvation and grace (Loc.664-1062), praise (Loc.1120-1194), mercy (Loc.1195-1224), repentance (Loc.1970-2637), the power of God (Loc.3421-4066), and the believer's endurance (Loc.4066-4641). His framing of the goal of spiritual formation naturally leads to a discussion of these considerations to enable the

believer to pursue holiness. Packer's formulation of the goal, therefore, closes the gap between the recognition of Jesus as a teleological model and the actions the believer must take to effectively pursue the emulation of His holiness. This formulation of the goal naturally leads into the second category of Christotelic goals presented here, in that his concept of holiness engages both the outward actions and inward state of the believer (Loc.451-456).

The second category is growth into Christlikeness, in which the being of the believer is transformed to become like Christ (see Wilkins 1997:9-11; Olukoya 2008:n.p.; Samra 2008:3; Demarest 2009:37; Greenman and Kalantzis 2010:24; SW Smith 2010:Loc.156-162; Hayford 2001:22; Howard 2012:n.p.; Willard 2014a:Loc.344-346, 2014b:105). While the first category emphasizes the outward manifestations of growth, this category emphasizes internal formation. While certainly the emulation of Christ would require internal change to fuel resultant external "imitation", it seems that the necessary process is better informed by this second formulation, which holds internal change as integral to establishing lasting change. Boa (2001:16) uses Romans 8:29 as the foundational verse for this *telos*. SW Smith (2010:Loc.156-162) characterizes growing into Christlikeness as conformity with God's ideal for humanity. Hayford (2001:22) states that the "Christ in you" concept of Colossians 1:27 encapsulates the "incarnational" goal of Christotelic transformation.

Among these views, Willard (2014a:Loc.344-346, 527-528) has written most extensively about this goal. He states strongly that transformation into Christlikeness is not only the goal of spiritual formation, but of human life itself (2014a:Loc.299-301). He further states that the believer's pursuit of Christlikeness is a defining characteristic of Christianity (2009a:41-42). He writes, "Christian spiritual formation is focused entirely on Jesus. Its goal is an obedience or conformity to Christ that arises out of an inner transformation accomplished through purposive interaction with the grace of God in Christ" (2014a:Loc.348-350). Willard's statement of the goal, therefore, is both Christotelic and Christocentric. Even more, his elucidation of this goal offers spiritual formation as a vital answer to the fundamental existential questions of humanity. This formulation of the goal of spiritual formation is scripturally strong and visional, and its Christocentrism is particularly satisfactory to those of an Evangelical bent.

The third category is defined by union with God, and at times is described with the terms theosis or deification. While there has been seeming conflict surrounding the idea of

theosis, Kärkkäinen (2004:4-7) states that the common ground between the Eastern concept of theosis and Western concepts of salvation and justification is union with God (cf. Collins 2010:1-3, 46). On the Eastern side, Nassif (2012:n.p.) explains that Christ's sacrifice and atonement opens the door for humanity's return to the state of glorification seen in the garden of Eden. For Nassif, being conformed to Christ is to find union with Him, which results in the process of deification (cf. 2 Cor 3:18). Evangelicals, and Western Protestants in general, are beginning to give greater attention to theosis as an acceptable and sound characterization of Christian transformation (Mosser 2002:36-39; Austin 2015:172). In agreement with Nassif and Kärkkäinen, Austin (2015:186) emphasizes union with Christ as the defining moment of theosis. In examining theosis from a Lutheran perspective, Cooper (2014:1, 4) argues that it is distinct from apotheosis or divinization, both of which endorse the process of humans becoming independent divine entities. True Christian theosis is not achieved or maintained separately from Christ. He states that we should view it as the end of a soteriological process (2-4) in which we participate in the life of God toward taking on the likeness of God (6-8). He terms this process "Christification". In this way, Cooper links theosis with being conformed to the image of Christ.

It seems that this third category is the most direct in conveying the vision of growth into Christlikeness as the process by which both the believer and God maintain integral roles. Emulation could easily devolve into mere behavior modification without an attendant genuine growth of the inner being. Conformity with Christ may seem elusive and daunting. However, the idea of transformation through union with Christ not only provides a healthy balance of the involvement of God and humanity, but also seems an attainable goal. It is possible that some (certainly not all) proponents of the second and third characterizations of a Christotelic goal are attempting to describe the same *telos* in different language. However, this third category provides greater specificity (and agreement among its proponents) in how the transformation into Christlikeness occurs: union with God.

2.2.2 Character, Personality, and Self-Improvement

Goals of spiritual formation often center on the character and personality of the believer. Goals which focus on character favor growth in the ethical and moral dimensions. Goals which focus on personality emphasize issues of selfhood or individual psycho-intellectual development. Finally, goals which focus on self-improvement simply advocate for success in human life.

The following are goals which center on character formation. Wright (2010:Loc.1164-1169) proposes the goal of Christian virtue, by which he means the development of ethical and moral character as representatives of God's Kingdom. Sanders (2008:Loc.7040-7054) states that the goal is a lifestyle which reflects the character of Jesus and pleases him. Nouwen (1981:21-23, 28-29, 42-43) frames the goal of formation in terms of moving from human worry to an internal change of heart. Hybels (1987:7-8) presents the most general goal here, emphasizing being rather than doing—stating that the growth in who we are will naturally affect what we do. While Hybels' is not incorrect, his formulation of the goal lacks the requisite precision and depth for this topic, and his work follows suit.

A number of authors focus on the increased expression of Christ's love in the believer's character, and a resulting closer relationship with God. Driskill (2012:n.p.) states that the practices of spiritual formation form our character toward the goal of loving God and loving neighbor. Benner (2009c:Loc.48) argues that Jesus Himself teaches that love is the goal of transformation. By becoming like Him, we will express the same love that He had for the Father and for our brothers and sisters (Loc.1010-1013). Packer (2009:Loc.279-280, 396-399, 967-973) states that the goal of Christlikeness is linked with the goal of expressing love for God and neighbor. Johns (1993:22-23) and Vondey (2015:205) bring this concept down to earth with the goal of individual growth as it produces growth in community. Foster (2009:Loc.65-79) presents the vision of achieving a state in which we reflect the life of Jesus by being in constant contact with the heavenly Father (Loc.65-79). Frost and Frost (2016:15, 26) maintain a similar position, positing that the goal of formation is to attain sonship in relation to God.

The following are goals which emphasize growth in personality. Pennington (2000:39-40, 89-90) characterizes the goal of formation as finding our true selves in God. Benner (2011:Loc.536-538) similarly argues that a goal of formation is to become fully human, by which he means holistically mature in all aspects of our humanity, including "body, emotions, sexuality, consciousness, the unconscious, longings and desires, thoughts, the senses and imagination, and much more". Anderson and Reese (2009:n.p.) argue that Christian formation requires spiritual mentorship which connects ultimate identity and ultimate purpose in the imitation of Christ. They summarize this as the mentoree finding his or her "unique voice". This is related to the findings of Asumang (2010:442) whose analysis of formation modeled by Jesus and the disciples in the Gospels of Mark and John concludes that a modern goal of formation is that "believers are psycho-socially, theologically and spiritually moulded into the pattern suited for their projected functions."

Perhaps the most trite view of the goal of formation is self-improvement. There are many popular Christian renditions of self-improvement (Houge 2015; Groeschel 2017; Roberts 2017), but the most instructive discussion of this approach to spiritual formation is given by Vondey (2015:202, 207). He identifies a "social passivism" in certain Pentecostal views of formation, particularly in the proponents of various "health and wealth" doctrines, which aim for the socio-economic betterment of the believer. Vondey contrasts this self-serving goal with that of a social engagement approach to formation, in which the believer aims to better his or her community (210-211).

Goals related to character, personality, and self-improvement are all anthropocentric, and therefore faulty, as they are centered on the believer. While it certainly makes sense to choose a goal which focuses on the individual in the context of spiritual formation—a topic which is definitionally concerned with the growth of the believer—such goals often inadvertently underemphasize the importance of God's role in the maturation process. In the pursuit of spiritual growth, it is all too easy to shift the focus from God to self. Goals of self-improvement are the guiltiest in this regard (e.g. Houge's 2015 focus on habits).

The most exacting author with this goal, however, is Wright, whose goal in Christian growth is Christian virtue. A close look at his work on formation reveals an overemphasis on the actions of the believer due to the formulation of this goal. He defines virtue as "practicing the habits of heart and life" (Loc. 461), and states that Christian character is developed by acting out virtues (Loc.466-468). While he asserts that the transformation of character occurs with the help of the Holy Spirit, and that all growth occurs through grace (Loc.1040-1045), the book ends up focusing more on his idea that this transformation occurs through years of hard work (Loc.490-494, 2513-2519). By attempting to motivate the reader to actively pursue the vision of virtue, Wright's writing lionizes human effort as the catalyst for growth. Certainly, achieving anything meaningful in God requires work on the part of the believer. However, an overemphasis on the believer in the stated goal of formation easily leads the theory as a whole into an imbalance toward human works. An instructive example here is Wright's characterization of putting on the new self presented in Colossians 3:9-10, which he states is primarily achieved by "consciously deciding, again and again, to do certain things in certain ways, to create patterns of memory and imagination deep within the psyche and, as we saw from contemporary neuroscience, deep within the actual physical structure of our mysterious brain" (Loc.2356-2358). It is telling that God is absent from his enumeration of this important process. To be fair, Wright does state in his discussion of the fruit of the Spirit that virtue is both a gift from God and

the result of human activity (Loc.3178-3180). However, Wright pays very little attention to the manner in which God grants this gift, nor the state of being necessary for the believer to receive it. Wright presents a strong theological case for his theory of Christian formation, but the formulation of his goal unintentionally causes it to be believer-centric rather than Christocentric. In the Christian context, any discussion of growth cannot afford to underemphasize the transformative power of God in Christ.

2.2.3 Universal Goals

Some goals of spiritual formation address universal human interests in the overarching plan of God. Such goals recognize the teleological impact of individual growth as it affects future fulfillment for the entire human race and the world. For example, Habermas (2008:33-34) subsumes the goal of spiritual formation under his assessment of the scriptural goal of all of human life: restoration. He gives an instructive breakdown of Christian purpose in descending scope: the restoration of creation, the restoration of God's people as a whole, and the unique restoration of the individual believer in his or her gifts, experiences, and calling. Bowers (1995:86) similarly states that spiritual formation must result in the formation of witnesses of the Kingdom of God morally and vocationally. Relatedly, Wright (2010:Loc.1149-1153) includes the ultimate aim of being formed as a citizen of God's new heaven and new earth in the goal of virtue. Willard (2009b:22, 387) argues that the ultimate goal of the believer's transformation is the eventual return to Edenic life and ruling over the earth in union with God. Greenman and Kalantzis (2010:24) state that being shaped into Christlikeness is the goal, but they also include the universal goal of changing the state of the world as a result of individual spiritual formation. Asumang (2010:442) links the believer's growth in their individual calling with the resulting activity which furthers the accomplishment of God's will.

It is somewhat surprising that such universal perspectives are not as prevalent as one might expect. These formulations attempt to address God's larger purpose in our spiritual maturity. To be fair, some authors deal with this issue in their handling of theology. Christenson (2001:Loc.461-465) states that Colossians 1:27 and Luke 17:21 point to the same reality, thereby linking Christlikeness with the furthering of God's Kingdom. Benner (2009a:Loc.486-488) contrasts the failures and futility of the kingdom of self with the creativity and supremacy of the Kingdom of God in order to delineate objective reasons for growth. It is prudent to recognize both the personal and universal aspects of the goal of spiritual formation do not occur "in a vacuum" but rather function concurrently with God's

ultimate plan of salvation. At the very least, the goal of spiritual formation should be able to answer this question: What do we do with our spiritual maturity? It could be easily argued that this consideration lies outside the scope of spiritual formation, which may be definitionally constrained to the maturity of the believer. However, Christ himself modeled and taught a consistent focus on the Kingdom of God (Mt 4:23, 5:19-20, 6:10, 6:33, 10:7; Mk 1:15, 4:11, 9:47; Lk 4:43, 9:60-62, 10:9-11, 11:2, 12:31-32, 17:20-21; Jn 3:3-5; Acts 1:3) so any Christocentric goal should naturally include it.

2.2.4 Assessment

This review raises a few questions. Firstly, must there be, or can there be, one specific goal of Christian spiritual formation? If not, what does that mean for the discipline in terms of providing a clear vision of its aim(s) and purpose(s)? Also, are the variations of these goals the result of superficial differences in vocabulary, real differences of theological formulation, or indicative of the lack of an agreed-upon definition of the phenomenon itself?

The scripturally sound nature of many of the goals described above supports the idea that there is not one basic goal of spiritual formation which can be rendered in concise and simple terms. Many of these goals can be true simultaneously, with no conflict between them. In fact, the ground they cover when viewed as a whole reveal the width of the subject and the richness of its scriptural support. Perhaps it is an instructive exercise in this regard to simply combine the three main headings of this section into one comprehensive goal, which might look something like this: the goal of spiritual formation is the growth of individual Christian character into Christlikeness toward the completion of God's ultimate will for humanity and the world. The writers in this field would perhaps generally agree on this comprehensive yet imprecise definition while politely disagreeing about the particulars (e.g: what is Christlikeness and how does that support the fulfillment of God's plan?).

It seems there are three reasons for the wide variation here. Firstly, this variation in goals is easily traced back to the abundance of scriptural material on the subject. There is excellent biblical support for the majority of these goals. Secondly, and relatedly, the current level of variation is amplified by the general lack of systematic approaches to the underpinning theology of spiritual formation. In other words, in the realm of spiritual formation there is both a preponderance of Scripture and a scarcity of systematization of that Scripture. Thirdly, most authors (wisely) choose to narrow the scope of their projects in

order to present a vision of spiritual formation that is coherent, intelligible, and applicable. Viewed within the scope of their associated works, therefore, many of these goals are accurate, adequately scriptural, and sufficient in a narrow teleology. Perhaps, then, the bottom line here is not that these variations point to a lack of agreement in the field, but rather that not enough systematic work has been done in a wider scope by which to render a comprehensive formulation of the goal of Christian spiritual formation. However, it may be prudent to see these goals as existing in a hierarchy, with some being superior to others due to their biblicality and centrality to Christian doctrine.

2.3 Paradigmatic Concepts of Spiritual Formation

The paradigmatic concept is the author's central image or idea which descriptively or categorically encapsulates an entire theory of spiritual formation. While the goal identifies the destination or end purpose of spiritual formation, the paradigmatic concept guides the manner in which the theory is discussed. A paradigmatic concept is essentially a guiding thematic meme which serves as a sort of lodestone for the author and reader. The paradigmatic concept can take many forms, such as metaphor (e.g. a journey), model (e.g. educational or developmental), or theological image (e.g. Resurrection). For example, a common guiding concept is that of spiritual formation as a journey. Authors utilizing this concept would present the main ideas of spiritual formation through the metaphor of journey, structure their work commensurately, and express the details of formation using the imagery of a journey. A well-constructed paradigm will comprehensively encapsulate the associated theory and create coherence among the other three facets of spiritual formation: goal, theo-philosophical foundations, and activities. A strong paradigmatic concept, therefore, causes the theory as a whole to be motivational, intelligible, and enactable.

An instructive example of a paradigm is given by Smith (2010:Loc.96-102), who utilizes the scriptural analogy of potter and clay (God and man, respectively; cf. Job 10:9-10; Is 64:8). This concept explains spiritual formation through the lens of literal formation. Smith takes the analogy even further by introducing the concept of the kiln, which represents the "furnace of transformation" which solidify believers into vessels of honor (2 Tim 2:21-22; Loc.270-278). Smith believes that using such analogies in the context of spiritual formation help to bypass the limitations of the human mind in the process of growth (Loc.109-111). This idea aids in the further exploration of paradigmatic concepts of spiritual formation. The use of analogies and metaphors are effective ways of exploring new or unfamiliar

concepts. It is for this reason that the use of analogies is common in discussions of spiritual topics, partially due to the elusiveness of the spiritual dimension of Christianity, but also perhaps to cause greater transformative impact, as Smith argues. By employing encapsulating paradigms, authors in the spiritual formation field present familiar images and language in order to impart comprehensibility to spiritual phenomena. Smith's use of the potter and clay analogy provides a palpable image of the believer's formation at the hands of God. Every aspect of Smith's theory is comprehensible within this guiding concept. Even if one does not accept Smith's proposition that analogies bypass the limitations of the mind, it can at least be said that analogies aid in the communication of unfamiliar ideas. Other examples of using understandable language and analogy by which to explain spiritual formation include framing it as a process of education, as a process of death to self, or as a lifelong journey. The paradigmatic concept is of pivotal importance in establishing coherence and accessibility for its attendant theory.

Paradigms of spiritual formation are presented here in six categories: journey, developmental, educational, biblical, devotional, and relational.

2.3.1 Paradigmatic Concepts of Journey

The journey paradigm is fairly common (see Stanley 2002; Nouwen 2010; Warner 2010; Willet 2010; Davis 2014). Mulholland (1993:12-13) provides the most direct explanation of this paradigm as he contrasts static Christian discipleship with the dynamic sense of a journey. He holds that believers should consider discipleship as a process rather than a "possession". This is the bottom-line reason why Mulholland advocates for the paradigm of a journey: the believer must stay "in motion". In fact, Mulholland (2013) considers the journey concept so important that he wrote a second book utilizing the same paradigm. The "deeper journey" leads the believer beyond the initial growth afforded by the zeal of fresh conversion and church attendance into the lifelong pursuit of Christlikeness (12-16). There is much to commend here. Mulholland provides a solid explanation regarding the power and purpose of the journey paradigm, utilizing it as a way to convey the fundamental nature of the pursuit of formation. The Christian life should not be static, but rather dynamic. Further, the journey will certainly not end in this lifetime, and therefore the believer must continually move deeper and deeper into maturity. While Mulholland gives robust description and explanation for his paradigm, other authors use the terminology of journey without explanation (see Peace 1998:5; Wilson 2009). It seems that the term "journey" can be used as shorthand to convey a sense of direction and purpose in the

process of growth. For example, Foster (2011), uses the term as a major component of his title, but uses it sparingly in his text.

Demarest (2009:11-12) offers the most detail in his journey paradigm. He references the travels of Abraham, the Israelites, and Jesus as exemplars of journeys led by God. These examples show that the concept of the journey is suffused with biblical history and imagery. He relates the journeying of these biblical figures to the modern spiritual journey of the believer. This comes across as both inspirational and aspirational for those who wish to pursue Christian growth. Demarest specifies the nature of his journey paradigm with the concept of "seasons", the natural cycles of life through which believers are constantly made and remade in God. This paradigm characterizes the process of Christian growth as an upward spiral. Demarest essentially follows Brueggemann's model, which begins with being orientated (experiencing God and finding faith), then disorientated (struggles and doubts), then "reorientated" (spiritual renewal) (14-15). Particularly, he relates the seasons of disorientation to the wilderness of the Bible (151). The addition of the seasons concept in the overall paradigm honestly addresses the disorienting problems faced by all Christians and recognizes the nonlinear nature of spiritual growth. Further, it firmly places the seasons of distress within the overall process of spiritual formation, which aids the believer in correctly relating to trials as growth opportunities in God (152-153). Finally, this paradigm directly emphasizes God's involvement in leading the journey. Both Mulholland and Demarest successfully utilize a nuanced formulation of the journey paradigm to lead the reader into a deep, yet practical, conception of the process of formation. These examples reveal the potential for paradigms of spiritual formation to guide their associated theories into coherence of goal, theology, and activity.

2.3.2 Developmental Paradigmatic Concepts

Developmental paradigms utilize vocabulary and imagery of progressive growth. Examples include becoming a man of God (Getz and Getz 2011; Mills 2014), the transition from slavery to sonship (Frost and Frost 2016), and growing from servant to son (Jenkins 2011). Perhaps the most basic kind of developmental paradigm is that which centers on the growth of character (see Hybels 1987; Dawson 2007; Wright 2010). Benner (2009b:Loc.250-253, 1072-1082) suggests that spiritual formation can be viewed as the developmental process of "becoming yourself". He argues that knowledge of God without knowledge of self cannot lead to maturity. In seeming opposition to this, Idleman (2015) phrases his paradigm as "the end of me", which encapsulates the idea that finding God is

the result of coming to the end of ourselves. Here Benner and Idleman reveal the width of variation in paradigmatic concepts of spiritual formation. Both aim for the maturation of the believer, but propose polar opposite guiding concepts. While the Bible supports the idea of the death of self (cf. Jn 12:24; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:5), it does not directly support the concept of becoming yourself. Benner's paradigm would certainly be attractive for those who are seeking self-knowledge in the process of spiritual formation, but it may not be satisfactory for those who wish to pursue formation within a biblical worldview.

A common developmental paradigm is stages of faith. Fortosis (1992:284), proposes three stages of spiritual formation: formative integration, responsible consistency, and self-transcendent wholeness. Ashbrook (2009) constructs a model of stages of growth using Teresa of Avila's seven mansions, which include following Jesus, longing for oneness with God, and living a life of love in the Trinity. Hagberg and Guelich (2004:xxi-xxii) discuss the stages of faith in the process of transformation as a "critical journey" toward wholeness and identity. Their stated stages of faith include the recognition of God, learning about God, working for God, "the wall" (in which movement seems stymied), the journey inward, the journey outward, and the life of love. Fowler (1995:117-214) mapped out stages of growing faith which include the following: undifferentiated faith, intuitive-projective faith, individuative-reflective faith, conjunctive faith, and universalizing faith. The most important aspect of these theories as it pertains to the current discussion is the way in which the paradigms shape the authors' theories. A discussion of the theo-philosophical aspects of these theories—in other words, their actual ideas—should be reserved for the next section. However, there are still important aspects to examine here.

Hagberg and Guelich (2004:xxiv) explain that their work is primarily descriptive and does not prescribe methodology for spiritual growth. This is perhaps an excellent summary of the primary use of this paradigm, that is, for assessment. The paradigm of the stages of faith allows Fortosis, Ashbrook, Fowler, and Hagberg and Guelich to present cogent descriptive theories with intricate individual parts. That each individual stage represents a developmental "moment" reveals the diagnostic nature of this paradigm. In fact, the basic segmentation of these theories causes them to function perfectly fine outside of their original contexts, and even intermingled with other individual stages of faith. For these reasons, it seems this approach to spiritual formation is most helpful for pastors, teachers, and Christian counselors in the effort to assess the spiritual maturity of individuals under their care. Their inherently anthropocentric nature, however, causes them to be less helpful to individual believers pursuing formation. As previously discussed, anthropocentrism

easily leads to an unproductive focus on self and a diminished focus on God. It would be easy for the reader of these works to spend more time categorizing progress rather than engaging in formative activities. However, this does not detract from the diagnostic value of these theories for Christian leaders.

In seeming agreement with this assessment, Nouwen (2010:Loc.136-143) disagrees with the concept of stages of growth, which he sees to be too "performance oriented". He prefers the concept of "movements"—such as from sorrow to joy, from fear to love, or from resentment to gratitude. In this way, Nouwen focuses on the developmental progress of the believer from negative poles of human nature to corresponding positive poles grounded in the gifts of the Spirit. While the concept of "movement" in this regard may seem somewhat nebulous, it fits with Nouwen's desire to lead the believer away from viewing growth as a granular process and into a sense of fluid, ongoing progress. In many ways, this can be seen as a metaphysical journey paradigm with clearly identified spiritual and emotional paths.

Related to the stages of faith paradigm is Waggoner's unique study of the state of spiritual formation among 2500 Protestants (2008:xii). Waggoner assesses the formation of these believers in seven "domains": (1) Learning—how much the believer studies the Bible and makes an effort to learn Christian beliefs. (2) Obedience—the believer's avoidance of sin and acting in according to God's will. (3) Service—how the believer practices serving God and serving others. (4) Evangelism—how often the believer shares the gospel with others. (5) Faith—the believer's level of belief in God's promises. (6) Worship—how the believer focuses on God in praise and thanksgiving. (7) Relational—the state of the believer's relationship with God and others. Rather than stages of progress, these domains assess growth in particular aspects of Christian life and character. This model seems more likely to produce accurate assessments than the stages of faith paradigms due to its recognition that a believer's maturity may vary across these domains. In other words, one person might be rather mature in faith while simultaneously being immature in the expression of service. Christian leaders utilizing this paradigm of assessment, therefore, might tailor their approach more appropriately for individuals in their care, targeting specific areas of immaturity measured in these seven domains.

2.3.3 Educational Models

There is a strong overlap between spiritual formation and Christian education. Both aim for

growth in the believer, although by various measures. Christian education not only works to foster growth in student knowledge and skill, but also prioritizes growth in general student maturity. As Holmes (1991:vii) states, education transmits values, and values affect the formation of the student's character. Essentially, the basic nature of Christian education is formative, including the formation of sound doctrinal thinking, ethical character, and spiritual maturity. In fact, Palmer (1993), Gangel and Wilhoit (1998), and Habermas (2008) characterize spiritual formation as a process of education. This close connection between Christian education and spiritual formation therefore causes the educational paradigm to be common.

However, the educational paradigm is distinct from most other paradigms in that educational theory is its own realm of academic study. Theories of Spiritual formation which fall in the scope of the educational paradigm are essentially interdisciplinary. For this reason, educational theories require educational theory as a foundational source of paradigmatic concepts and methodology. This is reflected in the compiled volume of essays on spiritual formation in the context of Christian education, edited by Gangel and Wilhoit (1998). Other researchers focus on the addition of spiritual instruction to preexisting forms of Christian education (Johnson 1989; Smith 1996; Anderson and Yust 2006; Naidoo 2008; Westerhoff 2012). Additional works in this category review effective approaches to the spiritual formation of children (May, et al 2007), examine discipleship as a distinct model of education (Bowers 1995; Willard 2009a), investigate the role of catechesis in formation (Murphy 2007; Parrett et al. 2009; Johnson 2010) and characterize Christian education as a spiritual journey (Palmer 1993:xxiii-xxv).

The study of formation through the educational lens has application for Christian schools and seminaries, which causes many of these works to be geared toward teachers rather than students, or toward institutions rather than individuals. Relatedly, *The Journal of Psychology and Christianity* devoted an entire issue to the role of spiritual formation in graduate psychology programs, reviewing the manners in which formation is integrated with higher education (cf. McMinn, et al. 2013:313; Ripley, et al 2013; Tisdale, et al 2013). The educational model is fairly straightforward as a paradigmatic concept. Deeper discussions on educational approaches to spiritual formation will be undertaken in later sections.

2.3.4 Biblical or Theological Paradigmatic Concepts

Biblical or theological paradigmatic concepts draw from the imagery of the Bible and of Christian doctrine. Such paradigms include discipleship (Wilkins 1997; Koessler 2003; Sanders 2008; Waggoner 2008; Putman 2014; Willard 2014b), the renewing of the mind (Christenson 2001), resurrection (Peterson 2010), and the death to the self (Idleman 2015; Maldonado 2015).

A popular biblical paradigm is discipleship. Sanders (2008) centers his paradigm on the example of Christ and his disciples. Saunders (2012:Loc.66067, 234-237) advocates for a personal discipleship of intimacy and involvement. Putman (2014:Loc.147-165) cites Matthew 28:18-20 in arguing that the discipleship paradigm is distinct from and superior to the common Church aim of gaining converts. Peterson's (2000:15-18) treatment of Christian growth rests on the idea of a journey of continual obedience. This guiding concept pushes against the Western world's desire for immediate results, which is antithetical to the requirements of Christian maturity. Anderson and Reese (2009:n.p.) stand on the paradigm of spiritual mentoring, which they believe to be a better descriptor in this day than discipleship. They characterize spiritual mentoring as informal, mutual, and non-directive. Stanley and Clinton (2014:Loc.128-132, 289-293) also use mentoring as their guiding concept, stating that it goes beyond the passing on of knowledge, but also causes change by the transfer of experience and perspective. Anderson and Reese, as well as Stanley and Clinton, are clearly using different terminologies to describe the same paradigmatic use of discipleship. The concept of discipleship is also widely used in works which utilize a different primary paradigm (see Packer 1994; Foster 2009; Willard 2009b; Beasley-Topliffe 2017). The strengths of this paradigmatic concept are found in its biblical grounding and its involvement of Jesus as the imminent driving force of formation. Further, this paradigmatic concept correctly identifies the need for ongoing relationships of training under Christ and His teachings. In fact, it is difficult to think of a concept which is more applicable to spiritual formation for those who value Christocentrism. Jesus' use of discipleship, as well as His disciples' enactment of discipleship, reveal the imminent applicability of the paradigm. Founding the whole of spiritual formation on a concept with such prevalent scriptural description naturally leads such theories to be relational, interactive, biblically formed, and Christocentric. Once again, a paradigmatic concept clearly dictates the shape of a theory as a whole.

Other paradigmatic concepts focus on the manner in which growth occurs in seemingly

destructive ways. Stoeber (2005:ix-x) relies on the guiding concept of suffering, which he argues lies at the heart of transformation. Maldonado (2015:Loc.530-532, 1175-1186) utilizes the concept of the death to self as indicative of the primary means by which Christian growth occurs—positing that the process exemplified by Christ's death and resurrection are the main element of Christian transformation. However, Peterson's paradigmatic use of resurrection is the richest use of doctrinal concept in this category (2010:Loc.193-194, 225-227). Peterson argues that the believer can "participate" in Jesus' resurrection life, which causes maturity. He writes: "The resurrection of Jesus establishes the conditions in which we live and mature in the Christian life and carry on this conversation: Jesus alive and present" (Loc.193-194). This paradigm masterfully directs the believer to the Pauline center of the Christian faith (cf. I Cor 15:12-19), while simultaneously presenting imagery which conveys both the death of immature humanity and the rebirth into spiritual maturity. Peterson writes, "The practice of resurrection is an intentional, deliberate decision to believe and participate in resurrection life, life out of death, life that trumps death, life that is the last word, Jesus life" (Loc.225-227). The transformational power of God imparted in the concept of resurrection enables this paradigmatic concept to resonate with the promise of effective spiritual formation. Further, the concept encapsulates the power of Jesus being present in the believer's life—a power which is not optional in the pursuit of true spiritual growth. The paradigmatic concept of resurrection is an excellent example of a guiding idea which leads the theory into coherence and availability under a powerful biblical truth.

2.3.5 Devotional Paradigmatic Concepts

The language and concepts of the devotional life are also utilized as paradigms in spiritual formation. The most definitive of these is the paradigm of the disciplines, which Willard calls the "methods for the spiritual life" (2009b:Loc.90). Foster (2002), Willard (2009b), Whitney (2014), and Calhoun (2015) all utilize the spiritual disciplines as the paradigm for their theories. This concept emphasizes human action to garner God's response of transformation. As Calhoun's subtitle explains, the disciplines are "practices that transform us". Foster and Willard, both focus on the methodology of spiritual formation, enumerating the conceptual bases of the disciplines. While the individual disciplines will be covered in more detail in a later section on the activities of spiritual formation, it is important here to assess the utility of the disciplines as a paradigm.

Foster's (2002) book on the disciplines was a driving force behind the popularization of

spiritual formation. In some way, then, this paradigm holds a special role in spiritual formation. However, the use of the disciplines as a paradigm elevates these activities as the fundamental engine of Christian growth. The role of the disciplines should be understood in the wider context of the theological foundations of spiritual formation. The disciplines as a paradigm must be formulated and communicated with nuance, in order to avoid the impression that Christian maturity is the product of human effort. This issue is sidestepped best by Mathis (2016:15), who asserts that the disciplines are the means of grace which bring us closer to God. Rooting the disciplines in grace at the level of paradigmatic concept avoids the pitfall of anthropocentrism. However, this paradigm best exemplifies the need to bifurcate the negative consequences of a chosen paradigm from its other qualities. The disciplines are clearly integral aspects of spiritual formation, for they are the common activities which foster growth. This discussion of its use as a paradigmatic concept does not detract from the scripturality or efficacy of the individual disciplines. Rather, the point here is that the use of the disciplines as a guiding concept naturally prioritizes human action in the pursuit of Christian maturity. However, the Bible is clear that true spiritual growth does not occur outside of God's activity (cf. Col 2:6-7; Cor 3:18, 5:18; Heb 12:2; 1 Jn 3:2).

On a more basic level, conversion is also used as a paradigm. Howard (2012:n.p.) notes that Evangelicalism sees conversion as a transformative reality that creates union with God and allows a deep reception of Christ's work. Smith (2001:29) characterizes conversion as a "primal religious experience" (30), and states that spiritual formation is the outworking of conversion (152). This paradigm emphasizes the role of spiritual formation as a fundamental aspect of the Christian life. The association of conversion with transformation requires the attention of all believers due to the universal Christian experience of conversion. It is possible that the paradigmatic concept of conversion may be a little too basic to be sustained over a lifetime of growing, but it emphasizes that the process of formation occurs from the very beginning of the Christian life. The paradigms of both Howard and Smith emphasize that an ongoing process of growth must be pursued as an intrinsic aspect of common Christian life.

2.3.6 Relational Paradigmatic Concepts

Relational paradigmatic concepts emphasize the believer's relationship with God. Thomas (2010) views the actions of formation as personal ways of loving God. Similarly, Bruce (2008:25-29) sees the disciplines as being a means of relationship between God and man.

Jenkins (2011:Loc.379-383) offers the paradigm of friendship with God. Farley (2014) emphasizes the formative nature of "relaxing with God". Frost and Frost (2016) present formation as a process which leads to sonship with God. Benner (2009) utilizes the emotional action of surrendering to love as his guiding concept. Packer (2005:15-18) puts forth the paradigm of the believer's relationship with the Holy Spirit. Polo-Wood (2014) utilizes the paradigm of the Trinity as relationship.

The most interesting of such relational paradigms is Foster's concept of the "with-God" life (2009). While this includes the believer's relationship with God, its locus is God's continual presence with individual believers and His people as a whole throughout all aspects of life. In this paradigm, the recognition that He is with us forms the entirety of the theory of spiritual formation (Loc.64-96). Foster et al. (2005), assert that the "with-God" principle is not only the guiding concept of formation, but that it is the core concept of the Scriptures—with Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of this reality (xxvii). This paradigm is far-reaching in scope, for Foster asserts that it is the primary theme of the Bible. The breadth of its scope and the simplicity of its terminology, however, causes it to be somewhat ambiguous as a defining term of the spiritual formation process. One cannot disagree that from Adam and Eve, through Abraham, through Moses, through the children of Israel, and ultimately to Christ, the Bible tells the story of God being with His people on earth (2009:Loc.56-67). However, as a paradigm, the with-God life seems elusive, providing no obvious conceptual handhold by which the believer might grasp and pursue spiritual formation. It is possible, though, that this is due to the paradigm's ontological construction, for the with-God life is primarily a state of being. While it is accurate to characterize this as a relational paradigm, it does not immediately represent the interactive nature of relationship in its emphasizes on relational being. There is nothing theologically flawed about this emphasis, but it is instructive to recognize that a purely ontological paradigm emerges as less concrete and compelling in the formulation of spiritual formation theories.

2.3.7 Assessment

Firstly, the most striking aspect of this review is how the paradigmatic concept dictates the defining emphasis of the theory. Journey paradigmatic concepts tend to produce theories which emphasize transformation as a process (e.g. Demarest 2009; Mulholland 2013). Developmental paradigmatic concepts tend to produce goal-oriented theories which break down the formation process into phases (e.g. Hagberg and Guelich 2004; Ashbrook 2009; Benner 2009b; Jenkins 2011). Educational paradigmatic concepts tend to produce

discussions on spiritual formation which are evaluative (e.g. Naidoo 2008; Duncan 2012; Ripley, et al 2013) and action-oriented (e.g. Holmes 1991; Bowers 1995; TenElshof 2000). Theological paradigmatic concepts tend to produce biblically sound theories (e.g. Christenson 2001; Hayford 2001; Sanders 2008; Peterson 2010). Devotional paradigmatic concepts tend to produce theories which emphasize methodology (e.g. Foster 2002; Willard 2009b). Relational paradigmatic concepts tend to produce theories which emphasize a relationship with God within the goal of transformation (e.g. Jenkins 2011; Frost and Frost 2016) or the process of transformation (e.g. Packer 2005; Foster 2009; Polo-Wood 2014). This variation in emphases is not a negative characteristic of the literature, but rather indicative of the variety of its applications. For example, the evaluative nature of the education paradigm is perfectly suited for Christian educators who wish to improve student formation. The methodological discussions of devotional paradigms are excellent resources on the conceptual foundations of the disciplines. Further, it is generally true that each individual may find that some paradigmatic concepts resonate more than others in their personal pursuit of formation. For this reason, a broad range of paradigmatic concepts is helpful, particularly in the width of potential application within the diversity of global Christianity.

Secondly, and relatedly, the paradigmatic concept has a strong impact on the range and character of principles included in the theory. For example, Wright's (2010) paradigm of Christian virtue naturally leads the principles of his theory to be primarily ethical and moral. In particular, this causes him to focus on human patterns of "thinking and acting" as the primary targets of transformation (Loc.499-509). Peterson (2010), on the other hand, puts forth the paradigm of resurrection, which leads into identifying the "born again spirit" of the believer as the target of transformation (Loc.101). In these two examples, the identification of the human dimension to be transformed is discussed in terminology which is directly related to the guiding concept. The paradigmatic concept of discipleship utilized by Sanders (2008) and Willard (2014b) shapes their discussions of the activities of formation to recognize the power of actively following and obeying Jesus. However, the concept of experiencing the Holy Spirit leads Keefauver (2000) to focus on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the primary element which must be in place for formative activities to be effective (Loc.2209). Again, the same aspect of spiritual formation—here, the power behind the activities—is characterized in different ways based upon the associated paradigmatic concept. While authors may discuss similar fundamental principles of spiritual formation, the paradigmatic concept they choose has a profound effect on how those principles are defined and described.

Thirdly, not all guiding concepts are scripturally based. While discussions can remain scriptural even when the encapsulating concept is not, it seems that Bible-based concepts tend to indicate a stronger adherence to the Word of God. Concepts such as conversion, discipleship, and the death of self often carry the spiritual weight of the scriptural principles which inform them, and are therefore, from an Evangelical perspective, more likely to be reliable and effective.

2.4 Theo-Philosophical Foundations of Spiritual Formation

The theo-philosophical foundations provide the theoretical framework for spiritual formation. This includes sources of knowledge such as theology, philosophy, psychology, and educational theory. Most writers in the field of Christian spiritual formation utilize theology as the primary theo-philosophical foundation. Theology includes both the theological approach (biblical, systematic, etc.) as well as the theological ideas at the core of the theory.

Theological and/or philosophical frameworks of Christian spiritual formation range from being primarily anecdotal and personally experiential in nature (McManus 2015) to systematic biblical theology (Willard 2009a; Wright 2010; Kendall 2015). The range of theology at work in the arena of spiritual formation is revealed in the kinds of entries found in Beasley-Topliffe's spiritual formation dictionary (2017), which include: "Affective Spirituality", "Catharism", "Kenosis", "Søren Kierkegaard", and "Neoplatonism". Assessing the theo-philosophical sources which lie at the foundation of any particular theory is instructive of that theory's accuracy, trustworthiness, and applicability.

2.4.1 Systematic Theology Foundations

While most works on spiritual formation do not approach the subject in a strictly systematic way, it seems that systematic theology is the best way to categorize the theological approach of those who draw upon the Bible as a whole in order to formulate propositions concerning the nature of Christian spiritual formation. Dawson (2007:Loc.89-139) systematically studies the words and actions of Jesus throughout the NT as the basis for a spiritual formation paradigm focused on emulating him. Foster (2009:5-10) takes a systematic theology view of the whole of Scripture and concludes that nearly every story in the Bible is about the "with-God life". Challies (2007) provides a layman's basic systematic theology on the topic of discernment. While he includes illustrated stories and examples,

he primarily focuses on the key texts in the Bible.

Willard puts forth a number of systematic teachings on spiritual formation, and taken as a whole, they present a cohesive theory of spiritual formation. He examines biblical evidence in order to formulate a framework of spiritual formation which includes such considerations as the purpose of life, the goal of seeing God's Kingdom on earth, becoming like Jesus, the disciplines, and life after death (2009a). Willard reviews the OT and NT evidence for an interactive God and concludes that God is just as available today as He was in biblical times. Elsewhere, Willard (2009b:14-18) focuses on the theological foundations for the necessity of the spiritual disciplines, stating that the work is intended to give the theological basis for the disciplines, rather than providing concrete methodology. He explains how salvation, the purpose of human existence, and the nature of the human being all relate to the importance of the disciplines and spiritual growth toward God's purposes, with biblical evidences given throughout his discussion. He examines the need for the disciplines in the context of Jesus' words, Paul's epistles, as well as in Christian history. He believes that the Bible centers the disciplines on the human body, which "is the focal points of human existence" (29-31). Willard (2014a) also explains spiritual formation as the process by which God changes the heart. He reviews the biblical evidence for the need of spiritual formation, the biblical definition of the heart, and the biblical vision of the Kingdom. He reviews the process of transformation in the context of individual aspects of the human being: thoughts, feelings, will, body, social life, and soul. Willard's works represent milestones in the study of spiritual formation, and taken together they form a consistent theory. Further, they represent the most extensive systematic approach to the topic of spiritual formation. Willard utilizes analysis and exegesis, as well as synthesis and retroduction of Scripture in order to formulate the essential principles of spiritual formation as informed by the text of Scripture. While his analysis is sometimes cursory, it seems that this is not a product of defective scholarship, but rather due to intentional simplification in the face of a popular target audience.

Another excellent example of a scholastic systematic theology approach is Wright (2010), who systematically builds his case for a theory of Christian virtue pursued for the coming Kingdom. His study interacts with the text of Sermon on the Mount, the epistles of Paul, and the passages on the fruit of the Spirit to reveal an eschatologically connected view of Christian character formation in anticipation of glorification (Loc.1664-2191). He asserts that Christian character formation must occur in the bigger picture of God's ultimate plan for humanity. He characterizes this as a return to the original plan for Adam and Eve,

summarized with the term "royal priesthood" (Loc.1379-1389). In being those who reflect God's character in the earth, Christians act as the priesthood which furthers God's Kingdom. His theological examinations of the biblical text are strong, and his propositional constructions are eminently logical. Further, his theory reflects its systematic foundation in that it is made up of a number of interlocking principles which all build upon each other to form a cohesive whole.

Willard and Wright both uphold the entirety of the Bible as the primary source of truth in Christian growth, and they both approach this source systematically. However, the conclusions which emerge from their interpretations are vastly different. Willard's theology upholds the spiritual growth of the inner man, while Wright's leads the believer to focus on the moral and ethical. But in spite of all their differences—in style, tone, and hermeneutical method—these authors arrive at a similar fundamental truth concerning spiritual formation. Wright advocates that Christian maturity is the expression of Christ's character in "love, gentleness, meekness" and other virtues espoused by Jesus in the Beatitudes (Loc.3694-3699). Willard states that spiritual formation is the "Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself" (Willard 2014a:Loc.344-346). For both of these theologians, the end result for formation is growth into Christlikeness. Even amidst the differences in paradigm, theology, and activities, these two authors arrive at the same goal. The wider scope of this accord is affirmed by Foster: "While the many Christian traditions have differed over the details of spiritual formation, they all come out at the same place: the transformation of the person into Christlikeness" (2009:10). The assessments of previous aspects of spiritual formation highlight the variation within the current literature, but here we must be reassured by the elementary similarity of two disparate authors utilizing the same basic theological approach.

2.4.2 Doctrinal Foundations

Some authors base their theories of spiritual formation on specific doctrinal topics. LeMasters (1992) views spiritual formation through the lens of eschatology. He argues that proper Christian behavior is found in the concept of the "final redemption of the universe" (80). Sanders (2008) focuses on the Trinity. Sanders does not build an argument, but rather discusses theological characteristics of the Trinity to be understood and applied toward Christian growth, covering such doctrinal topics as providence, perseverance, Christ's transcendence, discipleship, the transformational power of the Holy Spirit, and the

fire of the Holy Spirit. Benner (2009a:Loc.1380-1382) founds his theory on obedience, explaining that "God wants to change our choosing, not simply our choices". Packer (2005) works with pneumatology, presenting the scriptural evidence for the Holy Spirit's role in Christian growth. Keefauver (2000) also studies spiritual formation through pneumatology, stating that the Holy Spirit causes growth into Christlikeness (Loc.718-720). Further, he states that the fruit of the Spirit is internalized nature of Christ (Loc.1650).

Koessler (2003) and Sanders (2008) both approach formation through the study of the discipleship, primarily looking at what the Gospels reveal about the Christ/disciple relationship. Stanley and Clinton (2014:Loc.480-485) study formation through the lens of discipleship and the Lordship of Christ, and extrapolate their concept of mentorship through the study of these biblical concepts. Benner (2009c) reviews the entire Bible, from creation to the fall to the redemption of Jesus, from the perspective of love. He states that every action of God along the way was motivated by love, and that Jesus embodies the perfect love of God (Loc.165-251). Therefore, he argues, surrendering to that love is a major formative concern. Stoeber (2005:ix-x) examines the topic of theodicy from the perspective of spiritual formation and concludes that positive suffering is not only a means of growth, but is also an answer to the question of theodicy. Lescher (1998) writes through an ecclesial lens, arguing that ministers must resolve the relationship between spiritual formation and Church community (11-12). He proposes that spiritual formation does not occur without a strong ecclesiastical element, and that it functions concurrently with all church programs. Foster (2002) utilizes both Scripture and the teachings of Christian mystics, but seems to found his entire project of spiritual formation on what he calls "the path of disciplined grace" (7-8). By this he means to draw upon the doctrine of grace, yet still emphasize the believer's necessary enactment of the disciplines to receive God's grace. Wright (2010:Loc.1040-1081) also sees the doctrine of grace to be a strong underpinning reality in the process of spiritual maturity stating that God is wholly responsible for the completion of our salvation.

There has also been research on spiritual formation as it overlaps the social gospel. Foster (2001) dedicates a chapter to the social justice tradition, examining the application of compassion and love toward equity. Herzog (1986) discusses how the spiritual element emerging in the study of Christian formation has affected the development of doctrine, and argues that this requires refreshing the commitment to justice across theological-ideological lines. Searle and Searle (2013:n.p.) examine how the monastic practice of the spiritual disciplines interacts with the social gospel, stating that monastic ideals such as

humility and compassion "should be brought out of the cloister walls and unleashed in order to bring renewal", transforming both Church and community. Maddox (2002:64, 80) makes the case that John Wesley taught the social gospel must function in the context of spiritual formation, but that this integration of holiness and social action has been lost by the movements which stem from his teachings. Arzola (2006) studies four approaches to youth ministry in an urban context, recommending a "prophetic youth ministry" which is Christ-centered, holistic, community-focused, transformational, and liberational (53-54). Spiritual formation has also been studied in the context of social work (Sermabeikian 1994; Holloway 2007; Canda and Furman 2010; Canda 2012). Straughan (2002) states that spiritual development is an integral part of social work, particularly because of the key role that religion plays in human life, and that social workers should recognize and respect this, even if they are not religiously inclined (162-163). There is, however, a scholastic disagreement regarding the connection between Christian formation and social transformation. Vondey (2015:203, 205) states that the conception of spiritual formation by Pentecostals in certain parts of the world is primarily that of social action. He writes, "Particularly in places ridden by hunger, disease, unemployment, indebtedness, and corruption, the goal of Christian formation is to provide an alternative community, morality, lifestyle, and spirituality." However, Willard (2009b:67) argues that social action is not the core of Christian spiritual formation, but is rather a natural result of Christian maturity. In Willard's view, individual transformation must come before social transformation. It seems that this disagreement is a definitional one. If spiritual formation is primarily concerned with individual Christian maturity, as Willard thinks it does, than clearly the believer alone is the primary focus of transformation. However, if the definition includes Christian communities as a whole, then Vondey's view would not be incorrect.

This overview reveals how many doctrinal topics are related to spiritual formation. It reaffirms the truth that spiritual formation is a field in which an overwhelming majority of theological topics can, and must, can be focused toward practical theology. An instructive example of the effective theological use of doctrinal concepts in forming a theory of spiritual formation is Averbeck (2008), who proposes that the three theological topics which contribute most substantively to our understanding of spiritual formation are: Holy Spirit, community, and mission. After examining these three theological topics in depth, Averbeck provides a detailed definition of spiritual formation: "the ministry through which we seek to stimulate and support the ongoing spiritually transforming work of the Holy Spirit in and through the personal lives, relationships, and ministries of genuine believers so that we all progressively become more conformed to the image of Christ according to the will of God

the Father" (53). This is an excellent example of doctrinal theology informing the basic theory of spiritual formation. The exploration of the relevance of three biblical concepts to spiritual formation leads Averbeck to a thorough definition of spiritual formation. We see here how theo-philosophical foundations are the basic building blocks by which a theory is constructed. The strength, depth, and clarity of any theory are highly dependent upon the author's choice of such building blocks.

2.4.3 Biblical Theology Foundations

Some authors have approached spiritual formation through the use of biblical theology or comparative biblical theology (see Samra 2008; Asumang 2010). Stuckenbruck (2002) examines the book of Mark for clues on a scriptural foundation for spiritual formation. He concludes that the book portrays Jesus as both full of power and a victim of great suffering, yet still completely entrusts himself to being shaped by God the Father (90). Kendall (2015:n.p.) uses Philippians 2:5-11 as his primary passage of Scripture in examining aspects of Christ's character that we should imitate, such as meekness, humility, servant leadership, and obedience. Similarly, Farley (2014:n.p.) uses Matthew 11:29-30—in which Jesus declares that His yoke is easy and His burden is light—as the basis of his discussion on the discipline of resting in God. Smith (2010:n.p.) reviews the various uses of the potter and clay metaphor in Scripture, particularly in Jeremiah, in order to establish its significance and application in the realm of spiritual formation.

Peterson (2010) centers his discussion of spiritual formation on a close reading of Ephesians. He focuses particularly on resurrection, and states that the Church is the place in which Christians "practice" resurrection together to find growth in God (Loc.1959-1960). Elsewhere, Peterson (2000) builds his work around fifteen Psalms of Ascent (Ps 120-134), sung by the Hebrews on their journey to Jerusalem. The principles covered by Peterson correspond with the contents of these psalms, including repentance, providence, worship, service, help, security, joy, work, happiness, perseverance, hope, humility, obedience, community, and blessing.

Some authors utilize character studies as their source of theology. Jenkins (2011) uses Abraham as the model of the transformational nature of friendship with God. Getz and Getz (2011) examine the life of Timothy as a model for young Christian men. Mills (2014) provides a mix of basic biblical theology and practical theology in the application of the book of Nehemiah in concrete methodology for men. Maldonado (2015) focuses on the

biblical material on Christ's life, death, and resurrection in order to form his theory of spiritual formation as a death to self. Putman (2014) relies on Jesus as the model of disciple making, and states that Jesus approached discipleship both intentionally and relationally (Loc.342-347). Kendall (2015:n.p.) uses the concept of imitating Christ as the guide for his work on spiritual formation, and emphasizes our emulation of our Lord in attitude, initiative, and motivation. Nouwen (1981:15) builds his paradigm of spiritual formation on Jesus' words "do not worry". From this three-word commandment, Nouwen characterizes growth as the result of God's Spirit moving due to the believer's determination to give Him room amidst a harried and unfulfilled life (23-35, 93).

Many of these biblical theological efforts are indispensable in the quest to establish biblically accurate theories of spiritual formation. The work of systematic theology cannot be pursued effectively without such foundational work. An example which reveals the valuable nature of these ventures is found in Fee (2010:41), who examines the use of the NT terms for "spiritual" (particularly in the Pauline literature, including 1 Corinthians 2:14, Colossians 1:9, and Ephesians 1:3) and concludes that this term exclusively means "by the Holy Spirit" in the NT worldview. He argues, therefore, that spirituality, and spiritual formation, cannot be divorced from the Holy Spirit; it is precisely the Spirit that is referenced in the NT usage of the term spiritual (38-40). This is an excellent example of a short work which examines a narrow area of the biblical text in order to produce an accurate account of the biblical view of an integral aspect of spiritual formation. Future works on spiritual formation should utilize this biblical definition of the term and allow it to shape more expansive work on the topic. Further, works such as the ones described above should be attractive sources for future works of systematic theology.

2.4.4 Historical and Denominational Theology Foundations

Another source of theological foundations are historical theology (Foster 2001), which here includes Christian mysticism (Dreyer 2005; Valantasis 2005; Barton 2006; Ashbrook 2009; Benner 2012), as well as denominational theology (Bowers 1995; Sims 2013; Vondey 2015).

Some inquiries into historical theology have yielded fascinating fruit. Decock (2013), for example, reviews Origen's recognition of discernment as a spiritually formative principle. Elsewhere Decock (2011) reviews Origen's concept that a deeper understanding of the Logos results in a responsive action to action which brings the believer into likeness with

the Logos Himself. Anderson and Reese (2009) generally follow a historical theology approach focusing primarily on monastics and mystics, using such people as Augustine, Aelred of Rievaulx, Julian of Norwich, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Jeanne Guyon. Stoeber (2005) also primarily interacts with theologians of the past in his discussion of theodicy and transformation. Webber (2009:37-44) advocates for evangelicalism's return to the form of the early Church, and that doing so will mature the Church as a whole. He therefore focuses his study on the early church fathers in identifying the qualities of a mature Christian Church. Thomas (2000) reviews the mystical concept of the inner/outer life and argues that this common distinction is flawed in that is overemphasizes inner moral life over ethical action (54). Demarest (2009: 14-15) discusses Brueggemann's model of stages of Christian growth, which begins with being orientated (experiencing God and finding faith), then disorientated (struggles and doubts), then to reorientated (spiritual renewal).

There are a few Pentecostal/Charismatic treatments of spiritual formation. Johns (1993) was one of the first to examine formation through the lens of Pentecostal theology. Her paradigm is built on an "affective-spiritual" catechesis for "the oppressed", which she sees to be commensurate with the Pentecostal worldview (18, 62). She argues for an understanding of formation which relies on the link between pedagogy and ontology. Bowers (1995) draws on Wesleyan-Pentecostal theology in his formulation of educational approaches adequate to the denominational tradition. Christenson (2001) addresses formation from a Lutheran Charismatic perspective, and it reflects both the pneumatology and rationality of both denominational elements. One of the most influential voices in Pentecostal/Charismatic views on spiritual formation is Hayford (2001), who emphasizes the power of the Holy Spirit in personal and experiential aspects of formation. Hayford states that most books on spiritual formation and the disciplines tend to be dense and heady, therefore he chooses to approach this work from a more personal standpoint (7-8). According to Hayford, transformation occurs through "the Spirit-formed life", which consists of three elements: being "Spirit-born" through repentance from sin and placing faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, being "Spirit-filled" in receiving the power promised by Jesus, and being "Spirit-formed" in continuing to grow into Christ likeness through discipleship to the Lord (8-9). Hayford's ideas are clearly formed from deep Bible study, however his determination to keep his discussion simplified has a negative effect on the ultimate effectiveness of his teachings. He often posits certain theological concepts without giving them enough explanation of his position. One example is the "Pillar Principle," which borrows language from Revelation 3:12. Hayford seems to use it as a term regarding the

trust the believer should have in God in the process of transformation (15), yet he seems to primarily use it as a descriptor of how mature believers will provide supporting strength to others (14, 17). Hayford either assumes too much of the reader, or does not require enough detail in his writing. Because the theological foundations of this work are intentionally simplified, there is a resultant lack of precision and cogency to the theory as a whole. This is not necessarily the result of his denominational perspective, but it certainly clouds the attempt to identify a distinctly Pentecostal/Charismatic approach to spiritual formation. In fact, Hayford's problem of oversimplification is indicative of the longer works in this field as a whole, from any denominational perspective. It is easy to state that non-scholarly works should not be judged in this manner, but when the majority of major works on spiritual formation are written for a popular audience, it is difficult to affirm the acceptability of a lack of detail in the biblical foundations in any of them.

The most interesting work regarding denominational perspectives in the context of spiritual formation is Porter (2008), who acknowledges the discomfort with spiritual formation that some in the Evangelical community feel. He addresses objections to spiritual formation, such as: it is of Roman Catholic origin, it contradicts the sufficiency of Scripture, it is too focused on works-righteousness, and/or it is too experiential (131-148). Porter employs theological arguments to address these accusations. Regarding the concept of Catholic origin, Porter states that Christian growth is a universal Christian concern and that it is not difficult to divide erroneous Roman Catholic teachings from the practices of spiritual formation (133-134). Porter agrees that discourse on spiritual formation has been influenced by other theo-philosophical concepts. He writes, "spiritual formation has been heavily influenced by extra-biblical sources of insight—for instance, philosophy (Willard), psychology (Benner), and the history of Christian spirituality (Foster)" (138). He posits that the sufficiency of scripture should be seen as being the highest authority, and offers Pauline imitation theology (drawn from 1 Cor 4:16; 1 Cor 11:1; 1 Th 1:6; 2 Th 3:9) as a biblical example of acceptable extra-biblical influence on Christian growth (139-140). Against the accusation of works-righteousness, Porter agrees that this can certainly be a pitfall with spiritual formation, but that any pursuit of sanctification or holiness shares this same pitfall (143). It is therefore obviously not an unavoidable aspect of spiritual formation. Regarding the accusation that spiritual formation is too subjectively experiential, Porter argues that that the experiential reality of the Christian life is a biblically supported concept (cf Jn 14:16-23; Eph 3:16; Col 1:29; Rom 5:5, 8:16; 2 Tim 4:17) (144-145). In his mind, Evangelicals are generally guilty of underemphasizing this important Christian truth (145-146). Porter's concluding point is that spiritual formation should be viewed as the pursuit of

sanctification (129-130). This is an excellent example of examining the theo-philosophical aspects of spiritual formation in order to form accurate theory. While this work is essentially apologetic in nature, Porter's careful engagement with the theo-philosophical foundations behind the issues raised by critics produces clarity on the biblical principles integral to spiritual formation.

2.4.5 Interdisciplinary Foundations

Interdisciplinary approaches to theo-philosophical foundations include a mix of psychology and theology (Groeschel 1984; May 1992; Crabb 1993; Shults and Sandage 2006; Sandford and Sandford 2007; Marion 2011; Strawn and Brown 2015), a combination of theology and social science (Estep and Kim 2010), a combination of social science, hermeneutics, and Christian ethics (Brown et al. 2011), philosophical Christian spirituality (Fowler 1995), identification of personality and spirituality in Meyers-Briggs testing (Goldsmith 1997), the spiritual use of the Alcoholics Anonymous twelve-steps of recovery (Webber 2016).

Steele's (1998:9) theo-philosophical foundation for spiritual formation is "a critical confessional model of practical theology." Steele draws on Freudian psychoanalytic theory (58-61), behaviorism (61-64), and humanistic psychology (64-66) in producing a practical theology of Christian formation. Steele is clear, however, that such theories alone are inadequate in themselves to produce a whole paradigm of Christian formation. Murphy (2001) explores the relationship between pedagogy, epistemology, and formation. She argues that objectivist epistemology causes Christian catechesis to focus on the transmission of mere information, and therefore neutralizes the transformation which should attend the true knowledge of God (323-324). As an alternative, Murphy suggests that the experience of liturgy is the locus of Christian formation (331-332). Mutch's (2014) writing on formation interacts with the study of neuroscience. He proposes a greater integration of the role of emotion into spiritual formation to produce greater efficacy in the pursuit of Christlikeness. Relatedly, Edwards (2015) posits that the process of spiritual formation can be understood neuro-scientifically and discusses how mindful meditation increase awareness and emotional stability (236-237). Johnson (2001) reviews the ways in which postmodernism interacts with spiritual formation in positive ways. She compares the process of spiritual formation to that of internalizing culture or learning language (317). She concludes that pastors should not overemphasize Christian education institutions, such as Sunday school, as vectors of formation, but rather emphasize the growth which occurs in

the natural ongoing participation in the community of faith (328-329). McManus (2015) presents the concept of formation in the context of art and creativity. McManus is somewhat postmodern in his approach, asserting that the artist interprets his or her own life through their art, and that this mirrors of how God forms us as his works of art (20-30, 73). Packer (2009) states that his is a work of "systematic spirituality", which he defines as "a subsection of systematic theology in which one tries to think everything through, and think it all together, in terms of communion with God as the central relationship" (Loc.562-563). Packer is both biblical and logical in his approach and generally follows a systematic theology paradigm, yet his language reflects a lofty view of spirituality. Such interdisciplinary approaches attempt to identify effective formative theory and methodology from other fields—such as psychology, neuroscience, and post-modern critical theory— and harmonize them with aspects of Christian formation. Perhaps the most important metric of validity for these theories is the evidence of rigorous assessment, adjustment, and qualifications for non-Christian sources. Not all aspects of these disparate sources are compatible with the Christian worldview (cf. Steele 1998:65-66), and therefore they should not be implemented in the development of spiritual formation theory without both acknowledging their limitations and arbitrating their counterproductive differences. The inclusion of theo-philosophical sources without without harmonizing them with truth of Scripture is not only unsatisfactory, but might quite possibly function destructively in the context of Christian spiritual formation.

Some underpinning theology is married to a strong anthropology. Conn (1999:96-97) argues that the final stage of spiritual formation in the Christian context is the losing of oneself. Relatedly, there have been discussions on how the concept of personality affects Christian spiritual formation. Beck (1999) correlates Jesus' teachings with the five primary traits identified in personality theory: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Thomas (2010) describes nine ways in which we relate to God, which could all be understood as various personalities. The sensate feels God through emotion (51-68). The traditionalist experience God in rituals and symbols (69-94). The intellectual relates to God through mental processes (193-214). Conde-Frazier et al. (2004) have given detailed attention to the interaction between spiritual formation and multiculturalism. "The conviction set forth in these pages is that when authentic relationships are built that embrace diverse backgrounds, tremendously positive growth in Christlikeness can occur" (7). In examining liturgy in various community contexts, Masango and Pieterse (2008) conclude that ministers must keep in mind that modes of spirituality may differ across various communities (137), and therefore that the

unique spiritual needs of the congregation must be met by corresponding liturgy (130-131).

Theories based on stages of faith represent another arena of inquiry into spiritual formation which is strongly anthropological. Fortosis (1992:283-284) puts forth a model which is informed by educational theory, developmental research, and theology. Ashbrook (2009) constructs a model of stages of growth utilizing the mysticism of Teresa of Avila's seven mansions. Fowler (1995:117-214) draws deeply from the well of developmental psychology. Hagberg and Guelich (2004) rely on psychology, concepts of self-actualization, Christian spirituality, and biblical stories. The theo-philosophical foundations of these works primarily revolve around the human experience. Perhaps these stages of faith best exemplify an area of spiritual formation which is acceptably influenced by non-theological fields. The stages of faith are not primarily prescriptive, as Hagberg and Guelich admit (2004:xxiv), but rather descriptive, as Ashbrook acknowledges (2009:n.p.). Description and assessment of phases of individual growth seem to allow a heavier use of extrabiblical influences of psychology, Christian mysticism, and educational theory. For this reason, the concepts provided by disciplines outside of theology are certainly more applicable in the construction of models of spiritual formation which do not promote activity whose origination falls outside the scope of Scripture.

Perhaps the strongest anthropological approach to theo-philosophical foundations is Habermas (2008:51-57) who identifies five universal questions asked by humans and connects them with Jesus Christ as the paragon of humanity. "Where did I come from?" is answered by Jesus' Role of Master Teacher (87-99). "What is my background?" is answered by Jesus' Role of Faithful Learner (101-108). "Who am I?" is answered by Jesus' Role of Son of Man 109-121). "Why am I here?" is answered by Jesus' Role of Great Physician (123-132). "How do I get to where I must go?" is answered by Jesus' Role of Submissive Servant (133-145). This example reconciles existential questions with biblically sound Christological answers. Habermas' questions are self-evidently representative of general human experience, even if they may not be comprehensively so. He leverages these universal questions toward the delivery of formative Christocentric answers. This not only produces a unique anthropological theory of spiritual formation, but also demonstrates the existential solutions of the Christian worldview.

An example in which secular theory is not properly reconciled with the biblical worldview is found in Benner (2012). He describes his interdisciplinary approach: "I will draw on insights from Perennial Philosophy; evolutionary theology; cultural anthropology; comparative

spirituality; and clinical, developmental, and transpersonal psychology—placing all of this back within a Christian understanding" (Loc.176-84). Elsewhere in his various works on spiritual formation, Benner (2009b, 2009c, 2011) particularly draws heavily on Christian mysticism, philosophy, and psychology. Benner cites his work as a psychologist and spiritual director in the development of his formation theory (2009c:Loc.70-72), adding that, "my personal journey as a human being and as a Christian has been even more important in this learning" (Benner 2009c:Loc.73). This is a good indicator of the source of Benner's views in his various works. Benner does not always harmonize his non-biblical theo-philosophical foundations with scriptural evidence. For example, Benner characterizes the soul as "not a part of self but a way of living—a way of living with fuller consciousness", and states that the spirit should be seen metaphorically rather than ontologically (2012:22). While this may be an interesting way of viewing soul and spirit from a psychological view rooted in a materialistic worldview, it is not reflective of the biblical worldview (regarding soul, cf. 1 Sam 18:1; Ps 103:1; Eze 18:4; Mt 10:28, 16:26, 22:37; 3 Jn 1:2; Rev 6:9; regarding spirit, cf. Ps 51:10; Jn 3:6, 4:24, 19:30; Rom 8:6, 16; Gal 5:16-17; 1 Jn 4:1). The correct characterization of soul and spirit is of pivotal importance in spiritual formation, for it defines an integral aspect of the human being which must be adequately addressed in the theory and methodology of spiritual formation. By diverging so greatly from the truth of Scripture on such a pivotal point, Benner disqualifies his theory as a whole because it is built upon theo-philosophical foundations incompatible with Scripture.

2.4.6 Relational Theology

The terms "relational" and "relationship" can have at least two usages in spiritual formation literature. Firstly, it can refer to a dynamic and connective way of viewing spirituality as a system of many interrelated parts. This is the usage meant in the psychological term "relational spirituality" (Tomlinson et al. 2016; cf. Shults and Sandage 2006:20-26), which forms the basis of "relational spiritual formation" proposed by Sandage and Jensen (2013). This approach emphasizes a differentiation-based view of spiritual growth. While this term encompasses the believer's relationship with self, with community, and with God, it seems the primary usage refers to the system of connections which make up the spiritual life of the individual (101-102). Their view emphasizes increased self-awareness (96-97), and "differentiation of self", in which responses and communication to self and others occurs "intentionally and non-reactively" (95-96). O'Gorman (2001:351) uses the term in a similar way, but defines it from a postmodern position, stating that spirituality itself functions

relationally. He views spirituality as impossible to define and states that it therefore can only be understood as connection.

The second definitional use of the term "relational" in the context of spiritual formation would be specifically in reference to the believer's relationship with God. Using this definition, Shepson (2012) examines the scriptural understanding of God as helper. Jenkins (2011) reviews the various kinds of relationship categories displayed in Scripture—such as servant, steward, and son—but settles on God's friendship with Abraham as the ultimate expression of maturity. In this way, Jenkins suggests that friendship with God is the end result of maturity (Loc.592-600, 711-720). Frost and Frost (2016) review the scriptural evidence for the believer's status as a son of God, and state, *contra* Jenkins, that sonship to God displays the highest level of Christian maturity (15, 37).

This second use of the term is not as prevalent in the theo-philosophical foundations of spiritual formation as one might expect. It is important to note that the relational component of spiritual formation is commonly recognized, even if it is not a prevalent facet of goal, paradigm, theology, or activities. The following paradigms include relational considerations in their formulation of the goal of spiritual formation: the establishment of a love relationship with God (Ashbrook 2009:n.p.), intimacy with God (Foster 2002:4), rest with God (Farley 2014:n.p.), and adoption into the heavenly Father's family (Hahn 2012:n.p.). However, the relationship with God is not maintained as an ongoing consideration in the remainder of these theories. This is the result of a lack of holistic construction. For example, Willard poignantly states that being alive to God in Jesus requires an ongoing relationship with the Father (2009a:48), and that the disciplines must be enacted in a living relationship with God (2014b:107). These are powerful relational characterizations of spiritual formation concepts. However, they are not integrated further in Willard's subsequent discussion. Bruce (2008) believes that spiritual formation is "the process of God's giving Himself to us...and our giving ourselves to God" (24). While this definition of spiritual formation is foundationally relational, it functions more as a presupposition upon which the remainder of his theory rests. The presuppositional treatment of relationship in the literature is common, and it reveals the lack of effective theories which view the transformative nature of the interplay between man and God as an integral aspect which must be addressed in all facets of spiritual formation theory.

2.4.7 Assessment

Firstly, this review reveals the general lack of detailed systematic theology approaches in the study of spiritual formation. Aside from a few authors—primarily Wright (2010), Willard (2009a), and perhaps Foster (2009)—most theories do not stand upon a solid foundation of biblical evidence which systematic theology provides. More systematic work needs to be done. It is of great benefit that authors have done excellent work in biblical theology (e.g. Stuckenbruck 2002; Asumang 2010; Fee 2010; Kendall 2015), and researchers should consider using their work as stimulating building blocks for further systematic endeavors.

Secondly, while it would seem generally helpful to include psychology in the study of spiritual formation, most works which do so at times stray from a biblical foundation. For example, Marion's (2011:Loc.336-684) attempt to harmonize Christian spirituality with psychology characterizes the Kingdom of Heaven as a level of consciousness rather than a spiritual reality. Less egregious examples include the concepts proposed by Crabb (1993) and Benner (2009b; 2011). Perhaps this is the product of the creeping influence of purely naturalistic or deterministic worldviews. It seems this reflects a wider trend in Christianity as a whole, for as Steele noted in 1998, "Much of the church's activity today has become overly psychologized," as exemplified in replacing sanctification with building self-esteem (10). Certainly, psychological concepts are relevant to the research on spiritual formation. However, an overreliance upon them can skew theories toward untenability due to an insufficient scripturality.

Thirdly, in the attempt to write in a readable style, some authors have sacrificed integral biblical detail. For example, Stanley and Clinton (2014) provide inspiring stories of Christian mentorship. The advice gleaned from such stories generally seems sound, but much of it is not confirmed by the Word of God. Even Willard faces this difficulty when he provides a description and definition of the spirit (human), which does not arise from a detailed examination of biblical (or even traditional) discussions on the topic (2009a:78-81). It seems most of these missteps are the byproduct of simplified writing for a popular audience or relying too heavily on summaries. Regardless, any lack of explicit biblical adherence causes difficulties for those who desire deeper biblical discussion.

Finally, it should be noted that the categorization along this axis is not reflective of the actual theological concepts found in each theory, but rather in the theological approach or model. This is not ideal, for the comparison of theories is best done along conceptual lines of principles or scriptural themes. However, doing so with more than a handful of works at

a time is so unwieldy as to be impossible. So while this axis is more concerned with the detail of the theo-philosophical foundations at the heart of each theory, categorizing them by their particulars is not feasible on a larger scale such as this literature review.

2.5 Activities of Spiritual Formation

Of the four aspects of spiritual formation discussed in this review, the category of activities is the easiest to define. Essentially, the activities are the methods by which growth and maturity are pursued by the believer. The activities should correspond to the first three facets of spiritual formation. They should effectively move the believer toward attaining the stated goal of the spiritual formation, reflect the paradigmatic concept of the theory, and put theology into practical motion. The activities will be examined in these categories: devotional, study, denominational, spiritual counseling and direction, and attitudinal.

2.5.1 Devotional Activities

The most common activities are often referred to as the disciplines, which include prayer, meditation, reading of Scripture, solitude, silence, fasting, repentance, service, community, worship, communion, and celebration (Mulholland 1993; Bowers 1995; Peterson 2000; Boa 2001; Mulholland 2001; Foster 2002; Dawson 2007; Willard 2009b; Barton 2010; Nouwen 2010; Wright 2010; Benner 2012; Nelson 2012; Piper 2013). Authors also include activities such as reflection and the *lectio divina* (Peterson 2009; Nouwen 2010), work (Vondey 2015), rest (Farley 2014), self-examination (Keefauver 2000:Loc.187, 315, 447; Smith 2007), surrender to God's presence (Pennington 2000:39-40), mentorship (Houston 2011; Stanley and Clinton 2014), learning by example (Getz and Getz 2011), evangelism (Root 2008:180-181), the recitation of the Jesus Prayer (Mathewes-Green 2009; Dawes 2013), eucharistic liturgy (Hauerwas 1995; Wells 2002), liturgy and disciplines in the Book of Common Prayer (deSilva 2008), and spiritual direction or guidance (May 1992; McMahan 2002; Moon and Benner 2004).

Benner provides the broadest list of suggestions of disciplines. Benner (2009a) recommends the use of the Lord's prayer (Loc.345-520), consistently choosing God's will (Loc.711-766), and allowing God to purify and focus human desires (2009a:Loc.897-908). Elsewhere, Benner (2009b) suggests journaling simultaneous to the following: Bible study, the exercise of thankfulness to God, asking God to reveal Himself in the events of the day (Loc.491-498), as well as unflinching self-examination and self-acceptance (Loc.582-721).

Benner (2011:Loc.1697-3621) also delineates six activities of "soulful spirituality", which include practicing awareness, cultivating wonder, honoring otherness, embracing reality, living with presence to the moment, and choosing surrender. Further, Benner (2009c:Loc.820-823) recommends the actions of "turning" and repentance to God to elicit transformative encounters with him. The descriptive language of these activities is certainly informed by his reliance on the theo-philosophical foundations of psychology and Christian mysticism. While Benner's presentation of theology is somewhat garbled due to these extrabiblical influences, it is interesting to note that the depth and breadth of his methodology and activities are enhanced by these interdisciplinary interactions. For example, his six "soulful spirituality" examples all find root in scriptural teaching (2011; see chapters 8-13), even though their descriptions are not purely biblical. Perhaps, the lesson we might draw from this is that interdisciplinary methodological interplay might be beneficial in providing fresh formulations of previously under-explored spiritual formation activities based in Scripture. Once the biblical foundations of an activity are sure, the most important secondary factor in its assessment is its efficacy. If the goal of spiritual formation is the maturation of the believer, we should not dismiss activities which demonstrate transformative power, regardless of their origination in other fields, provided that they are harmonized with the teachings of Scripture.

The discipline of repentance is not as well-represented in the literature as it should be. Koessler (2003:Loc.275-277) recommends repentance, which he believes starts with self-honesty to recognize where we've fallen short of discipleship. Packer (2009) includes repentance as a necessary formative act. Relatedly, Keefauver (2000) includes activities of self-reflection and self-assessment in his workbook. It is strange that many discussions of the disciplines do not include repentance or self-examination, as repentance is a biblically prescribed method of seeking the Lord for change (cf. Is 30:15; Mt 3:8; Lk 5:31-32; Acts 3:19). As one of the fundamental activities of the Christian life, repentance should be emphasized to a much greater degree than it currently is in the literature.

2.5.2 Study Activities

Study activities are those which are associated with the formative power of examinations of the Bible, doctrinal texts, or formation workbooks. While the reading of the Bible is often considered a discipline, it is presented in this separate category due to its prominence. Its unique importance is revealed in an assessment of the spiritual formation of 2500 Protestants, which found that the single greatest factor which correlated with higher

spiritual maturity in the individual believer was the reading of the Bible (Waggoner 2008:68-69). Waggoner summarizes: "the foundation of spiritual formation is exposure to God's revealed truth, and this truth, when clarified by the Holy Spirit and received by faith, results in transformation" (76).

There are a few approaches to Bible study which intentionally balance the gaining of knowledge with the formation of spirit. Blevins (1997:69-70) warns against Bible reading primarily to support truth propositions, arguing that this often supersedes a fresh reading of the biblical text. Blevins' answer to this is the contextualization of the reading of Scripture within the whole of Wesley's five means of grace: the Lord's supper, prayer, fasting, Scripture, and Christian conversation (72). In this way, Blevins asserts not only that the believer should approach the study of the Bible as a means of appropriating God's transformative grace, but also that it does not function in a formative way without properly integrating it with other disciplines (80-82). Foster (2009) advocates reading the Bible with the mind in four ways: literally, in context, in conversation with itself, and in conversation with historical Christian theology (10-11). He suggests the believer also reads the Bible with the heart, and uses the term *lectio divina* for this act. He breaks down *lectio divina* into six aspects: listening, submitting, reflecting, praying, applying, and obeying (12). Foster is detailed in explaining both the exegetical and spiritual aspects of Bible study. This approach lays out a process of Bible study which balances head and heart, orienting the student to grow in knowledge and in spirit. It properly supports accurate examination, relational listening, and the application of Scripture as fundamental aspects of Bible study.

Some authors consider the formative power of theological study. Curran (2010) argues for a spiritually formative approach to theology. He hopes to re-characterize the work of theology as a liturgical spiritual discipline which functions toward sanctification. Steele (1998) agrees, stating "Theology is practical divinity, that is, it is to clarify the call of the gospel so as to empower the formation of Christian lives" (9-10). Charry (1997:379) argues that theology has become primarily about the logical coherence of doctrine rather than the support of a godly life, and she calls for a new, formative exegesis. Packer (1994) hopes to foster Christian growth through catechetical teaching based on the theological study of the Apostle's Creed, conversion and baptism, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments. Relatedly, Sanders (2008) seems to treat the study of the theology of the Trinity as a formative activity in itself, presented in the attempt to create an experience by the Word with causes growth in faith and belief (Loc.14090-14101). This is related to Frazee's concept that a greater understanding of doctrine leads to becoming more like Jesus

(Frazee 2014; Frazee and Larson 2015). Frazee provides guided readings regarding such topics as Salvation, the Bible, Church, worship, prayer, Bible study, love, joy, and peace. These approaches seem to equate greater knowledge with greater character. This connection cannot be dismissed, but it can easily be overstated. Knowledge does not always lead to a changed lifestyle. These works emphasize the study of important foundational teachings on the Christian faith; certainly this leads the reader into a greater understanding of the Christian life. However, theological and doctrinal study must be paired with direct teaching on the application of what is learned in such study in order to be impactful and effective. Frazee's approach acknowledges this, including a discussion of some disciplines, as well as providing a workbook for deeper study and application.

The workbook format is essentially its own subgenre in spiritual formation (see Keefauver 2000; Smith 2007; Duvall 2008; Roller and Foster 2009; Warner 2010). The purpose of this format is to guide the reader into spiritually formative experiences. Some are more verbose, with the workbook elements receiving less attention (Hudson 2010), while others are descriptively terse and focused primarily on the exercises (Keefauver 2000). Of particular note in the workbook category are the Renovaré spiritual formation guides, edited by Richard Foster (Graybeal and Roller 2009a; 2009b; 2009c; 2009d). Rather than state their position outright, Graybeal and Roller provide Scriptures, readings, and questions, the significance of which requires reflection and discussion to truly grasp. This approach is a creative solution to the problem of application, for these works do not provide a complete presentation on spiritual formation without the active participation of the reader (vii). This reveals one strength of the workbook concept, which is its emphasis on practical activities. While it is always the believer's responsibility to take action, workbooks provide guided avenues for such action.

Keefauver (2000) is another excellent example of what the workbook format has to offer: experience. Keefauver includes formative activities such as prayer, reading of the Word, self-assessment, and asking the Holy Spirit to help in every aspect of the process of growth. The exercises in his workbook continually point the reader toward genuine experiences with the Holy Spirit, which Keefauver considers indispensable in the quest for Christian transformation (Loc.74-77, 725-735). By leading the reader into the experience of the Holy Spirit in spiritual formation, Keefauver brings the spiritual aspect of formation into focus. This is of particular help for believers who may either find the notion of spiritual activity to be daunting, or those who have not engage in such spiritual formation activity before.

Smith (2010) provides activities such as Bible readings, guided prayers, times of silently seeking God, as well as the diagramming of feelings, emotions, challenges and situations. He provides questions intended to provoke honest assessments of our standing with God, such as our level of trust (e.g. Loc.846-848). Smith takes a fairly relational approach, stating that "Spiritual transformation occurs as we intentionally nurture our relationship with God" (n.p.). It is interesting to note that Smith treats relationship as an ongoing concern through the given workbook activities, even if the didactic portions of his work do not always include a relational component. This reveals how closely the relational component is to the experiential components of spiritual formation. By providing avenues by which to experience spiritual formation in a relational connection to God, Smith promotes a lived relationship with the source of transformation. While a distinctly holistic, relational approach to spiritual formation is missing in current literature, Smith provides a rare opportunity for the reader to experience relational spiritual formation through the participation in workbook activities.

2.5.3 Denominational Activities

Some researchers have investigated the specific activities which arise from denominational theologies. Howard (2012:n.p.) states that the foundational activities of Evangelical spirituality include Bible study, listening to sermons, family devotions, singing, and the Jesus Prayer. Driskill (2012:n.p.) states that progressive Protestants have recently rediscovered the formative power of prayer, contemplation, reflection, and other activities such as "walking with eyes of compassion in the midst of a decaying urban neighborhood". Along with contemplative prayer, Hahn (2012:n.p.) recognizes baptism and the Eucharist as activities of growth in the Catholic tradition.

There have been discussions of spiritual formation from a Pentecostal perspective. Writing more than two decades ago, Bowers (1995:58) points out that Pentecostal approaches to education, discipleship, and formation suffer from the lack of a strong "spiritual-theological foundation" (58). Researchers in this field have attempted to close this gap. Bowers (1995) himself posits that Pentecostal education must disciple believers into a relationship with Christ by the Holy Spirit, which results in "moral transformation", fellowship with God and community, and "a life of Christian ministry" (78). Archer (2004) looks at the sanctifying nature of the sacraments of foot washing, Spirit baptism, healing by oil, and communion from a Pentecostal perspective. He frames these activities as opportunities for the Holy Spirit to function redemptively and proposes that these activities are communal

"nourishment" for the faith journey (82). Boone (2004) states that community and worship are the key elements of Pentecostal spiritual formation, for the Holy Spirit works through interpersonal relationships and the activities of worship to form Christian character. McMahan (2002:336) discusses formation from the perspective of Pentecostal and Charismatic spiritual direction. McMahan identifies the primary emphases of maturity in the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition as: continual searching for an experience with God, belonging to the community of God, sharing spiritual experiences with others, expressions of the Charismatic gifts and the fruit of the Spirit, ministry to the spiritual community, and evangelism (340-341). Drawing on Johns' landmark work on Pentecostal formation (1993), Alvarado (2012) recognizes the important role of worship in the Spirit as a liturgical practice which continually develops the worshiper's relationship with God (141). Alvarado suggests that the Church should see Spirit-filled worship as a "learning experience" in which every participant is taught and transformed in an encounter with the Spirit (148-151). Vondey (2015:205) argues that the exercises of Pentecostal formation should include "renewing the mind by building a new mindset of discipline, hard work, and self-reliance at the core of concrete poverty alleviation projects". Research into spiritual formation from this denominational perspective provides excellent preliminary discussion on the distinctive concerns of Pentecostals and Charismatics. However, it seems these works have not adequately answered the need identified by Bowers, at least according to Vondey (2015:215), who states that Pentecostalism has yet to find a theory of formation which adequately addresses its denominational identity. Clearly, there is much more room for research into the Pentecostal and/or Charismatic distinctives of spiritual formation. It is possible that the wide variety of denominational and cultural identities which sit under these umbrella terms may not accommodate one inclusive, yet comprehensive, theory.

2.5.4 Spiritual Counseling and Direction

The relationship between spiritual formation with spiritual direction and discernment is certainly a close one, but is often ill-defined. Moon and Benner (2004) categorize spiritual direction as a form of soul care, and recognize its close proximity to spiritual formation. Conn (1999) finds the two to be inextricably linked, stating that spiritual direction is predicated on the believer's desire for spiritual formation (88). Nouwen (2010:Loc.224-226) recommends the use of a spiritual director to make the practices of reflection, *lectio divina*, silence, community, and service even more transformationally effective. Pienaar (2015:159-162) advocates a non-directive approach to spiritual direction and coaching

which is not focused on problem-solving, but rather basing the process of maturity on the reformulation of the life experience of the directee. Anderson and Reese (2009) give advice to mentors and mentees, identifying specific elements which cause spiritual mentorship to be effective. Among these include a genuine "attraction" between mentor and mentee, the necessity of discernment, the establishment of trust and intimacy, responsiveness, and accountability. From these views we might extrapolate that spiritual formation is always a component of Christian counseling and direction, but not always vice-versa. Certainly, it seems that having some form of outside counsel can be helpful in the pursuit of spiritual growth, but most writers do not present it as fundamentally necessary. Nevertheless, the process of maturity is always involved to some degree in the efforts of spiritual counseling and direction.

McMinn and McRay (1997) consider the potential applications of the spiritual disciplines to psychotherapy. They note that most psychologists consider character change to be difficult, while in the Christian context the spiritual disciplines are seen as having great efficacy toward that endeavor. For this reason, they advocate the use of the spiritual disciplines on behalf of both the therapist and the patient, both in and out of the therapy sessions. Relatedly, Eck (2002:266) reviews the use of the spiritual disciplines in clinical psychology, arguing that they "address disordered cognitions, behaviors, and relationships". Eck cites a study (Worthington 1988) which found that the most efficacious spiritual elements used in counseling were the forgiveness of God and others, as well as the assigning of "religious homework" (Eck 2002:276). Mangis (2000), in response to Dallas Willard, states that just as it is an error to see spiritual formation as emerging only from preaching and teaching in the Church, so too is it an error for Christian psychologists to rely on psychotherapy and counseling to independently cause transformation (259). As a remedying response, Mangis suggests reliance upon spiritual activities which shape the inner life.

The approach to spiritual formation from the perspective of counseling and direction examines how formation can be fostered in others. Most formation literature focuses on the individual believer's own seeking of maturity. However, the exploration of spiritual counseling and direction in this context gives necessary attention to how mature Christians might aid others in their growth process. Counsel and direction both function as a two-way street, with requirements of both counselor and counselee, but certainly the greater responsibility for maintaining a correct approach to formation sits upon the one leading this kind of relationship (cf. Lk 6:40; Jas 3:1-2; Titus 2:7; 1 Tim 2:2).

2.5.5 Attitudinal Activities

Some authors astutely address the necessary attitudes with which to approach the disciplines. Willard considers obedience (2009a:145-147) and love (2009b:Loc.145) to be the foundational attitudes of the disciplines. Christenson (2001:Loc.101-110) proposes that spiritual formation rests upon the recognition that God must cause it. He suggests that the methodology of formation is like the wooden forms placed for concrete, into which God pours his holiness (Loc.340-386). Koessler (2003:Loc.1630-1714) states that the basic attitudes of spiritual training are grace, truth, and effort. Benner (2009a:Loc.521-655; 2009c:Loc.708-710;) posits that our surrender to God's love is the only proper and lasting motivation for obedience. It is possible that some might disagree that these attitudinal considerations should be categorized as activities. A case could be made for understanding them as theo-philosophical foundations. They certainly straddle the line between these two axes of spiritual formation. However, these attitudes are not often naturally occurring in the human being, and must therefore be intentionally chosen by the believer. This would place them in the category of activity. Further, these attitudes greatly impact the efficacy of spiritual formation activities. For this reason, it could be argued that an exploration of these necessary attitudes is of greater importance than the activities themselves.

Some activities rest upon the attitude of emulating character. Dawson (2007) develops activities which arise from a study of Christ's personality, which include practicing humility, obedience to the Father, prayer, repentance, following Jesus, and evangelism. Kendall (2015) also reviews the personality of Jesus and recommends practicing meekness, initiative, humility, obedience, and worship. Koessler's (2003:Loc.512-769) handling of discipleship includes the recommendation of following Christ's personality in humility, submission, patience, generosity. Toward growing into a friend of God, Jenkins (2011) advocates cultivating a deep trust of God, giving, communication, and loyalty (Loc.1431-1435, 1821-1823, 2180-2185, 3674-3685). The attitude of emulation is a necessary component of Christocentric spiritual formation. However, it should be viewed as methodology rather than method. In other words, it provides a strong theoretical understanding of spiritual formation, but does not, in itself, describe adequate activity with which to attain change in character. Simply hoping to become Christlike does not in itself induce transformation. However, conscious emulation of Jesus provides a formative attitude which causes activities to be more effective toward growth.

Intentionality is an attitudinal activity which has primarily been examined in the intersection of spiritual formation and educational theory. TenElshof (2000) emphasizes that Christian educators can no longer assume that incoming students maintain any workable knowledge of Christian life, and that therefore they must be intentional in the pursuit of spiritual formation in the classroom. Jones and Jennings (2000:127-128) describe the addition of intentional spiritual formation activities at Duke Divinity School, which energized engagement on behalf of both students and faculty. Naidoo, who provides a theoretical framework with which she uses to study spiritual formation practices in an educational context, suggests that Christian educators should intentionally integrate formation into all aspects of the students' lives. Christian education should therefore impact "the intellectual, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of life in the educational process" (123). The concept of intentionality is useful in that the activities of spiritual formation, particularly the disciplines, do not always automatically cause formation (cf. Willard 2014b:107). The need for the attitude of intentionality, on the part of both teacher and student, reveals the irreplaceable nature of the believer's participation in the process of Christian maturity. In other words, if the believer does not purposefully desire and pursue spiritual formation, growth will at best be slow and erratic, even when activities associated with spiritual formation are consistently undertaken.

Another attitude can be characterized as the giving up of self. Chole (2015) explores the importance of disillusionment as a kind of "dark night of the soul" in the process of formation. Relatedly, Maldonado (2015) emphasizes the methodology of "death to self", which includes presenting ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1), surrendering to the will to God, living in the "baptism of love", and substituting the life of the Spirit for the life of the flesh (Loc. 1089-1153). Benner (2009a:Loc.1050-1100) similarly states that believers must deny themselves and surrender to the cross so that life might come from death. The common thread here is the creative activity of abandoning aspects of immaturity in order to attain maturity. Certainly the death to self, the renunciation of flesh, and embracing the cross are scriptural concepts (cf. Lk 9:23-24; Jn 12:24; Rom 6:11; Gal 2:20, 5:24). Although described in various ways, the willing allowance of small processes of spiritual, emotional, or mental death in the overall movement toward growth is a formative attitude of spiritual formation.

Another attitude explored by Cachia (2013:70-73, 76) is the "listening heart." Cachia reviews the Hebrew words and concepts surrounding Solomon's request for a listening heart and concludes that the believer's determined openness to God allows internal

change. Cachia (2013) writes: "Thus, 'a listening heart', which Solomon requests from God, entails a deliberate and conscious openness of the whole person to God from the very core of one's being as to let God fashion one's will, reason, feelings and way of life" (76). The listening heart is connected to the human "spiritual senses" by which we experience God (78-80), and Cachia therefore identifies humility and receptivity as necessary attitudes for effectively maintaining a listening heart (80-82). Ultimately, the listening heart is an attitude by which the believer maintains and grows a transformative relationship with God. Listening, receptivity, and humility are efficacious attitudes by which to approach the activities of formation in a relational way. This is instructive of the difficulties involved in presenting relational modes of transformative activities, for relationships function primarily as emotional and spiritual connections, although expressed in activity. For example, love is primarily an emotion or state of being, but it is expressed through various kinds of speech and physical touch. Attitudinal methodology, therefore, may be an important future avenue to be explored by researchers on relational modes of spiritual formation.

In this same vein of relational activities, Benner (2012:162-163) states that the most effective methodology is that which encourages "openness, surrender, and willingness". He asserts, therefore, that common approaches to the Christian disciplines are naturally counter-productive to spiritual transformation, stating that they might actually encourage willfulness. Similarly, Willard (2014b:107) argues that lesser-known disciplines—"fasting, solitude, silence, listening prayer, scripture memorization, frugal living, confession, journaling, submission to the will of others as appropriate, and well-used spiritual direction"—are more effective than common activities in promoting Christlikeness because they are more related to discipleship. Willard states that activities such as study of Scripture, prayer, and service will not be formative unless intentionally pursued for that purpose. Both Benner and Willard promote relationship as an important attitudinal component of spiritual formation. For Benner, the relationship is primarily characterized by surrender to God. For Willard the relationship is characterized as discipleship to Christ. Either way, the chosen attitudes of the believer determine the degree to which the activities are pursued relationally and effectively.

2.5.6 Assessment

Firstly, the most basic critique is that some authors do not adequately address activities of formation. For example, Kendall (2015:n.p.) gives great detail on the character of Christ we

should be imitating, but does not guide the reader into successful modes of imitation. Hybels (1987:710) reviews the kind of character Christians should have, but gives little concrete methodology with which to develop such traits. Packer's (2009) imaginative language reflects his high spiritual viewpoint, but this causes his activities to be rather elusive, even when he is directly addressing activities such as prayer and repentance. Similarly, while Peterson (2010) generally sticks with the biblical text and calls Christians to come up higher, most readers would come away from the book with little understanding of how to apply his theory. The study of spiritual formation is ultimately an exercise of practical theology. Even a superlative theological presentation is no replacement for a concrete and efficacious enumeration of activities.

Secondly and relatedly, some authors treat activities of formation as a secondary concern because they don't believe there are definite correct approaches to activities which universally lead to success. Benner (2011:Loc.592-593) states that spirituality itself "is not something that can ever be reduced to beliefs or practices". Willard (2014a:Loc.1805-1806, 2185-2186) maintains that there is no formula for growth into Christlikeness, which may account for why his book on the disciplines (2009b) includes only one chapter on specific methodologies while the rest primarily provides the theological framework for the disciplines. This perspective is understandable, though disappointing. A lack of discussion on concrete activities greatly limits the practical applicability of the theory.

Thirdly, an overemphasis on activities at times inadvertently conveys the mistaken notion that spiritual growth can occur primarily by human effort. Particularly, Foster's (2002) treatment of the disciplines, while founded on the idea that the will of the believer is not in itself strong enough to produce change (5-7), at times focuses too much on the human role in the disciplines without an attendant discussion of the primacy of God's role (see particularly his chapters on prayer, study, submission, and celebration). Similar examples of this issue include Crabb (1993), Benner (2009b), and McManus (2015). This issue can be addressed. Christianson (2001) provides a guidepost which ensures the inclusion of God's transformational power. He proposes the activity of continually returning to "Square 1", in which the believer recognizes that God must be involved in our process of growth, and thereby asks or "a fresh release of the Holy Spirit" (Loc.62-65). He further encourages the believer to recognize that the activities of spiritual formation can only build the "forms" into which God will pour His holiness (Loc.385-403). Christianson here provides an understanding of devotional activity which ensures that the believer's focus will continually return to the source of all spiritual transformation.

Fourthly, it is interesting to note the lack of relational activities. Community relationship considerations are certainly addressed and emphasized (e.g. Pagitt 2003; Nouwen 2010:Loc.304-305; Benner 2012:173-190; Palacios 2011:124-128). There are elements of relational activities in the attitudinal category, such as Cachia's attitude of the "listening heart" (2013), Benner's attitude of surrender (2012), and Maldonado's "death to self" (2015). However, there are few discussions of practical activities that fully inculcate the power of a relationship with God in Christ. It seems that one possible way forward on this point is to pair relationally focused activities with proper underlying attitudes which together orient the believer toward intentional communion with God.

Finally, the categories presented in the above review are certainly not the only viable way to divide and describe the activities of spiritual formation. Wilhoit (2008) places activities into four categories: receiving (confession, worship, and prayer), remembering (preaching, evangelism, meditation, spiritual direction, and small groups), responding (community commitment, discernment, and compassion), and relating (Hospitality, reconciliation, observance of the Sabbath, and time management). O'Gorman (2001:362-5) identifies three main categories in the context of Christian education: service (action on behalf of community), reflection (interpretation of God's Word in the present context), and communion (relationships in community). Willard (2009b:158) divides the disciplines into the two categories of abstinence (such as solitude, fasting, and sacrifice), and engagement (such as study, worship, and prayer). Nouwen (1981:69-92) divides the disciplines into two different categories: solitude and community. In solitude the individual connects with God. In community, God functions in our shared lives. The categorization of activities in these various ways seems more helpful to the scholar than the average believer. It is possible that studying formation in such categories aids in the believer's recognition of their use, but it is more likely that the effort of categorization aids in better understanding the nature of the activities and their interrelation.

2.6 Assessment of the Four Axes as a Whole

In looking at these four axes together as a whole, we recognize the scarcity of works which adequately address each aspect in a holistic fashion. For a work to be seen as holistic in this manner, each of the four components must be fully developed and integrated as a self-sufficient paradigm. The one example which seems to fit these requirements is Wright's *After You Believe* (2010). It is a systematic venture which encapsulates the goal of Kingdom character, the theology of an eschatological priesthood, and the methodology of

church liturgy and study, under the guiding concept of Christian virtue. Wright's practical approach to the ethical life, presented as it is in a logical and comprehensive manner, is imminently applicable due to its holistic construction.

A work which suffers greatly from a lack of integration is Packer (2009), primarily because it nearly achieves holism. Packer's paradigm is Christian holiness, which incorporates the goal (pleasing God) with theology (a systematic definition, description, and delineation of the process of holiness from a biblical foundation). However, what is missing is the proper integration of practical activities. Overall, the work is strong. However, the lack of integration results in Packer's paradigm to be more difficult to implement than that of Wright.

Another instructive example of how a lack of holism affects the success of a theory is found in Hayford (2001). He identifies the goal of formation as growth into Christlikeness. This is clearly a solid goal taken directly from the teachings of the Bible. However, he does not make a firm connection between his paradigm of the "Spirit-formed life" with this movement toward Christlikeness (8-9). His theology is somewhat systematic for the first half of the book, and he switches to a biblical theology examination of the Lord's Prayer as the primary underpinning theological approach. There is nothing wrong with utilizing different modes of theological study to underpin a theory, but such a choice causes some degree of disunity in the work. The activities he recommends are essentially the standard disciplines with an emphasis on prayer. There is nothing that an Evangelical with a general acceptance of Pentecostal/Charismatic views would find unsound in Hayford's work. Further, Hayford's writing is encouraging and inspirational. However, the lack the connectivity and cogency afforded by holism among the four axes of formation results in the theory lacking coherent power and applicability.

Another example of how the lack of holism affects activities is found in Peterson (2010). His paradigm is resurrection, and he emphasizes the related Christian activities of baptism and communion (Loc.229). Due to his extensive discussion of the theology of the resurrection of Christ, the activities of baptism and communion carry spiritual weight in the context of his theory. However, he also gives a long list of other activities which he does not connect to the resurrection paradigm (Loc.230-234). By not explicitly discussing how resurrection also affects activities like prayer and confession, such methods lack vision and motivation in the context of his overall theory.

The works of Willard also come very close to achieving holism. Over the course of several books (2009a, 2009b, 2014a, 2014b), Willard lays out a paradigm of formation in which the guiding concept of the divine conspiracy encompasses the goal of transformation into Christlikeness with a Bible-based theology covering God's plan from Eden to the Kingdom. His approach to the activities is primarily methodological, however, investigating the theological detail behind the activities, rather than their practical application. The theological basis of his methodology is strong and unique, stating that the disciple lives out the commitment to Jesus through the disciplines enacted by the human body. However, his conscious choice to avoid practical discussion of activities causes the theory as a whole to languish in the theoretical. Here we see a nearly holistic paradigm which merely lacks one element: practicality in the treatment of formative activities. Willard's work is strong and highly influential. It is theologically sound, groundbreaking, and visionary. Yet this deficiency causes the paradigm to be less impactful than Wright's. It is an instructive case.

These works reveal the need for further work on the formulation of holistic paradigms of spiritual formation. The shining highlight of Wright's paradigm is the intelligibility imparted by its holism. The overall power of Packer, Hayford, Peterson, and Willard is diminished by the deficiency of holism. While this literature review reveals that there is high-quality work being produced in this field, movement must be made toward putting the individual pieces together to form effective, whole theories. Of particular importance is the integration of theology with activities, which seems to be a general weak area in the study of formation. Even Willard himself has identified this deficiency in Christian approaches to formation when he writes that Christianity has yet to put forth "a coherent framework of knowledge and practical direction adequate to personal transformation toward the abundance and obedience emphasized in the New Testament, with a corresponding redemption of ordinary life" (2009:41). Willard makes excellent progress in addressing this issue in his own work. Researchers of spiritual formation must pick up and continue his wholehearted endeavor.

This lack of holism further exacerbates the handling of the believer's relationship with God in the context of spiritual formation. As discussed often in this review, there are a number theories which touch upon the significance of the relationship with God in the pursuit of spiritual growth. However, there are very few, if any, which fully account for the formative power of the believer's relationship with God in goal, paradigm, theological foundations, and activities.

What is lacking in the literature as a whole is the identification and description of concrete relational approaches to the disciplines and activities which are at once Christocentric, scriptural, and holistically integrated into the entire theory—particularly along the axis of activities. Benner (2012) provides specific relational approaches, but they often arise from psychological or other non-biblical approaches and therefore suffer from a weak scriptural foundation. Willard, on the other hand, seems to state that the very relational nature of spiritual formation is the prohibitive factor in identifying the activities which promote Christian transformation. Willard (2014:107) writes, "No formula can be written for spiritual formation, for it is a dynamic relationship and one that is highly individualized". Perhaps this is the best summarizing evidence for the lack of distinctly relational activity in the literature. Foster's theory of the "with-God life" displays holism surrounding its paradigmatic concept, but similarly suffers from a somewhat ambiguous enumeration of its attendant relational activities. In other words, it does not definitively answer what the believer is meant to do to actively pursue transformation in a relationship with God. It is disappointing that three of the foremost voices on Christian formation stop just shy of presenting theories which are holistic, biblical, relational, and clearly enactable—by building upon faulty theo-philosophical foundations, by claiming unfeasibility in regard to integrated activities, or through the ambiguous appeal to rely God's formative activity. Literature on spiritual formation, therefore, currently provides no thorough, satisfactory answers to such questions as: How does one pray relationally? How does relational repentance function transformatively? What is the proper formulation of the theological and anthropological elements which cause formative communication and connection between the believer and God? While these questions may remain unanswered, it is important to recognize the manner in which attitudinal activities discussed in the literature inform the possible enumeration of relational modes of transformation.

It must be emphasized that the discussion of these deficiencies is not meant to criticize particular authors or works, but rather to address areas of lack in the field as a whole. To state that a work is deficient in its holism or in its treatment of relationship is certainly not to be construed as a negative comment on its clarity, scripturality, soundness, purpose, or importance. The primary issue discussed here is the general lack of theories of spiritual formation which wholly account for the believer's lived relationship with God in goal, concept, theology, and methodology. This gap belies the fact that the spiritual growth of the Christian is integrally dependent upon God's activity. For this reason, studies into spiritual formation would benefit greatly from works which attempt to address this principal element of the maturing process.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review has summarized various approaches to Christian spiritual formation, which is the pursuit of godly maturity. The literature on spiritual formation was reviewed in four distinct axes: goal, paradigmatic concept, theo-philosophical foundations, and activities. The goal of formation may seem self-evident (growth), but there is variation in the details of that *telos.* The most common goal is growth into Christlikeness. Paradigms of spiritual formation maintain a high level of diversity, and provide guiding concepts which shape the presentation of the theory as a whole. The theo-philosophical foundations of formation include all conceptual resources which give rise to theory, and include the Bible, philosophy, mysticism, psychology, education, and the social sciences. Activities most often consist of the disciplines, of which there are dozens. These four aspects of spiritual formation are interdependent. Their interrelation has a high degree of influence on the cohesiveness and intelligibility of the theory as a whole.

The authors on this topic are passionate. Much of the biblical and theological work is impactful. Many of these works are practical. The subject is vast and growing. Yet it is clear that there is still great room for further inquiry. However, given the deficiencies identified in the current literature, it will be valuable to investigate whether these gaps are addressed in John Robert Stevens' approach to spiritual formation. This is one of the primary aims of the next three chapters.

Chapter 3

A Synthetic Systematization of

Stevens' Theory of Spiritual Formation

3.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to identify, synthesize, and systematically define John Robert Steven's theory of spiritual formation as it is encapsulated in his concept of a walk with God. This will be done in conjunction with an investigation into Kierkegaard's relevant writings on Christian maturity and the human relationship with God. In this chapter, Steven's ideas will be studied and discussed on their own terms in order to present an accurate representation of his theory of spiritual formation. The critical engagement of this theory will be reserved for chapters 4 and 5.

Because his thoughts on spiritual formation are spread throughout his many works, the summary here is fundamentally a product of synthesis. One of the hallmarks of Stevens' theological perspective is that it is holistic. He presents the scriptural teachings of Christianity as highly interrelated and interconnected. For this reason, a level of synthesis is needed to bring together his writings on Christian spiritual formation in order to thoroughly recognize the fundamental parts of his overall theory. Stevens did not write one definitive work in which he enumerated his view of Christian maturity and/or the process of growth. Therefore, we must first attempt to synthetically identify and systematize the theory as a whole before moving on to assess its parts. Certainly this approach will result in some of what is discussed in this chapter to require further investigation and clarification. This seems acceptable, since one of the aims of this dissertation is to further enumerate and

assess Stevens' views through academic interaction with his texts, Kierkegaard's texts, the biblical text, and with contemporary literature on spiritual formation.

In order to provide a foundation of context and comparison, a presentation of Søren Kierkegaard's relevant views of formation will begin each section. These Kierkegaardian concepts will then reappear throughout the discussion of Stevens' ideas in order to lend greater detail to Stevens' perspective. Stevens' view of Christian spiritual formation echoes the theological project of Søren Kierkegaard in fascinating ways, and the interplay between the two will serve to deepen the examination of Stevens' theory.

It may be important here to address a major problem associated with studying Kierkegaard, which is the reconciliation of his pseudonymous and personal writings (cf. Rae 1997:4-5; Pattison 2003:4-8). The polyvocality of his corpus at times obscures his true personal views. This dissertation aims to only present Kierkegaardian ideas which emerge from a harmonization of his pseudonymous writings with his non-pseudonymous writings. At times, his pseudonyms will be mentioned, if only to give proper context. However, it seems reasonable to attribute harmonized pseudonymous text to Kierkegaard himself, if only for the sake of simplicity in a dissertation which is not primarily concerned with the problems of Kierkegaardian authorship. Further, the obviousness of Kierkegaard's genuine Christian belief revealed in his journals provides an excellent foundational insight into a mind focused on Christ, by which all of his pseudonymous claims can easily be compared (cf. Gouwens 1996:1-25).

Stevens' approach to spiritual formation is summarized by the term "a walk with God." This term appears often in both academic and pastoral theological works. However, perhaps because of its ubiquity, it is often left undefined except in non-theological works (e.g. Luhrmann 2004:521). A number of devotionals use the term in their titles to signify a spiritual Christian lifestyle, yet none of them rigorously—and some, neither cursorily— define the term (Tiegreen and Ministries 2004; Muyskens 2007; Copeland and Copeland 2012; Morse and Kang 2013). When this term is defined, some focus on how it relates to the imitation of God (Siegel 2007:737-38), the believer's conduct and speech (Block 1995:128-29, 133), or how it exemplifies a journey with God as a metaphor for life (Sheriffs 1990:52). Others focus on its first appearance in Scripture—in Genesis 5:22, 24—and the example it provides with regards to Enoch's relationship with God (Cole 1991:293; Parnham 1974:117). Sproul (2011) uses the term as the title of his commentary on Luke, focused on aiding the reader in relating properly to Jesus.

There are a few examples which are instructive regarding the slipperiness of this ubiquitous term. Sheen (2008) describes four types of personalities who do not walk with God. However, Sheen neglects to directly define the term. Packer (2005) uses it as a major component of his subtitle for one of his works on spiritual formation—*Keep in Step with the Spirit*—but does not actually use the exact phrase in his book. He ends up utilizing the similar terminology of "walk by the Spirit", as stated by Paul in Galatians 5:25 (16-17), which intimates that he sees the two phrases as synonymous. However, he never explains how or why. Boa's (2001) work on spiritual formation uses the term "walk with God" eight times without providing a definition. These oddities reveal how often the definition of this phrase is simply assumed. Stevens' literature surrounding this phrase, on the other hand, is both vast and detailed. It is the central concept of his approach to spiritual formation. The synthetic systematization of his writings on a walk with God in this chapter will present a complete picture of his use of this phrase. The major delimitation of this chapter is that it primarily focuses on Stevens' discussion of a walk with God. For this reason, Stevens' teachings on each topic in this chapter are examined only as they pertain to a walk with God.

As stated in the introductory chapter, it seems any approach to spiritual formation can be analyzed along four axes. The first is the goal or *telos* of spiritual formation. The second is the paradigmatic concept (usually, an idea or image) which encapsulates the theory in an overarching concept. The third major aspect includes the theological and philosophical underpinnings of the theory. The fourth axis defines the activities of formation. Each of these aspects must be holistically integrated for any paradigm to function properly. The synthesized enumeration of Stevens' spiritual formation theory here is structured according to these four axes.

The propositional statement which summarizes John Robert Stevens' approach to spiritual formation is this: *Individual progress in Christian maturity results from a consistent and active walk with God which emphasizes a transformative relationship with God in Christ, led by Him for His purposes.* This propositional statement will be revisited in the conclusion of this chapter and compared to the propositional statements produced for each aspect: goal, paradigmatic concept, theo-philosophical foundations, and activities.[1]

As The New American Standard Bible (NASB) was Stevens' translation of choice throughout most of his writings, all Scriptures throughout this dissertation are presented in

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[1] This dissertation does not aim to perfectly summarize or synthesize Kierkegaardian spiritual formation, therefore summary propositions for his theory will not be given.

this translation unless otherwise noted.

3.2 The Goal: Growth For God's Purposes

3.2.1 Kierkegaard's Telos

There are a number of goals identified by Kierkegaard in the pursuit of Christian growth. Kierkegaard states pseudonymously (as Climacus) that living ethically is the "highest task" of the human being (1989a:129). Climacus also states that the goal of Christianity is eternal happiness (1989a:347). Additionally, Kierkegaard strongly believes in a God-given, personalized *telos* for each human being (2005:93). These three seemingly disparate goals are more completely expressed in Kierkegaard's concept of "the single individual", which seems to be a primary definitional term for his goal for Christian spiritual formation.

For Kierkegaard, the concept of the single individual is the embodiment of the Christian faith, as well as the conceptual *telos* of his own life's work. Kierkegaard clearly held this as his personal *telos*, for his desired epitaph was "that single individual" (Hong and Hong 1990:xvii). Walsh (2009:1-2) states that for Kierkegaard, the formation into the single individual is the goal of each human's life, and is the ultimate shared goal of humanity as a whole. All of Kierkegaard's "upbuilding discourses"—a substantial portion of his work—are addressed to the single individual (Hong and Hong 1990:xvii).

For Kierkegaard, the notion of the single individual stood for much more than the plain meaning of the term. Moore (2007:xxvi-xxvii) summarizes what Kierkegaard means by its use:

> First, it means to stand alone before God and come to an awareness of God. The sooner I realize that I stand naked before God, the more authentic I will become. Second, an individual is a unified, integrated self ordered by a single purpose. "Purity of heart," Kierkegaard explains, "is to will one thing." Third, an individual is a responsible self, who in freedom gives account for one's decisions or failures to decide. One's true self is constituted by the decisions one makes. Lastly, to be an individual is to exist as a unique self that possesses a dignity above the race, the crowd.

The Kierkegaardian notion of the single individual is multidimensional and encompasses the interrelated concerns of the authenticity, purpose, responsibility, uniqueness, and the

God relation. His framing of the *telos* is simple in terminology, but complex in nuance. It is important to note, however, that the pursuit of being a single individual is not focused on self-improvement. Self-improvement can easily be motivated by pride, yet Kierkegaard (1975b:432) maintains that the transformation of the Christian individual is characterized by the diminution of selfishness.

For Kierkegaard, the single individual finds his divine individuality in a relationship with God. Each aspect of the single individual as *telos* of Kierkegaardian spiritual formation is subsumed under the overarching concern of the God relation. The human cannot be his true self without standing in relation to God (Hannay 2003:72-73). Conjunctively, the divine cannot be understood outside of the context of the individual. In the Kierkegaardian conception of the single individual, the human's relationship with God cannot be divorced from the individual's spiritual formation, and vice-versa. The existential problems of the human experience are solved in the individual relating himself to God, which orients his life afresh and causes change in the breaking of temporal limitations. The *telos* of the finite human is finding infinitude in God. However, in Kierkegaard's view, the God relation does not cause the human being to be dissipated into the divine "through some fading away or in some divine ocean" (Kierkegaard 1975b:36). Rather, the union with God is accompanied by spiritual formation by which the individual experiences "the personality clarified and intensified to the utmost" (Kierkegaard 1975b:36). Central to Kierkegaard's concept of the God relation is its individualistic nature. For this reason, the terminology of the single individual encapsulates the unification of God and man, which results in the spiritual formation of the human being.

The concept of the single individual also entails the discovery and realization of the unique personal God-given purpose, which emerges from the God relation. Kierkegaard writes, "But this I do believe…that at every person's birth there comes into existence an eternal purpose for that person, for that person in particular. Faithfulness to oneself with respect to this is the highest thing a person can do" (Kierkegaard 2005:93). This eternal purpose is divine in origin, but it must be actively pursued by the individual. One goal of spiritual transformation toward single individuality is the attainment and embodiment of this individualized purpose. It seems that this view motivated much of Kierkegaard's existential writings on the search for self-identity, as well as his own personal seeking of God (Golomb 2012:33-35).

However, at this point "the single individual" ceases to be a comprehensive term for

Kierkegaard's *telos* of formation. While it contains within it the necessity of the believer's relationship with God, it does not seem to fully incorporate the importance of Christ, who is a major teleological vector of Kierkegaard's theory. In Kierkegaard's view, the goal of finding and attaining an individual *telos* is insufficient on its own. In order to reveal the overarching goal of growth, he provides the analogy of a child learning to walk. In helping the child take his first steps, the parents do not walk alongside the child, but rather present themselves as the goal of the task, standing away from the child with outstretched arms. He completes the analogy in this way: "So it is with Christ. Christ gets in front of us, does not walk beside his disciples, but is himself the goal toward which we are to strive while we are learning to walk alone. There he stands at the goal, turning toward us and stretching out his arms—just as a mother does" (Kierkegaard 1970:315). Here, the growth of the child, learning to perform this common, yet crucial, human action, is motivated by relationship. In this analogy, Christ is the goal for growth, and this goal is relationally motivated. As the believer (the child) learns to walk spiritually, this maturity is purposed toward coming closer to Christ. This analogy captures the fundamental Christotelic relationality of Kierkegaard's view of spiritual transformation.

Kierkegaard's Christotelic goal entails not only a relationship with Christ, but also a transformation into his nature (Kierkegaard 1970:322–323; 1991:237-250). For Kierkegaard the practice of Christianity was defined by being like Christ (1970:317). Kierkegaard (1967:123) writes, "Christ's entire life must supply the norm for the Christian and for the life of the whole Church. One has to take every particular aspect of Christ's life straight from his baptism to his resurrection and show correspondence. What else does it mean to be a Christian?" Kierkegaard elevates the imitation of Christ as of higher importance than faith itself in the life of the Christian believer (1970:335). He cites John 14:6, stating that Christ as truth and life presents the person of Jesus as the goal of the Christian faith. Kierkegaard characterizes the *telos* of Christian growth as going far beyond a personal goal; rather, it is a demand that all Christians live up to their name and display the nature of Christ. Barrett (2015a:151-152) suggests that Kierkegaard was influenced by the Pietistic tradition in this regard, in that he emphasizes regeneration and sanctification as a process of a new life in Christ. Kierkegaard's Christotelicity is a hallmark of his view of the individual's growth in the Christian context.

Kierkegaard also recognized the eschatological significance of growing into Christlikeness. Kierkegaard (2005:217) here provides a written prayer to Christ which emphasizes the attitude of following Jesus in order to resemble him, and connects it to his final judgment:

You who yourself once walked the earth and left footprints that we should follow; you who from heaven still look down on every pilgrim, strengthen the weary, hearten the disheartened, lead back the straying, give solace to the struggling. You who will come again at the end of time to judge each one individually, whether he followed you—our God and our Savior—let your example stand very clearly before the eyes of the soul in order to dispel the mists, strengthen in order to keep this alone unaltered before our eyes so that by resembling you and by following you we may be able to stand rightly before you in judgment—oh, but may we also be brought by you to the eternal happiness with you in the life to come.

Kierkegaard emphasizes the preparation for end time judgment as an important goal in becoming like Christ. Kierkegaard sees judgment day, in which each person stands alone before God, as an integral factor in his statement that "Each one has the task of becoming an individual" (Kierkegaard 1956:185). The spiritual formation of the believer into the complete individual desired by God is motivated by the eschatological accounting by the God who knows His purpose for each person. Kierkegaard's *telos* of spiritual formation, therefore, takes into account the eschatological significance of maturity into Christlikeness as it functions in the eternal God relation.

3.2.2 Stevens' Goal

John Robert Stevens' proposed goal of spiritual formation is a holistic encapsulation of increasing individual Christlikeness for the furthering of God's Kingdom—a process centered on a relationship with God toward the realization of personal destiny and community maturity. Stevens uses the terminology of "God's sovereign law of purpose"—borrowed from Romans 8:28-30—to encapsulate the goal of a walk with God (Stevens 1982:655). This concept brings together the major aspects of Stevens' goals of spiritual formation: individual destiny (called according to his purpose), the priority of relationship (those who love God), transformed into Christlikeness (conformed to the image of his Son), and community maturity (many brethren). However, it is all centered on the furthering of God's will, leading to the establishment of his Kingdom (his purposes). This section will review Stevens' treatment of these five interrelated concepts—Christlikeness, the establishment of the Kingdom, a relationship with God, individual purpose, and community maturity—as the summarizing *teloi* of a spiritually formative walk with God.

Summary Proposition: *The goal of spiritual formation is Christlikeness on both an individual and corporate level toward the establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth.*

Scriptures: Prov 29:18; Hos 6:3a; Mt 5:6, 5:15-16, 6:33, 22:36-40, 25:14-30; Lk 17:21, 19:17; Jn 4:23; Acts 13:36; Rom 8:14-16, 8:23-27, 8:29, 8:32, 12:2; 1 Cor 3:9-13; 2 Cor; 1:20 Gal 2:20, 4:1-3; Eph 2:22, 4:15, 5:8, 5:27; 2 Th 1:10; Rev 19:8, 21:2.

3.2.2.1 Christlikeness

For Stevens, a major goal of spiritual formation is Christlikeness—achieving the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ. While Stevens does not use the term "Christlikeness" as an exact term in his writings, it is an appropriate term with which to capture a major aspect of his *telos* of a walk with God. Stevens (1974b:35) writes, "This was the whole purpose, that whom He would foreknow He would also predestinate to be conformed to the image of His son (Romans 8:29). We are going to be exactly like Jesus Christ—in nature, in life, in everything." Stevens states that the Church should focus on pursuing the goal of seeing the character of Christ, "His very nature and beauty and wonder", emerging in each believer (1986:2-3). Stevens relies on the phrasing of Ephesians 4:15 as a foundational explanation of the *telos* of Christian maturity: "to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ" (1975c:122-125). This Christotelic view represents the most foundational goal in Stevens' concept of a walk with God: it is meant to bring each believer into conformity with Christ as the paragon of spiritual maturity.

Using Matthew 5:15 as another foundational scripture, Stevens explains that God wishes for His nature to be expressed by the believer. The good works of those who are mature do not glorify the human being, but rather glorify God because they are directly imparted from His nature (2007c:862-863). Stevens states that growth in God is not about having greater wisdom, but rather to be a reflection of His glory (1981b:84-85). Stevens (1977c:104-105) writes: "The fact that the Lord makes provision for you means that He wants to share Himself with you. He does not merely want to dole out blessings; He wants to convey Himself. He wants to transmit to you His own attributes and His own nature, because He wants fellowship with you." The source of transformation is the Lord himself, who wishes to have fellowship with his people. The goal of formation into Christlikeness is therefore representative of the fundamentally relational process of Stevens' approach to

spiritual formation.

On this point, Kierkegaard and Stevens seem to be in close agreement, for each place Christ in central importance as a teleological end of spiritual maturity. For both, Christ is the ultimate ontological model for all Christian believers. It is interesting to note, however, that Kierkegaard's approach to his concept of the single individual did not necessarily include Christ. Within the context of Kierkegaard's idea of the single individual, Christ functions primarily as the means by which formation is accomplished. However, a greater scope of his works includes the general Christian goal of the imitation of Christ. Stevens takes a more integrated view of what Christlikeness entails, casting it as relational, ontological, teleological, and paradigmatic aspects of spiritual formation.

Both Stevens and Kierkegaard view relationship as a fundamental driving force of the pursuit of Christlikeness, although they do so in differing ways. It seems Kierkegaard sees Christ primarily as the prototypical means of spiritual maturation. The emergence of the divine in human form in temporal history—that is, the incarnation of Christ—establishes the potentiality for spiritual maturity toward closeness with God for every human being. Stevens, however, sees this issue in what may be described as a relational manner. Jesus is ontologically enabled to maintain a close relationship with the Father as his Son, and the Father desires similar communion with us. Therefore, humans must become like Christ not only in cohesive divine/human status, but also in the receipt of the spiritual qualities of Jesus which allow for a duplication of the Father/Son relationship in all Christian believers. This process is further enabled by the Holy Spirit, who brings us into adoption as sons (Rom 8:15-16; Stevens 1978c:31-32, 49).

3.2.2.2 Kingdom

For Stevens, the formative process of taking on the nature of Christ cannot be properly understood aside from the eschatological goal of the Kingdom. This occurs in a number of ways. Firstly, the pursuit of God's Kingdom is a motivation for pursuing spiritual formation. In other words, the attitude of seeking first the Kingdom spurs on the believer's drive to be matured. Secondly, the Kingdom is representative of an internal end result of proper spiritual formation—that is, the godliness of the Kingdom is established in the hearts of God's people. Thirdly, the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth must be undertaken by mature believers, and therefore stands as the grand eschatological concern of Christian spiritual formation.

Stevens sees the attitude of seeking the Kingdom as the motivating goal necessary in producing maturity in a walk with God (Stevens 2007a:501). The pursuit of God's righteousness—attained in the process of spiritual formation—is motivated by the believer seeking first the Kingdom (Mt 6:33; cf. Mt 5:6; Stevens 1987:649). Christ's admonition to seek first the Kingdom is a direct teleological command which spurs the believer toward the internalization of God's righteousness.

Stevens also sees the *telos* of the Kingdom as an internal process by which the Kingdom is manifest in the nature of the believer. In other words, achieving the prerequisite ontological state for citizens of God's Kingdom is an end goal of spiritual formation. Stevens (2007c:695) writes: "the Kingdom is not a discipline; the Kingdom is a creation of God. He's creating us." Since the Kingdom of God is made up of his people, the spiritual formation of Christians is an act of creating the Kingdom. Stevens refers to Luke 17:21 in emphasizing that the Kingdom is meant to be grown within the believer (1978a:58-60). Stevens sees Romans 12:2 as detailing the related movement of the believer's heart away from the kingdoms of earth into the Kingdom of heaven (1987:568-569). In Stevens' view, the believer's spiritual formation is an internal manifestation of God's Kingdom which then leads to the establishment of God's Kingdom in its earthly form.

The external establishment of the Kingdom can only be accomplished by mature believers. Each believer is meant to be an instrument in God's hands, "totally dedicated and bringing forth the fruit to the Kingdom" (1987:892-893). Luke 19:17 reveals the personal nature of the eschatological significance of spiritual formation, for the one who grows his talents is given ten cities to oversee. Stevens sees this as a parable which shows God's eschatological response to those who pursue the growth of their individual gifts (1987:49). Stevens (1982a:70-71) states, "In the Kingdom, it's not just what the Lord can do for us that counts, but it's what He enables us (after He's worked us over) to go out and do in His name." God's servants must be adequately capable to enact God's will in order to effectively further God's Kingdom. The mature Church is meant to be "an instrument that will be the vanguard to bring in the Kingdom" (1986:420). In the eschatological time period, which Stevens felt with immediacy, the necessary work of God to establish the Kingdom can only be undertaken by mature sons. Maturity is required to allow the individual—and the Church—to function properly in God's leading to establish the Kingdom (1978a:58-60; 2007a:501-502).

Similar to Kierkegaard, Stevens sees the maturity of the believer as being necessary for

meeting Christ upon His eschatological return. Stevens emphasizes the motivation of love in the anticipation of Christ's return. In this context, the spiritual maturity of the believer is similar to the bride adorning herself for the bridegroom in Revelation 21:2 (Stevens 2007a:246-247). The difficult process of spiritual formation is driven by the love motivation of being ready to meet Christ without blemish upon his return. In addition, Stevens views the Kingdom as an eschatological *telos* of immediacy and relationality (2007a:246-247). While Kierkegaard cites the future Day of Judgment as a necessary motivating factor for the human coming into a spiritually formative relationship with God, such a view places the eschatological *telos* of becoming far into the future. In other words, the fear of standing in judgment pushes the believer to pursue becoming a single individual before God. Stevens, on the other hand, advocates for the eschatological *telos* of the Kingdom as an ongoing present concern of the believer's ontology. The Kingdom goal is an everyday motivator for the believer's relational pursuit of maturity because believers are meant to see themselves in pivotal roles in the establishment of God's Kingdom. While Kierkegaard did discuss the Kingdom of God as an important Christian principle, he did not seem to view it as a teleological concern for Christian growth and maturity. Therefore, the usefulness of a Kierkegaardian foil on this point is rather limited. However, the eschatological framework in which Stevens describes the goals of spiritual formation is certainly on a more biblical footing.

3.2.2.3 Relationship with God

Stevens believes that a relationship with God is itself a goal of spiritual formation. Not only does he characterize the relationship with God as a *telos*, but he also holds it as the primary means by which growth occurs for the Christian. Stevens sees the two greatest commandments as the most foundational scriptural recognition of the goal of walking with God (Mt 22:36-40). He writes, "To live for something else besides this passing scene, to live wholly for the Lord with all our heart and soul, with all our mind and strength, serving the Lord with everything that is within us—let this be our goal" (Stevens 1976h:42-43). The relational goal is further detailed in the admonition of Hosea 6:3a, which must be a primary concern for the believer who pursues spiritual maturity. Stevens writes, "Unless we come to know Him, and we see Him with the eyes of our spirits, and He is very real to us, we are missing a walk with Him" (1976d:53). Stevens emphasizes that believers should not focus on what they need, or what problems they have, but instead should keep their focus on God (cf. Jn 4:23). If the believer matures without coming to truly know God, one of the

greatest purposes of Christian maturity has been missed.

Stevens also uses the term "sonship" in reference to a mature relationship to the heavenly Father. In his use of this scriptural concept, Stevens brings together Christlikeness with a relationship with God (1977c:105-106; 1981a:142; 1989:501-503; cf. Gal 4:1-3; cf. Rom 8:14, 23-27). Christlikeness therefore includes the mirroring of Christ's own relationship with the Father as His Son. This filial relational status indicates a mature focus on pursuing God's will, with the end goal of the establishment of God's Kingdom (Stevens 2007a:84).

The goal of a relationship with God also encompasses the individual's desire to be perfected for God's sake. In other words, the *telos* of the relationship situates God's interests as superseding the believer's in spiritual formation. The importance of the believer's relationship with God in spiritual formation is highlighted by Stevens' recognition that a self-motivated pursuit of maturity is an attempt to glorify the believer in the flesh. However, true transformation must glorify God (2007b:862-863). Stevens (1976d:55) writes poetically of this aspect in the context of the Church being the bride of Christ:

> Why are we trying to be sanctified and purified? It is for a purpose. When a girl is getting ready for a date, she takes a bath, puts on her best clothes, and fixes her hair. She wants to smell as sweet as a rose. Why? She is meeting the fellow who she hopes will ask her a certain very important question. We are looking for the Lord like the bride who has made herself ready. To her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness of the saints (Revelation 19:8). The fine linen is not just to show off. We want to be righteous because we want to please Him. We want to stand before Him; therefore, we purify ourselves. With all our hearts we want to be the bride of Jesus Christ.

By making the relationship with God a goal in itself, Stevens enumerates a motivational purpose which keeps the believer focused on God in the process of change. By situating the relationship as a *telos* in itself, the entire enterprise of spiritual formation becomes inextricably linked with the believer's relational pursuit of the Father and thereby routinely minimizes ineffectual self-centered human efforts to change. Stevens writes, "The only way we will be what God wants us to be is that we realize that the walk takes us into His presence" (1976d:54). The ontological concerns of individual spiritual formation—that is, being what God wants us to be—must be guided first by the goal of living in God's

presence. The walk with God moves the believer toward relational closeness with God. By making the relationship with God the goal, Stevens ensures that the believer must actively pursue an intimacy with God in order to grow (1976d:56).

The Kierkegaardian analogy of the child learning to walk toward the parents as his goal sheds voluminous light on Stevens' foundational goal. Christ is not just the paragonal *telos*, but He also represents the relational motivation for spiritual growth. Stevens' idea that the relationship with God is a goal in itself requires the maintenance of the relational motivation throughout the spiritual formation process. Further, for both Kierkegaard and Stevens, this relationship has as its end a complete union between man and God, with the Christian (the analogous child) firmly in the arms of the divine. The ultimate union of God and man—which is Christlikeness itself—emerges from the teleological focus of the God relationship.

Relatedly, Kierkegaard casts both God and Christ as the "highest good," and states that transformation occurs by the process in which "the existing person changes everything in his existence in relation to that highest good" (1989a:389). However, it seems Stevens would disagree that the "existing person" is able to change themselves. This notion underlies his emphasis on the believer's complete reliance on God, and the prioritization of relationship. Here we see an important distinction between Kierkegaard and Stevens in that Stevens allocates no direct transformative power to the believer in the process of spiritual formation.

3.2.2.4 Individual Purpose

For Stevens, the discovery and pursuit of a God-given individual purpose is also a *telos* of spiritual formation. This purpose is given by God and is expressed in doing his will (1976a:175). God's impartation to each believer is personally unique. Stevens (1989:491) writes, "You must realize that the creativity of God will be expressed through you in the unique way that Christ wants to manifest His attributes and abilities." Christlikeness, in Stevens' view, does not result in identical outcomes for each believer. There is no stereotype of Christian maturity, at least as it is judged on a personal, individual level (Stevens 1989:491). A supportive parable in this regard is that of the talents, in Matthew 25:14-30. Those who have been given particular gifts by God are responsible to use them to further his divine interests. Stevens explains that such gifts may bring about God's judgment upon those to whom he has given if they are not utilized for His purposes.

Therefore, the pursuit of individualized spiritual formation may be destructive without an attendant teleological recognition of God's will (Stevens 1982a:65-67). Stevens points to Proverbs 29:18 as confirmation that the process of growth must include maintaining and pursuing a God-given vision of his will (2007a:814-815). Stevens (1974d:29) explains that the God-given, personal *telos* is not a selfish goal to have in a walk with God:

> What is a walk with God? Does your definition still have rather selfish aspects to it? Or do you want to walk with God so you can actually fulfill the destiny He has brought you forth to fulfill? To be the person He has called you to be? To be the instrument in His hand that He has called you to be? Are you willing to be a disciple who is willing to see the loss of all things, as Paul said, "I count them but dung that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8)?

Stevens here contrasts selfish motivations with the determination to achieve personal destiny. The defining element which clarifies this contrast is the identification of individualized *telos* with God's will. For Stevens, the two are indivisibly one. Personal destiny can only be discussed in reference to the realization of God's plan on an individual level.

Stevens' treatment of individual destiny therefore cannot be viewed outside of the will of God (1981b:83-84). A walk with God will be divinely led in order to produce specialized maturity toward the accomplishment of God's purposes. Each person has "a place to fill" according to God's calling. Stevens writes that this "goes beyond any sense of personal accomplishment or meaning to your existence", for the believer will reflect God's glory as but one member of the Body of Christ (1981b:84-85). Stevens further emphasizes the focus on God's will in spiritual formation in this way: "That is our real goal—doing the will of the Lord out of a pure heart" (1982a:67). Transformation that leads to a purity of heart to do the will of the Lord is achieved by walking with God. Acts 13:36 also points to formation for God's purposes. Stevens describes what David went through, first being anointed as a child, living as an outcast, and finally assuming the throne. David went through his own formative journey, but he did it in order to serve the purpose of God in his generation an individual level (Stevens 1982a:676-678). Stevens writes, "If we want to see His purpose established in the earth and His Kingdom come forth, we must have faith that what He is doing in our lives is bringing us into that fulfillment. Everything that is happening to us, God is using to bring about the fulfillment of His purpose" (1976a:180). In this way, individual purpose is discovered and embodied with a Kingdom motivation.

In his trademark holistic fashion, Stevens also sees the individualized *telos* of spiritual formation also functioning as a means of growth. First Corinthians 3:9-13 points to the formative power of being God's fellow workers. Those who act toward establishing God's will automatically find themselves maturing. Stevens writes, "The day of the Lord is going to declare everything that we have done in Jesus Christ, whether or not we have built for Him to have His building stand as a living temple, made up of living stones for a habitation of God by the Spirit so that He can live in it and walk in it and be glorified in it (Ephesians 2:22). That is the eternal goal. Jesus will test what we have done" (Stevens 1987:50-51). As believers attempt to be obedient to God, their work will be tested. This experience will be formative—whether in burning away or in emphasizing what remains after the trying fire of God. However, the shape of each person's life after it is tested is dependent upon God. Further, Stevens (1974b:115) states that those who walk in their destiny are opposed by Satan because they pose a threat to him in that they are walking in the will of God.

Kierkegaard's concept of the single individual is an instructive foil to Stevens' teachings on individual purpose. The individuality espoused by Kierkegaard is one which emphasizes authenticity, purpose, responsibility, and uniqueness. Kierkegaard rallies behind the individual primarily because he characterized Church-going Christianity of his time as "the crowd"—a morass of dull uniformity within which believers were able to escape their personal responsibility before God. The *telos* of the single individual, then, requires a responsibility of each Christian to be personally obedient to God. This is why Kierkegaard casts the process of becoming a single individual as an ethical activity. McCabe (2017:55) explains that for Kierkegaard, "accepting oneself, being the person that God created one to be, is an ethical task of the highest order." Spiritual formation, for Kierkegaard, leads to a supremely ethical being.

While the shapes of Kierkegaard's single individual and Stevens' *telos* of individual destiny are rather similar, these goals seem to function differently in their respective views of Christian spiritual formation. Firstly, Stevens does not have behavioral ethics in view in championing the *telos* of personal destiny, but rather creative obedience to God to further His will. The relationality of Stevens' individualized spiritual formation seems to rescue the importance of individual destiny from characterizations of selfishness, for it is a product of accepting God's own pronouncements of His creation's personal *teloi.* For Kierkegaard, the believer is meant to live an ethical life—which can only be realized by becoming a single individual before God. Stevens does not seem to emphasize ethical behavior aside from what is assumed in his discussion of Christlikeness or the Kingdom. Stevens frames

individuality within the context of Christlikeness and the pursuit of the Kingdom because he wishes to keep the process of maturity oriented toward God and His will. Ethical behavior will follow naturally from these pursuits. Further, Stevens states that personal destiny is not necessarily associated with the discovery of personal meaning. Only the relationship with God provides meaning. This is different than Kierkegaard's existential project in which the individual's discovery of personal meaning is a weighty concern. Stevens' theory is wholly oriented toward the preeminence of God's will. This is why the pursuit of a God-given destiny cannot be characterized as selfish, for it is not motivated by the desire for self-satisfaction, but rather the accomplishment of God's will.

Finally, while Stevens certainly had strong things to say about "the crowd" of his day, the recommendation of pursuing individual purpose in a walk with God was not intended as an antidote to the oppressive dullness of the Christian community, but rather to serve as a bedrock of proper relationships in the Body of Christ. For Stevens, individual purpose cannot be divorced from corporate Christian maturity. Further, Stevens harmonizes individual destiny with the *telos* of Christlikeness through the metaphor of the Body of Christ. All believers are members of the larger Body of Christ, which displays the unified diversity of its individual members.

3.2.2.5 Community Maturity

Stevens' holds that the believer's maturity must not only be understood individually. The universal purpose in the Body of Christ must also be recognized as a *telos* of spiritual formation. Stevens writes, "There is a vision and a goal that God has for you to fulfill—both as an individual and as part of the Body of Christ" (2007a:814-815). As much as there is an individual destiny and goal for believers to attain, Stevens states that this exists concurrently with the spiritual truth that all believers are unified under one Lord, one faith, one hope, one baptism, and a unity of the Spirit (Eph 4:5). He writes, "Individual ministries must not be the goal, but the fullness of Christ should be the goal inherent in every ministry of the Kingdom" (1979:108). The fullness of Christ must be achieved individually and collectively.

Stevens' sees Matthew 5:16 as relevant to this principle, for God's nature is meant to be revealed in his people, which thereby brings glory to him (2007b:862-863). Further, in maturity, the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ emerges in the Church, which is His many-membered Body (1978a:57-58). Ephesians 5:27 emphasizes the link between spiritual

formation and the Church as the bride of Christ, for she is to have no spot or wrinkle (Stevens 1987:46). This points to simultaneous relational and eschatological goals for the growth and perfection of the individual, and of the Church as a whole. Stevens (1986:2-3) alludes to 1 Corinthians 13 as he writes: "If I have the gift of faith so that I can move mountains, but I do not have love, I am nothing. God's ultimate concern is not the miraculous ministry; His ultimate concern is that the manifestation of Christ and His love comes forth to the whole world." Particularly, in Stevens' mind, the manifestation of that love in Christ occurs in and through the Church. In many ways, for Stevens, the goal and purpose of spiritual formation are married in the person of Christ, expressed individually in Christlikeness, and then displayed in his universal Church body.

Kierkegaard's concept of "the crowd" as the countervailing force against the single individual perhaps clarifies Stevens' position concerning the balance of individual and corporate maturity. It seems Kierkegaard primarily viewed "the crowd" as a nullifying agent against the godly call of Christian maturity. Kierkegaard requires the believer to have a naked honesty of authenticity before God as an ongoing element of becoming a single individual. However, such authenticity is difficult to achieve and maintain when the temporal activities of society present themselves as a much more comfortable pursuit. Moore (2007:xix) writes, "Kierkegaard stands against every form of thinking that bypasses the individual or enables the individual to escape his responsibility before God." While the soothing anonymity of the crowd may lull the believer into complacency in Kierkegaard's view, Stevens is not willing to forgo the biblical imperative of a corporate, ecclesial expression of Christianity. Further, Stevens would caution against demoting the Body of Christ in favor of the primacy of the individual. Stevens' emphasis on the individual is a product of his recognition that the corporate expressions of Christianity are built upon the maturity of the component believers. A mature Church can never emerge from immature individuals. Kierkegaard's crowd may suppress the spiritual formation of a believer, but Stevens' community of those who walk with God will complete the purposes of the individual's maturity in Christ.

3.2.3 Summary and Reflection

The central *telos* of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation is Christlikeness. Christ is the center of Christianity, and therefore the ontological status of Christlikeness must be the destination of a walk with God. Christlikeness represents a holistic *telos* which includes four other related goals: the establishment of God's Kingdom, a relationship with God, the

empowering of the believer's God-given individual purpose, and the maturity of the Christian community as a whole. The relationship between these foremost goals could be framed in this way:

The state of Christlikeness is both an expression of the Kingdom of God on earth, for Christ's ontological state is one of perfect dedication to God's word, and therefore an expression of the Kingdom. Further, those who are internally conformed to Christlikeness are inherently concerned with following the pattern of Jesus in the effort to establish God's Kingdom. Christlikeness emerges from and leads to a Father/Son relationship which was established by Jesus in human form.[2] The relationship with God is both the means and the end of the process of spiritual transformation. Greater maturity leads to a deeper relationship with God. The individual has a God-given destiny in which he is expected to walk out God's will toward his purpose. The conception of personal calling cannot be divorced from Christlikeness and the pursuit of the Kingdom. Christlikeness does not result in universal conformity, but rather displays diversity in the members of the Body of Christ. Correlatively, Christlikeness functions on both an individual and communal level. The Church is meant to be a collective expression of Christ on the earth. This is dependent upon each individual maintaining an individual walk with God.

Kierkegaard and Stevens differ in important ways in how to account for the goal of spiritual formation. The concept of the single individual, while being a central *telos* in Kierkegaard's treatment of spiritual formation, does not immediately contain the concept of Christlikeness. Certainly, Kierkegaard maintains that becoming like Christ is a Christian goal, but it is curiously absent from the term which defines his ontological goal. For Stevens, however, becoming like Christ is the central defining *telos* of his theory. Further, Kierkegaard does maintain eschatological concerns in his treatment of maturity, but it is focused primarily on how the individual is received by Christ upon his return. Stevens, on the other hand, views the establishment of the Kingdom as an inextricable goal of Christian spiritual formation. This is due to Stevens' prioritization of God and His will throughout his theory. Spiritual formation cannot be pursued as its own end, for maturity is given by God in order to empower His people to accomplish His purposes. The two also frame the God relation in different manners. For Kierkegaard, the God relation is the means by which the human becomes and maintains his status as a single individual. For Stevens, the

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[2]Certainly, this relationship includes both sons and daughters, as all are the object of Christ's sacrifice. However, Stevens attempted to stick with biblical terminology and phraseology as much as possible, so this relational dynamic is best described in masculine gender as "Father/Son" even though it encompasses both male and female believers.

relationship with God is presented as a goal in itself. Those who are more mature are able to find a deeper connection with God, just as Christ had in His earthly ministry. The spiritual formation theories of Kierkegaard and Stevens are distinctively relational. However, Stevens seems more concerned with framing the process of Christian maturity as a path toward deeper communion with the Father in order to accomplish His will, rather than the achievement of self-fulfillment.

3.3 The Paradigmatic Concept of Spiritual Formation: A Walk with God

3.3.1 Kierkegaard's Paradigmatic Concept

The disparate variation of Kierkegaard's writings yields a number of ideas which could serve as a paradigmatic concept of his view of Christian spiritual formation. Such concepts include authenticity, passion, the single individual, the God relation, willing one thing, and the stages on life's way. These are certainly all interrelated, but not one of them seems to be all-encompassing of Kierkegaard's various concerns regarding spiritual formation. This is unsurprising, as the scope of Kierkegaard's existential project is extensive and multidimensional. Perhaps among these, the one which functions the most as a paradigmatic concept is the stages on life's way, primarily because it presents a unified model of development within which most other aspects of Kierkegaard's concepts fit.

In his writings on the stages on life's way—beginning with *Either/Or* (1843) and continued with *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846)—Kierkegaard identified three "spheres" of human existence: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. The aesthetic sphere is characterized by a focus on the temporal aspects of human life. Those who live primarily in this sphere are unaware of self and therefore inauthentic. The ethical sphere is concerned primarily with correct action. This is a sphere of futility for mankind, for humans cannot live an adequately ethical life in a sinful state. The religious sphere has the potential of the God relation, and therefore is the sphere in which the individual finds spiritual maturity and authenticity (Moore 2007:xx). While the progression through these three spheres is indicative of spiritual growth, only the religious sphere allows for transformation in God.

This paradigm presents progressive categories of living, although the three spheres are not necessarily meant to be seen as discrete modes of existence. Rather, the ethical contains the aesthetic, and the religious contains both. As Golomb (1992:73) states: "On Kierkegaard's image of man, the potential self consists of an aggregate of drives and

desires for different sphere of life, including the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious." While the human may function in all three of these spheres at once, the individual must continually choose the course of action which corresponds to the religious sphere. This conception of the spheres reveals Kierkegaard's focus on human free will. There are many competing desires which function in these three spheres. However, the human must consistently choose to live according to the principles of the religious.

Those in the aesthetic sphere focus on temporal goals. The aesthete finds pleasure in external objects. This is not a formative pursuit, but rather is characterized by the constant effort to arrange circumstances in a way that perpetuates the inauthentic life (Golomb 1992:76). Those in the aesthetic sphere cannot mature. Rather, they attempt to make external changes in order to address the issues of life. This sphere is therefore one of unawareness of self or God.

Those in the ethical sphere focus on reason, duty, and morality. However, these are pursued as abstract concepts, rather than internal truths. Kierkegaard thinks that ethics, in-and-of-itself, is an impersonal approach to life due to its abstractions and universalizations. In this sphere, self-expression is forgone in favor of conformity to ideals. The individual is therefore subsumed in the generalities of morality (Golomb 1992:76). Kierkegaard (1983:54) writes, "The ethical as such is the universal, and as the universal it applies to everyone, which from another angle means that it applies at all times. It rests immanent in itself, has nothing outside itself that is its τελοζ but is itself the τελοζ for everything outside itself, and when the ethical has absorbed this into itself, it goes not further." When held as the highest goal of life, ethics diminishes the role of God in human life. Because of this, the ethical sphere requires the human to attempt self-formation and ends up withstanding the authentic formation of the single individual. Evans (2004:49; cf. Kierkegaard 1983:68) summarizes Kierkegaard's view: "The ethical life is described as a process in which an individual seeks a relation to God through a commitment to becoming the self God calls one to be. However, within the ethical sphere the demands of God are seen as general rules and not individual callings, and so the relation to God is not individual and personal in character." While those in the ethical sphere may be aware of God and self, their spiritual formation is stunted by the limitations of attempting conformity to the universal, rather than the attainment of individual transformation. In the worldview of those who make ethics their supreme concern, God is not a required force of change. Rather, ethical behavior is seen as the mechanical requirements necessary to achieve a relationship with God. This moral focus of the ethical sphere presupposes human ability to

adequately attain the ethical. Fallen humanity, however, does not possess the ability to successfully maintain an ethical life, and therefore this sphere is fraught with futility (Heller 2008:4). Living in the ethical leads to despair and guilt, and a deep recognition of human sin. This recognition is both necessary and beneficial in directing the person toward the only sphere which allows for maturing and authenticity: the religious (Golomb 1992:76). Those who pursue spiritual formation will find the limits of human ability in the ethical sphere, and it will prompt them to search for something more.

The religious sphere is characterized by passion, inwardness, and faith in relation to God. It is the sphere in which the passion and commitment of the individual leads to authenticity (Golomb 1992:75). In this sphere, the human recognizes the impossibility of staying true to morality without God's assistance (Moore 2007:xx-xxiii). For this reason, those in the religious sphere are focused on the Absolute—by which Kierkegaard refers to the God of highest sovereignty, who stands singularly, in parallel to the single individual (cf. Kangas 2007:126-167). While moving from the aesthetic to the ethical is certainly a part of the process of formation, true transformation does not occur until the individual has reached the religious sphere. Moore (2007:xxiii) writes: "When an individual stands before God he no longer sees himself as self-sufficient. He recognizes his own inability to transform himself. The religious person strives to allow himself to be transformed by God." The religious sphere is therefore the proper sphere within which spiritual transformation occurs. However, change is still required to move from the aesthetic and the ethical. In this way, it seems Kierkegaard implicitly makes a distinction between transformation and general spiritual growth.

However, Kierkegaard elucidates further the nature of this paradigm's progression by dividing the religious sphere into two expressions: Religiousness A and Religiousness B. Religiousness A is defined by a life of passion, an inward dialectic search for God, and a subject/object relationship with self and God. Religiousness B "presupposes" religiousness A, and applies the principles of A in the context of Christianity (Dunning 2014:201-203). Religiousness A treats truth as immanent, that is, existing within the individual. However, Religiousness B treats truth as existing outside of the individual (Rae 2010:106). Since religiousness A assumes the preexistence of inward truth, the onus of transformation is still on the believer. Allison (1998:136) writes: "Since the presupposition of this level of inwardness is the belief that the truth lies within, the individual is viewed as already potentially in possession of his God-relationship or eternal happiness, and his task is simply to transform his mode of existence so as to become in truth what he already is

potentially." The problem with the paradigm of Religiousness A, however, is that the human is not capable of self-transformation, and the suffering involved in this pursuit will not be productive. However, the experience of Religiousness A is a necessary stepping stone in coming to the realization that the human is unable to be spiritually formed without the aid of God. This realization is necessary to lead the human being into Religiousness B (Walsh 2009:41-42).

Religiousness B is founded upon a relationship with God. Kierkegaard writes, "In Religiousness B, the upbuilding is something outside the individual; the individual does not find the upbuilding by finding the relationship with God within himself but relates himself to something outside himself in order to find the upbuilding" (1989a:561). While A relies upon human capacity, B places the focus on God. Religiousness B is the experience of genuine Christianity. Religiousness B is the metaphysical location of true transformation.

It is informative here to present another related paradigm, which Kierkegaard terms "the knight of faith". This is a person who has moved through the spheres into Religiousness B, and has found authentic individuality formed by a relationship with God. For Kierkegaard, Abraham is the foremost example of the knight of faith. Kierkegaard offers Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac as the paragon of true religiousness. The choice Abraham faced was to function according to the ethical sphere and thereby refuse to murder his son, or to prioritize his relationship with God and sacrifice Isaac (Murphy 2007:384). Abraham's willingness to transcend the universal and sacrifice Isaac demonstrated his status as an authentic individual in a relationship with God. His was an act of faith wholly resting upon a trust of God beyond what the crowd (of the aesthetic sphere) or human rationality (of the ethical) could adequately explain. This paradigm of the knight of faith encapsulates Kierkegaard's concepts of passion, subjectivity, a relation to the Absolute, and the single individual. Abraham's willingness to be subjective—that is, to ignore the dictates of the universal in favor of the God relation—is precisely what transformed him as he obediently pursued God's command. Golomb (1992:77) writes, "Abraham's self, tested and forged by the dreadful encounter with the Absolute, acquires a qualitatively new nature."

In the ethical sphere, salvation is reduced to a mere product of enacting universal requirements (Kierkegaard 1986:83–98). But for Kierkegaard, true salvation causes formation as an authentic individual. The faith of Abraham exemplifies this, for his identity was formed in the crucible of a relationship with God, which transcends the universal requirements of the ethical (Evans 2006:215-218). Evans identifies the point of

Kierkegaard's discussion of Abraham in this way: "What he wants us to see is that it is at least possible for God to encounter a person directly, not simply through social ideals, and that such an encounter can provide a new self, a new identity, and a new understanding of the purpose of human existence" (Evans 2006:220-221; cf. Turnbull 2015:471). Following ethical requirements is an effacement of individuality, for the universality of ethics cannot be applied authentically on an individual level. Rather, ethics generically requires conformity to ideals separated from personal *telos*. However, authenticity of faith emerges from passion, which enables the believer's commitment to be spiritually formed by God (Golomb 1992:76-77).

In Kierkegaard's account of the paradigm for spiritual formation, the human progresses from the aesthetic life (focused on sensual satisfaction and temporal speculation), to the ethical (in which the person is free enough from self-centeredness to make ethical choices), and finally to the religious (within which transformation can take place toward authenticity as a single individual in the context of genuine Christianity). Another way to characterize the three spheres is that the aesthetic is restrained by the human's immediate senses, the ethical is constrained by universal moral law as a priority over the individual, and the religious empowers an inner focus in which the individual's relationship with God trumps all other considerations (Guarnieri n.d.:38). Activity in the aesthetic and the ethical spheres yield no other fruit than despair of futility (Golomb 1992:72-73). These first two modes of existence are inauthentic and ultimately unfulfilling. Only the religious sphere—particularly in the religiousness B of Christianity—allows for authentic spiritual maturity in the God relation. Finally, the related paradigm of the knight of faith exemplifies superlative existence in the sphere of Religiousness B. External works and universal ethicality is forgone in favor of a formative relationship with the Absolute. Abraham is the paradigmatic figure who represents the ultimate transformation in a relationship with God. These paradigms of the stages on life's way and the knight of faith together embody the majority of Kierkegaard's approach to spiritual formation.

3.3.2 Stevens' Account of the Paradigm for Spiritual Formation

The central paradigm of John Robert Stevens' theory of spiritual formation is "a walk with God". This terminology is taken directly from the Bible (Gen 5:24, 6:9, 17:1, 24:40). Stevens' concept of the walk with God is primarily drawn from the examples of the men and women throughout the Bible who maintained a close relationship with God, as well as the passages which use this particular phrase. For Stevens, this concept embodies a

Christian way of life centered on the believer's submission to Christ as Lord (Stevens 1976a:218; 1986:608).

For Stevens, the concept of a walk with God begins with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, where they "walked and talked" with God (1980:104). However, the first individual in Scripture who is directly stated to have walked with God is Enoch (Gen 5:24). Following Enoch, two prominent figures in Genesis, Noah and Abraham, are also said to have walked with God (Gen 6:9, 17:1, 24:40). In developing this paradigm, Stevens also looks to the NT examples of those who followed Jesus. Stevens points to the uses of the verb "walk" in Ephesians as further scriptural examples of the concept, and he maintains that the epistle presents Christianity as a way of life embodied in the walking (Stevens 1974a:63; 1976a:150).

Stevens' treatment of a walk with God consists of ten interrelated components: relationship with God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, submission, dedication, love, hunger, directional progress, God's dealings, authenticity, and community relationships. These ten components together converge into a holistic paradigm of spiritual formation.

> **Summary Proposition**: *The paradigm of a walk with God encapsulates spiritual formation in the context of an active and authentic relationship with God, centered on the Lordship of Jesus Christ, expressed in love, hunger, dedication, and submission, and enacted directionally, through God's testings, on both an individual and communal level.*
>
> **Scriptures**: Gen 3:15, 5:24, 6:9, 17:1, 24:40; Ex 12:38; Josh; 2 Sam 22:32-41; Job 23:10; Ps 42:1-4a, 51:6; Hos 6:1-2; Mic 6:8; Mal 3:3; Mt 6:31-34, 7:26-27, 10:39, 16:16, 19:27-30, 21:28-32; Mk 10:25-45; Lk 10:27, 24:13-35; Jn 6:26-36, 66-69, 7:17; 15:12, 17, 20:14-16; Acts 26:19; Rom 2:29, 16:20; 1 Cor 11:3, 13:1-13, 15:20-28; II Cor 4:7; Gal 2:20, 5:16, 18; Eph 1:9-11, 15-23, 4:8-16, 5:22-24; Phil 1:6, 2:5-113, 3:9-11; Col 1:12-23, 2:18-19, 3:12-14, 24b; 1 Th 3:12; 1 Tim 6:15; Heb 10:25-39, 12:2; 2 Pet 1:4; 1 Jn 1:7, 3:11, 4:16-19; Ju 24; Rev 3:14-22.

3.3.2.1 Relationship with God

Stevens' characterization of a walk with God is fundamentally relational. He writes, "A walk with God means that you are more concerned about worshiping and communing with the Lord than you are in communing with any other individual on the face of the earth"

(Stevens 1980:107). One who walks with God must be focused on pursuing a daily spiritual relationship with him. In examining Enoch as an example of one who walked with God, Stevens states that he made God the ultimate priority in his life. Stevens also states that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac—the fulfilled promise of God—in favor of ultimate obedience in relationship to God, further reveals the prioritization of relationship in a walk with God (Stevens 1980:107-108). For Stevens, the issue of consistent relationship is a hallmark of a walk with God as differentiated from general Christian belief. Stevens states it is possible for someone to love God, and even be dedicated to serving him, without really knowing him (1980:104). Such a believer may be a Christian, but he would not have a walk with God. Here Stevens indicates the highly relational nature of this paradigm. The relationship with God is the engine of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation.

Stevens clarifies his view by contrasting a walk with God with mere experiences in God. A walk with God is not defined by the pursuit of experiences with Him. Rather, it is the pursuit of a relationship. Stevens (1971b:107) writes, "If you want to preach experiences, you will not receive them. However, if you teach people to walk and commune with God, you will have experiences right and left." While a walk with God certainly involves divine experiences, such experiences are expressions of a relational commitment. Experiences in God must lead to knowing Him (cf. Philippians 3:10). A focus on relationship ensures they will. Those who focus on the experiences over God Himself end up with a shallow relationship with Him even in the midst of divine experience (1971:79-80). Stevens writes: "It is a meeting with the Lord that you want, not experiences: it is to come to know the Lord and to walk with Him and to love Him" (1971:80-81). For Stevens, "experiences" included positive encounters with God in Christian activity, such as worship and personal ministry. He contrasted experiences with a deep knowledge of the Word of God. For Stevens, "experiences" could be genuine in God, yet still be unmoored from the knowledge of God Himself (Stevens 1974c:16-17). In other words, a believer could have an experience in God which does not result in a deepened relationship with Him. Any relationship will include phenomenological experiences of some sort, so Stevens was not entirely dismissive of them. But it is the relationship which is the priority. Stevens uses the example of salvation to illustrate that initial experiences in God must also be internalized within the believer in the process of formation. In this way, experiences in God must expand and unfold for the believer in order to bear fruit in maturity (Stevens 1974e:14-15). Stevens (1974e:15) writes, "Anything that God does has a potential of infinite expansion because it takes on the nature of God. It can be a tremendous experience that changes everything; at other times you will constantly be expanding and growing in the experience and the

experience itself will continue to grow." The relationship with God is the vehicle for such expansion and growth.

Relatedly, a walk with God is not pursued with the intent to be blessed. Rather, it is motivated by a love for God and desire to be close to Him. Stevens states that the seeking of God first is a fundamental aspect of a walk with God (1980:109). Paraphrasing Matthew 19:27-30, Stevens states that choosing to leave all to follow Him leads to the most important result: walking with God (1971a:81-82). Stevens further states that if we approach God to receive from Him, the prioritization of His blessings over a relationship with Him causes God to not answer our prayers. Stevens states that Abraham had the correct attitude, and was resultantly called "the friend of God". Abraham rejected the spoils of war with the four kings because his first priority was walking with God. Abraham knew that God would take care of him if he put God first (1982a:279-280). If the believer's motivation is primarily about what he or she can receive, a relationship of true dedication cannot be attained. The liberation of God through Christ is primarily meant to bring the believer into the ability to accomplish God's will, not to establish personal happiness (Stevens 1974e:27-28). In a walk with God, the believer is more concerned about God's desires than his or her own.

Kierkegaard's concept of the knight of faith is relevant here in clarifying Stevens' concept of relationship. For Kierkegaard, the failure of the ethical is its abstract universality, and therefore it's lack of individuation. Abraham, as the knight of faith, prioritized his relationship with God to such a degree that he was willing to break the universal requirements of the ethical in sacrificing Isaac. His relational focus made him into an authentic single individual. Both Kierkegaard and Stevens ensconce the believer's relationship with God as of utmost importance in the celebration of true Christianity, and its attendant transformation. For Kierkegaard, the reason for this is the impersonal and inauthentic nature of ethics. For Stevens, the importance of relationship is focused on Jesus Christ as the means by which humans are reconciled to God and thereby experience an ontologically transformative process. Whereas Kierkegaard views relationship as the necessary suspension of the ethical in the pursuit of single individuality, Stevens views relationship as the means and end of Christosis, that is, being transformed to be in conformity to Christ. Stevens' championing of a relational paradigmatic concept is therefore more commensurate with the biblical account of Christ's salvific and reconciliatory purposes.

3.3.2.2 Lordship of Christ

The basis of a walk with God, according to John Robert Stevens, is the Lordship of Jesus Christ (1983:501). The Lordship of Jesus Christ involves His headship over every man (1 Cor 11:3), and the Church (Eph 1:15-23, 5:22-23; Col 1:12-23, 2:18-19). Stevens' relational approach to spiritual formation is dependent first upon Christ's Lordship, for the believer's submission to the Lordship of Christ is required to find "genuine union" with Him (Eph 5:24; Stevens 1958:n.p., 2007b:141-142). Stevens (1989:363) explains that "There is no relationship to the Father without a relationship to His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is the sum and substance of everything that we believe." The believer's relationship with the Father is dependent upon Jesus Christ, who mediates it (Stevens 1978b:23; 1981a:58-61; 1987:191-192). Further, Jesus acts as the model of the close relationship with the Father entailed by a walk with God. In this way, the hallmark of relationality of Stevens' paradigm only emerges from the proper positioning of Jesus Christ in the life of the believer. This focus on Christ's Lordship is foundational to the spiritually formative nature of a walk with God. In submitting to Christ, the believer personally chooses to make Him Lord over every aspect of life (Stevens 1986:608). By making this choice, the believer gives Jesus personal access to transform the believer. The one who is ultimately mature is the one who has submitted, in totality, all aspects of his being to Jesus. Stevens writes, "The surrender of your life to Jesus Christ, your dedication to do His will and to serve Him is the basic concept of a walk with God" (1974e:20).

Stevens states that the revelation of Christ—that is, the spiritual knowledge of Jesus Himself, rather than the knowledge of doctrine—is what sustains a walk with God (1988:391). For Stevens, Peter's recognition of Jesus as the Son of God (Mt 16:16) is the foremost illustration of revelation (cf. Stevens 2007a:131). Revelation is a revealing of God which produces understanding and causes change. Paul's encounter with the Lord in Acts 9 also produced a revelation of the Lordship of Christ which transformed the persecutor Saul into an apostle. Paul himself stated that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19), and Stevens characterizes this as an experience of transformative revelation. Further, revelation contains a relational aspect in that it allows the believer to see the Lord as He truly is, and thereby produces relational knowledge (Stevens 2007a:131-132). Stevens (1986:423) writes, "Seek the centrality of Christ in every service: in your worship, in your submission to the Lord, and in your awareness of the Lord. Everything that you do and everything that you are is to be absolutely and completely focused upon the Lord. If that is your first concern, everything else will come forth from it." If Christ Himself is

pursued in submission, all else in the believer's life will function correctly in God. The believer's problems are addressed by bringing everything in life under Christ's authority and direction (2007a:575). However, this revelation of the Lordship of Christ must deepen as the believer progresses in a walk with God, or the walk will not last (1987:529). The revelation of Jesus Christ and the commitment to his Lordship are meant to be ever-deepening realities, commensurate with the ongoing spiritual formation of the believer.

This emphasis on the Lordship of Christ also encompasses the eschatological goal of the coming Kingdom, for Christ is the King (1986:420). The Lordship of Christ involves the submission of believers, all of humanity, and the entire creation to Jesus, who then delivers all things into the hands of the Father (Eph 1:9-11; Phil 2:5-11, 3:9-11; 1 Cor 15:20-28; 1 Tim 6:15; Stevens 2007b:141-142). The Kingdom goal is pursued in a walk with God centered on Christ's Lordship (cf. Stevens 1977c:44). Upon Christ's return, believers will stand before Him, perfectly spiritually formed (Ju 24). The Lordship of Christ is a foundational paradigmatic articulation of the eschatological goal of spiritual formation as a whole.

Kierkegaard did not directly discuss Lordship as a concept. However, he presents the commitment to Christ as a central issue in spiritual formation. Kierkegaard (2007:217) writes, "Relationship to Christ is the decisive thing. You may be thoroughly informed about Christianity as a whole, may know how to explain it, to present it and to expound it – but if with all this you think that your own relationship to Christ is a matter of indifference, you are a pagan." For Kierkegaard, authentic Christianity does not emerge from knowledge of principles, but rather in a relationship with the divine teacher of those principles. Christ's teachings are the truth; superior to all other teachings, they cannot be grasped outside of a relationship with Christ Himself (Kierkegaard 2007:53-54). The commitment of the believer to the relationship with Jesus must be absolute, expressed as an internal choice to make Christ the way, the truth, and life on a personal level (Kierkegaard 1967:177). This is different than Stevens in that the concept of Lordship contains within it the related topics of obedience and Kingdom. Kierkegaard desires to establish contemporaneity with Christ through a relationship. Moore (2007:xxvi) summarizes, "just as Jesus Christ produced certain effects on his contemporaries, to be his in faith one must be a contemporary of his and have vital, decisive contact with him now." Being a contemporary of Christ is an excellent concept in conveying immediate relational connection. However, it does not fully account for the believer's responsibility of obedience to God. For Stevens, relating to Jesus as Lord not only subjects every aspect of the ontological state of the believer to

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Jesus' transformative power, but also requires the believer accomplish His will according to the resultant maturity.

Stevens and Kierkegaard are in accord regarding the central importance of a relationship with Christ in the pursuit of Christian spiritual formation. However, Stevens' concept of the Lordship of Christ defines this pivotal relationship in a more fully coherent biblical way which places spiritual formation in the correct context of Jesus' rule over both believer and world. To relate to Jesus as Lord entails recognition of Jesus' authority, responding to that recognition with absolute obedience, and engaging Christ's eschatological concern for the Kingdom. Stevens' paradigmatic concern here is the correct role of Christ in a walk with God, including the precise nature of the believer's formative relationship with Christ.

3.3.2.3 Submission

Submission is the proper attitude in response to recognition of Christ's Lordship. For Stevens, submission is an essential aspect of his paradigm of spiritual formation. Obedience to the will of God is a daily concern for those who walk with God. After reviewing Matthew 6:33-34, Stevens states that every decision made by the believer must be based upon discovering the will of God and committing to do it. This is a relationship of discipleship (Stevens 1982:47-49). Stevens states that this attitude of submission is closely related to our faith. The level of faith we have toward God will reflect the inner depth of our submission to God and his Word (1979:205-206).

This submission connects the believer to Christ, and opens the door for spiritual formation. The believer enacts his dedication to Christ's Lordship by submitting to His authority. In submission, self-centered human ambitions give way to a true humility and obedience to God's will in every situation (1986:608). Those who desire to walk with God must genuinely do so for the sake of God's will. As Jesus states, "He who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39; Stevens 1982:22). The spiritually formative power of submission is found in the rejection of the desires of the old life of the human nature. Stevens (1983:351-352) writes, "Submission is the route to fullness. The flesh is always resisting divine fullness. When you submit, you let Christ come in. The flesh resists for it says, 'I must possess this vessel. I must dominate. My thinking, my instincts, my nature must predominate.' The dethronement and crucifixion of the flesh comes by the route of submission, determined submission." Submission empowers the removal of the old nature in order to mature and grow in Christ's nature.

Stevens uses Matthew 7:26-27 as a Scripture which explains the consequences of not being obedient to the Word of God, for the life of such a person is like the house that cannot weather the storm, for it is built upon sand. Those who walk with God are responsible to act on every revelational truth given to them by God. For this reason, obedience cannot be neglected in a walk with God (Stevens 1986:612). Those who are exposed to the Word of God but do not walk it out in submission and obedience will never spiritually mature (Stevens 1987:874-875).

Kierkegaard's handling of submission is best exemplified in his "either/or" formulation, in which he states that the human is either unconditionally obedient to God, or lives in perdition. If a person does not function in unqualified obedience, then that person does not love God. Kierkegaard (2007:11) writes "If you are not obedient in everything unconditionally, then you are not bound to him, and if you are not bound to him then you despise him." For Kierkegaard, the lack of total obedience to God signifies a lack of relationship. Stevens would not disagree with Kierkegaard's marriage of obedience and relationship with God. However, Stevens clearly disagrees with the ultimatum formulation of "either/or" when it comes to submission. Stevens states that progressive degrees of submission are worked within the believer as an attendant process in spiritual formation (1981b:211). No aspect of the human being is completely matured in an instant, and therefore expecting complete submission to be in place prior to the God relation would necessarily prohibit all growth. The expectation of perfection in any aspect of the believer's being prior to the formative process of a close relationship with God is countervalent to the generator of change in Stevens' paradigm.

3.3.2.4 Dedication

Stevens often paired dedication with submission in his teachings (see 1975a:49; 1976a:166; 1979:110; 2007b:50). Submission is the attitude which pursues God's will, but dedication is a wholehearted commitment to God. These must function closely together in a walk with God. Stevens cites Jesus' statement in John 7:17 to explain the importance of dedication and submission. The believer's will must be set to do the will of God in order to know the truth of the Word (1976m:106). Stevens states that the most immature motivation for walking with God is seeking what we can get from Him. A higher level of motivation is loving the Word of God, which promises what we can be in God. The highest motivation for walking with Him is being dedicated to God's will (Stevens 1982a:69-70). In identifying the nature of dedication as it relates to walking with God, Stevens summarizes the attitude of

those who walked with God in the Bible: "It is astounding how those people endeavored to live the whole of their lives in union and fellowship with the Lord, walking in all the light and truth that He revealed, eager to be fully obedient in anything He set before them to do" (1986:605-606). Those who walk with God are not only interested in a relationship with God, but are also dedicated in their relationship to him.

The issue of dedication not only functions toward the relational aspects of a walk with God, but also has formative power. The believer's dedication to God must be purified in order to sustain a true walk with God. According to Stevens (2007a:104; cf. 2007c:519-521), the believer must ask "Is God enough for me?" The ultimate dedication to God answers this question in the affirmative, with no competing commitments outside of God Himself. However, Stevens observes that every believer's dedication will come to a natural limit. Often this limit will be seen when the believer's human desires compete with the pure dedication to God's will (2007a:107-108). Such limitations will naturally restrict the believer's relational involvement (Stevens 1974e:165). Being dedicated requires drawing on God's faithfulness. The one who wishes to steadfastly walk with God must pray for God to aid in that endeavor. In seeing his dedication purified, the believer can continue walking with Jesus. In so doing, the believer overcomes the limitations of the flesh, and thereby is spiritually formed into greater maturity. In the process of spiritual formation, the believer's dedication itself will grow. In this way, not only is the believer's inner being maturing in their walk with God, but also their commitment to walking with God (Stevens 1982a:69-70).

Stevens specifies the nature of the dedication he has in mind by characterizing it as first a dedication to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Many among the multitude who followed Jesus were not motivated by genuine relational dedication, but rather by desires to be fed and blessed. Because their dedication was not strong enough, most left when Jesus first spoke of the communion (Jn 6:66-69; Stevens 2007a:30-31). Those who did not have an adequate commitment to Jesus had not undergone sufficient maturation to continue following Him (Stevens n.d.:1-2). The motivation of the believer is of utmost importance in a walk with God (Stevens 1983:432). Those who genuinely walk with Him are not motivated by human ambition, but rather are committed to God and His will. This motivation of dedication separates those who truly want to walk with God from those who follow God only to be blessed. Those who seek Him only to be fed are chastised (Jn 6:26-36). The contemporary believer must recognize the propensity to be self-focused in following Jesus, as exemplified in Peter asking what reward the disciples would receive for leaving everything for Jesus (Mt 19:27). Hebrews 10:25-39 addresses this dedication,

which was needed to withstand great suffering and ridicule and maintain a focus on God. Those who wish to walk with God today must have a similar dedication which endures (Stevens 1976h:34-36).

Stevens states that the believer must be honest about what is and is not truly submitted to Christ (Stevens 1974e:20). Jesus Christ Himself demands this level of dedication from those who wish to walk with Him as disciples. The believer's dedication to the Lordship of Christ must trump all other concerns. Stevens (1980:110) writes,

> Be ready to turn your back and walk away from everything in the world—if that is the price required to walk with God. Don't let anything mean more to you than God does; don't let anything rival God. Come to the place where you want Him above everything, even your own life. Oh how God blesses those that yearn after Him! What is the most profitable thing you can do? *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah 6:8.

This is the metric of the required dedication: is the believer committed to anything over and above God himself? Stevens states that even the blessings of God can wrongly take precedence over relating to God himself. This is one reason why God tested Abraham in asking for the sacrifice of Isaac, for Abraham could have valued the blessing of Isaac more than the giver of that blessing (1980:107-108). Walking with God will bring the believer to moments similar to the one faced by the rich young ruler, wherein the only way to continue on faithfully is to dedicate further to God. Stevens (1983:627-628) writes, "In essence, the Lord told [the rich young ruler] to get rid of all the other things that were absorbing his attention and set his attention on the Lord alone. This seemed to be deadly; nevertheless, the Lord would say the same to you. If you want to walk with God, you must be focused on God. If you are focused on something else, you will have to eliminate it to walk with Him." For this reason, each believer must be sure to keep their dedication alive in their relationship with Him or spiritual formation will not progress.

Kierkegaard's terminology of "willing one thing" corresponds with Stevens' concept of dedication. Kierkegaard (2007:36) writes, "The one who desires the Good, for instance, for the sake of some reward also fails to will one thing. He is double-minded." Willing one thing requires the complete dedication of the human will. According to Kierkegaard, willing one thing has formative ramifications, for it is a state of purity of heart. The purity of heart

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espoused by Kierkegaard mirrors Stevens' concern for the purification of the believer's motivation of dedication. Kierkegaard hones in on the seeking of a reward as a motivation incompatible with genuine Christianity and with maturity. Kierkegaard sees the unadulterated commitment to pursue the ultimate good as an integral part in the transformation of the individual. One cannot will the ultimate good while remaining self-centered. Relatedly, Stevens (1987:523) states that "You cannot serve God for personal reasons." The dedication that Stevens requires in his paradigm of a walk with God is completely focused upon the will of God. The Christian who wills only God's will certainly reflects advancement in the spiritual formation process.

3.3.2.5 Love

Stevens (1975c:41) states directly that we should "Look upon love as the motivation in a walk with God." The greatest commandment describes the attitude the believer must have in his relationship with God (Lk 10:27; Stevens 1983:432). Further, the reception of the love of God allows the believer to express the necessary intensity required in a committed relationship with God (Stevens 1975c:41-42). Even the Lordship of Christ is based upon love, according to Stevens (1975c:9). The relationship with God must be expressed in acts of service and devotion, but these actions must be outward expressions of genuine inner realities. Without love, such activities are not genuine. Stevens (1975c:36) states, "When we refer to our walk with God, we are really talking about the love of God. Nothing else would cause people to do what they do when they come into it." Divine love is therefore a foundational aspect of a walk with God in Stevens' paradigm in that it motivates the relationship between man and God.

Stevens views the love of God as a virtue which must be received directly from God. This love places confidence in God, not on the inherent abilities of humanity. The principle of love emphasized in 1 John 4:16 is that of abiding—abiding in love, abiding in God, and God abiding within the believer (Stevens 1975c:3-4). The necessary intensity and hunger to consistently commune with the divine comes by the impartation of God's love. Further, without this strong bond of love, the believer will not remain close in his walk with God due to the fear of judgment (I Jn 4:17-18). Insecurity in the relationship with God will limit the believer's walk. The solution is to let God love us, for the only source of the true love of God is God Himself (cf. v19; Stevens 1975c:6). That this love must be given to the believer by God is indicative of the basic shape of Stevens' overall theory of spiritual formation. Even the basic motivating factor of the relational growth process is divinely originated

(Steves 1975b:33-35).

Love itself is a spiritually maturing force in the context of a walk with God, for the love of God connects us with the source of change (1979:85). Stevens (1989:61-62) explains how love matures the believer: "We cannot love Him this intensely without loving what He loves, hating what He hates, and serving Him with all our heart." The believer's internal conformity with God's will indicates spiritual maturity. The growth of love corresponds with an increase in the believer becoming an expression of God's will, which is a sign of the overall growth of the believer's spiritual life. The description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 involves divine qualities, such as patience and kindness. As the believer grows in love, he or she matures by the internalization of God's qualities (Stevens 1987:65). Stevens (1989:119) summarizes that "It is impossible to be mature without love." He states that while immature Christians tend to love "spontaneously", more mature Christians respond to Christ's command to love and maintain a more consistent love (Jn 15:12, 17; cf. Ephesians 4:14-16; Stevens 2007b:548-549).

Kierkegaard maintains a similar stance to Stevens in that the love required of the Christian must be given by God. Only God himself can place the foundation of love in a person. Without this, the human has no capability to love. Further, love is the "foundation of the life of the spirit" (Kierkegaard 1962:212–224). This perhaps gives further power to Stevens' emphasis on love as a necessary ingredient in a relationship with God, who is Spirit. If relationship is the quintessence of Christianity, and love is the foundation of the spiritual life, then there can be no relationship with the Father without love. Kierkegaard also sees formative value in love. He maintains that the establishment of God's love within the believer is the goal of Christian life. God's love is unconditional, and Christ makes it possible to see this love manifest in the believer (Barrett 2015:100). The power of love to "build up" causes it to be a mechanism of Christian formation. However, Kierkegaard sees love as simply existing regardless of human effort. One who attempts to build love ends up bringing forth "the love that is already there" (Kierkegaard 1962:218). For Kierkegaard, the building up of love is a divine process that seems untouched by human intent. Certainly, Stevens would agree that the love in question here is divine in origin, for only God's love carries formative power. Stevens would state that the increasing internalization of love within the believer is simply the deeper reception of God's love. While Kierkegaard and Stevens are in general accord on the importance of love in a transformative relationship with God, Stevens offers it as a more prominent aspect of his paradigm, particularly as a necessary ingredient in the ongoing relationship with God in a walk with Him.

3.3.2.6 Hunger

Stevens situates spiritual hunger as an integral aspect of a walk with God. Stevens (1980:204) writes, "No one can walk with God unless he is tormented by a hunger after God." For Stevens, hunger is a spiritual drive or desire which motivates the believer to seek God. Stevens associates a hunger for righteousness with the desire to personally know God, and characterizes both of these aspects as requisites of a walk with God (Stevens 1987:303). Without this hunger, any spiritual experience, act of service, or even prayer will not lead to a consistent relationship with God (1987:210). Stevens associates this spiritual hunger with the attitude recommended by Jesus in Matthew 6:33 that we should seek first the Kingdom (Stevens 2007a:501). Stevens uses Psalm 42:1-4a as an example of the level of hunger the Christian must have. The desire for God must be as strong as the desire for water in the desert (Stevens 2007a:499-500). Without hunger, believers attain nothing more from God than what they already have, and therefore formation is stymied. If the believer does not have hunger, he or she must cry out to God for it. Stevens states that the Laodicean lukewarmness (cf. Rev 3:14-22) is pervasive in this age, and that it can influence every individual. He describes it as "a subtle quicksand of indifference" which quenches the hunger for God (Stevens 1982:127-128). This passivity must be overcome in order to mature in a relationship with God.

Stevens states that a difficult time in most Christians' lives comes immediately following the initial period of conversion. Often, the beginning period naturally contains a sense of closeness to the Lord. However, God will shortly begin to demand more of the believer, and this requires an increase in hunger for God. Without this hunger, the believer will not push further into the things of God (Stevens 2007a:66). Hunger must be maintained as an ongoing aspect of walking with God. As Stevens (2007a:501-502) states, "What was enough yesterday is not enough today." The spiritual formation of the believer is a continual process, therefore spiritual hunger is a consistent requirement. True hunger involves the recognition that the believer is incomplete. There is always more of God's Word to receive and become (Stevens 2007a:501).

However, hunger is not to be confused with ambition. The motivation of ambition causes a person to seek a position of authority—similar to how James and John sought to be positioned on either side of Jesus in His coming kingdom. However, Jesus countered with the Kingdom attitude that greatness requires being a servant of all (Mk 10:25-45). Spiritual hunger is a selfless desire to be close with God and to do His will (Stevens 1977a:4; cf.

Stevens 1983:151; 1987:352-353). Further, this hunger is not focused on the gifts of God, but on the person of God.

Stevens' concept of hunger is clarified by Kierkegaard's concept of the aesthetic sphere. The aesthete is focused on finding self-fulfillment through temporal means. The concept of the aesthetic sphere identifies hunger as a ubiquitous element of humanity. Whether worldly fulfillment or a relationship with God, The human will be hungry for something. Further, the precise orientation of the believer's hunger must be identified, for it seems that Stevens' admonition that a walk with God cannot be pursued for the blessings resonates with the aesthetic. In other words, the desire to be blessed by God is still an aesthetic desire to receive external sources of fulfillment without being responsible for the achievement of internal transformation. Any motivation of self-interest or self-satisfaction as the means or goal for self-fulfillment will stand against a genuine relationship with the divine, and therefore does not satisfy the paradigm Stevens offers for effective spiritual formation. If the believer's hunger is not set on God Himself it is not the brand of spiritual hunger advocated by Stevens, and will therefore fail to contribute to a formative relationship with God.

3.3.2.7 Progressive Direction

A walk with God involves constant, progressive change in the direction dictated by God. There are two aspects to this progressive direction. The first is that a walk with God leads the believer in directions that correspond with accomplishing God's will. Walking with God entails moving in submission to God. The second is that the believer's maturing process is progressive and aimed toward the goals of spiritual formation. These two aspects of progressive direction function together, for accomplishing God's will leads to spiritual maturity, and further spiritual maturity engenders a greater capacity to accomplish God's will.

The Lordship of Christ requires that each person seek the Lord for direction in all things (Stevens 1982:129-131). Stevens writes, "You will not be able to do the will of God in either a general direction or in the specific leading, without having a continual walk with God" (1981a:61). This is accomplished by being sensitive to the leading of the Lord, and being led by the Spirit of God (Gal 5:16, 18; Stevens 1981a:61). The believer's submission is integral in continuing to walk alongside God, according to His divine navigation. The direction of the believer's life and formation should not be dictated by personal opinion. As

Stevens (1983:147) states, "We are going to walk with God and not run ahead of Him."

In further explaining this facet of a walk with God, Stevens contrasts the wandering of the Israelites in the desert for 40 years with the directional walking they did when they conquered the land under Joshua as an example of progressive direction in a walk with God. Stevens (1974a:71) writes, "when you read the book of Joshua, you see a man wholly following the Lord, step by step by step. That is a walk with God." A walk with God has purpose and direction. Seeking God in order to discover his leading is an important element of a walk with God. The leading of God may entail personal or general destinations. Such destinations must be identified and pursued in a walk with God on a daily basis, for a walk with God entails daily progress (1974a:71-72). Stevens further uses the conquest of Canaan as an example of how spiritual warfare works in the context of a walk with God. Every new level in God—new "land"—is inhabited by giants which must be defeated. Stevens (1975a:74-75) writes, "Satan will battle every new area into which you move. The first thing you find is the usurper dwelling at that spiritual level to hold out the people of God." Progress and growth in a walk with God, therefore, will face Satan's opposition.

Progressive direction also works relationally. Stevens uses Mary Magdalene as an example of progressive direction in her interaction with Jesus in John 20:14-16. She at first does not recognize her Lord because He had moved into a "higher level" than she had known. But her eyes were opened in a greater awareness of Christ. This was a moment of spiritual formation which progressed her toward the next goal or destination in God's will for her life. Similarly, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus grew in their recognition of Christ, both in Jesus' teachings, as well is in the revelation which opened their eyes (Lk 24:13-35). Stevens leverages these examples in discussing the progressive nature of spiritual formation: "Is Christ the same to you as He was when you first began to walk with God? If so, that is very sad. But if Christ is constantly expanding in what He is to you, then you are growing and moving on in the Lord" (2007a:67-68). The relationship with God in Christ must become progressively deeper and stronger. The spiritual understanding of walking with God recognizes the need for directional progress in a relationship with God.

Progressive direction is a definitional consideration naturally found in the concept of walking. In other words, one who walks always makes progress step-by-step toward a particular direction. Therefore, the paradigmatic metaphor of walking with God entails directional progress. Stevens' theological definition of walking with God is further informed

by Genesis 3:15, 2 Samuel 22:32-41, and Romans 16:20, each of which discuss the "feet" as a metaphorical representation of victory. For Stevens, walking with God entails a directional movement toward an objective which must be attained in victory (Stevens 1974a:69-70). After reading Matthew 6:31-32, Stevens writes, "The secret of attaining great goals is to put forth the effort and the living of today to the utmost in God. Do not live tomorrow until you get to it. A man may worry about the mountain and how he is going to climb that last peak, but he should be more concerned about the step he is going to take right now, because the trip to the mountain is made, one step after another" (Stevens 1982a:795-796). Stevens states that "the scene constantly changes" in a walk with God, and that obstacles such as metaphorical mountains or rivers are intentionally placed by God (2007a:112-113). After quoting Philippians 2:12-13, Stevens states that God places within the believer the ability to walk out what at first seems impossible (Stevens 1981a:64-65). This is a major aspect of why a walk with God results in spiritual formation. As the believer progresses forward in his relational journey, God will lead him into impossible situations which require a new impartation from God. This leads the believer into progressive maturity.

It is perhaps in this context that the greatest difference between Kierkegaard and Stevens is emphasized. While Kierkegaard saw progression as possible through the stages on life's way—the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious—the actual functioning within Religiousness B entails a paradox of progression: the further one progresses in becoming like Christ, the more one recognizes the infinite difference between the human and the divine. While each step of growth may bring the individual closer to divine perfection, it also brings with it a greater recognition of how far is still yet to go. In this way, Kierkegaard maintains that progress in spiritual formation leads the believer to continually recognize the personal necessity of Christ's grace and redemption (Walsh 2009:142-143). Stevens, on the other hand, does not see progressive direction in a walk with God as paradoxical. Progress is progress, and gains in spiritual formation do not drown in a sea of infinitude. Whether such gains are seen in the diminution of self, the increase in Christ internalized, or both, such advancement does not lead to further despair on the part of the believer due to the recognition of the infinite distance left to cross. While there will always be more growth to be had until the believer is completely perfected in God, there is a definite point at which Christlikeness is attained. While Kierkegaard emphasizes the infinite gulf between the human and God, Stevens' emphasizes its ultimate traversability in Christ.

3.3.2.8 The Dealings of God

A major formative aspect of a walk with God is God's testings and dealings. Stevens sees the principle of walking with God as being both a wonderful experience and as the source of difficult and confronting personal experiences. Stevens states that the sinful old nature is not predisposed to walking with God correctly. Therefore, those who endeavor to maintain a relationship with God will soon find themselves going through the refining fire of God's dealings (1974c:93-94; 1976a:25). The pressure put upon those that walk with him is meant to expose the problems of the sin nature. The exposure of such problems allows the believer to seek God in repentance, which then causes change (1982a:204-205). Stevens (1977b:35-36) writes:

> Our walk with the Lord must lead to the dealings of fire and purging, of the sanctification of the vessel and the purification that John Wesley saw…. It has to be brought back to the scriptural standards, to the beautiful grace of God that comes to those who believe. The Lord is not only the author; He is also the finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He has begun a work and He is able to perform it unto the day of the Lord (Philippians 1:6).

Stevens sees the process of purification to be largely one that is uncomfortable for the believer. The dealings of God are the manifestation of God's working to perfect the believer's faith. Stevens uses Job as an example of this, for Job states "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as pure gold" (Job 23:10). The trials of those who follow God are meant to refine and transform the believer (2007a:750). Other examples used by Stevens are God's dealings with the Israelite people and the various trials of the OT prophets (Stevens 1976m:33-34; 2007a:747-750). In every stage of maturing process, God will continually devastate the believer with the intent that there be further spiritual growth.

Stevens looks to the refining discussed in Malachi 3:3 as a scriptural example of God's dealings. Stevens (2007a:350) writes,

> During the process of refining silver, the impurities come to the surface, forming a black scum on top of the silver. As you ladle off these impurities, soon the silver is so pure that you can look into it and see your face reflected back. When God says, "I want this man to be a treasure in whom I can be revealed; I want an earthen vessel in which My glory will come forth" (II Corinthians 4:7), He must first refine that person so that the impurities in his

life come to the surface.

God desires to see his nature reflected in His people. This is why those who pursue a relationship with Him will experience the dealings of God. This is a quintessentially formative aspect of Stevens' paradigm of a walk with God. The spiritual transformation emerges from a relationship with God, and is ultimately overseen and enacted by God Himself. The end result is the fulfillment of 2 Peter 1:4, which states that believers become partakers of Christ's divine nature by escaping corruption. God deals with the sinful corruption of those who are dedicated to walk with him (2007a:350-351). For Stevens, the dealings of God are the requisite descent which precedes ascent, shown in the example of Christ in Ephesians 4:8-10. Conforming to His death and resurrection (Phil 3:10-11) is yet another model in which suffering precedes transformation.

God's testings lead the believer to a place wherein they recognize their own lack of ability to act on God's will in a faithful manner. This experience of disillusionment is necessary to work the proper attitude within the believer, who must not have a sense of self-reliance, but instead must recognize God as the source of all goodness (1977a:54-55; 1982b:321-322). This explains Jesus words of Matthew 10:39, that those who lose their life for Christ will find it. Further, this is the experience Paul mentioned when he said he was "crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20). It is the experience described in Hosea 6:1-2, wherein God wounds, then heals, his people. This difficult process results in true discipleship, for the believer is driven toward a greater dedication to Christ. Walking with God is not predicated on human ability, and those who attempt approach it so will find great resistance, pressure, and testings from God. Stevens further explains: "Any man who has had any confidence in the flesh will be broken before God is through with him, and where he had been self-reliant and confident, now he feels completely inadequate to cope with anything. He comes to utter despair" (Stevens 1974a:88-90). As Romans 2:29 states, we cannot have any confidence in the flesh.

Kierkegaard views the process of transformation as one of suffering. Particularly, it is the suffering which emerges from the recognition that the human cannot transform himself, but must rely wholly upon God. It is a "self-annihilation" which allows God to transform the individual (Moore 2007:xxiii). This is similar to Stevens' concept of God's dealings, although Stevens characterizes the testings as originating from God. In both paradigms, the relationship with God causes spiritually formative suffering. However, the refining devastation discussed by Stevens is still relational in nature—in other words, the testings

come from God. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, characterizes the difficulties as primarily an internal struggle to renounce human ability in order to give oneself completely to God. Kierkegaard further includes the process of dying to the world (forgoing the pleasures of the aesthetic), in order to focus on God. Stevens seems to include this kind of suffering as an ongoing process in God's dealings, so that the believer is consistently brought into a greater and greater commitment to God as he deals with any desires in the human which are not commensurate with walking with Him.

3.3.2.9 Authenticity

A walk with God is meant to be a living, genuine reality. The one who walks with God is passionate to hear God's voice. For the one who walks with God, the Bible is alive. The one who walks with God feels a fire in his heart when he reads the Word of God (1980:110). The one who walks with God is honest with himself and with God. These are all examples of the authenticity Stevens has in mind for those who walk with God. Stevens did not use the exact term "authenticity", but it seems Kierkegaard's terminology is appropriate in expressing a prominent aspect of Stevens' paradigm of walking with God. Perhaps another appropriate term might be "genuineness". Stevens offers Psalm 51:6 as an example of the Lord's desire for this attitude of authenticity: "Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom." This is an aspect of the authenticity Stevens has in mind: truthfulness in the inner being and a stance of drastic honesty before God. Maintaining this personal attitude is a requisite for a walk with God. The relationship with God must emerge from a genuine desire for a relationship with God, otherwise it cannot be found or sustained. Stevens (2007a:823) summarizes: "One thing we want is reality. We want reality! Our walk with God must be real to us. We want to love Him, serve Him, and lay everything at His feet."

Stevens looks to the hearts of the hundred and twenty in the upper room as examples of those who authentically walked with God. Even after the personal devastation of seeing their Lord crucified, particularly among those who denied him, they remained faithful and obedient. Their humility was an expression of their genuine walk with God. If they had a legalistic attitude in their obedience to Christ, they would have cast aspersions and judgments toward themselves and others due to their many failings. However, the authentic humility allowed them to stand in the grace of God (2007a:782-783).

The strongest enemy of authenticity in the Christian context is legalism and religious

obligation. In Stevens' view, legalism hinders spiritual growth. It is the negative pole of the true involvement in a walk with God. Legalism attempts to produce righteousness through dead, human works. A legalistic person is self-interested and attempts to find fulfillment in works in order to gain praise, rather than serving God out of genuine dedication and submission. Externally, such people may seem to be progressing in their spiritual formation, but they are not open to receive the true transformative power of an honest relationship with God (Stevens 2007c:854-855). Stevens explains that the rituals of religiousness can be a distraction from a walk with God. This principle is further explained by Jesus' warning that sinners would enter the Kingdom before the Pharisees. This intimates that the inauthentic religious attitude is more of a barrier to closeness with God than sin itself. Stevens uses this idea to point the believer back to a genuine relationship with God, for only God Himself can change the sin nature. The religious attitude attempts to cover up the flesh. The authentic attitude stands in honest humility before the Lord, knowing that only He can cause true transformation (2007a:782-783). Stevens examines the story found in Matthew 21:28-32, in which a father asks his two sons to work in the vineyard. One says yes but does not show up. The other says no but arrives to work anyway. Stevens uses this contrast to discuss the difference between those who are negatively religious—who say many good things but never walk them out—and those who are like the publicans and harlots who hear the Word and respond in a genuine manner (1987:893-894). Stevens states that those who are spiritually immature tend to have a religious attitude. The religious attitude is primarily concerned with rules and regulations, rather than becoming a genuine agent of God's righteousness (1987:554-555). Stevens (2007a:768-769) states that "nothing can be more disastrous to walking with God than pharisaism" which clings to the letter of the law. Such an attitude requires only mental assent and is therefore not authentic. However, a true walk with God must involve authentic experiences with God which go beyond religiosity (Stevens 2007a:775-776).

Stevens' requirements of honesty, openness, and genuineness are very reminiscent of Kierkegaard's priority of authenticity. Authenticity is a defining characteristic of the single individual, and therefore the desired ontological state of the human. The inauthentic person lives in "thoughtless superficiality" (Hong and Hong 2000:x). Authenticity is made up of purity of heart and passion, focused on God and founded on self. For Kierkegaard, the Christianity of his age was lost in intellectual reflection, analysis, and passivity. The antidote to this is passion, which leads to decision-making and action, which in turn leads to authenticity. The person becomes authentic by making the choice to live with enthusiasm in a relationship with God. For Kierkegaard, Christian faith is the highest

authenticity, for it combines both the "how" and the "what" of inward existence (Golomb 1992:66, 74). This passionate pursuit of a relationship with God galvanizes an authentic state of being. However, both Kierkegaard and Stevens view empty religiosity as the enemy of authenticity.

Authenticity was a primary topic for Kierkegaard, for his existential project hoped to answer what it means to be a true self (Hong and Hong 2000:x). In this way, the term is almost synonymous with Kierkegaard's *telos* of becoming. For Stevens, on the other hand, the genuine, honest state of authenticity is a required attitudinal approach to a relational walk with God. For Kierkegaard, authenticity is a goal of spiritual formation. For Stevens, authenticity facilitates the transformative God relation. God requires naked, self-reflexive honesty from those who wish to commune with him. Positioned in this authentic relationship with the divine—pursued with genuine motivations of hunger, dedication, and submission—the believer is able to be spiritually formed. Stevens' notion of authenticity is a proscribed attitude by which the believer successfully walks with God. Perhaps it could be said that Kierkegaard is primarily concerned with authentic self; Stevens is primarily concerned with authentic relationship.

3.3.2.10 Community Relationships

Stevens states that a walk with God involves community involvement in the Body of Christ (Stevens 1975c:8-9). After believers establish their own walk with God, there is a collective ministry which emerges from the Body of Christ as a whole. Stevens believes that believers should be dedicated to each other as unto the Lord (1987:367). Both individually and collectively, Stevens emphasizes that a walk with God is based upon the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He connects this with a revelation of the Body of Christ, which is essentially the expression of Jesus' Lordship in His people (Stevens 1975c:9). In submitting to church governance, the believer is exercising service to the Lordship of Christ, not to man (Stevens 2007a:576). Stevens sees 1 John 1:7 as an explanation that the only way to truly have correct relationships with other Christians is to walk with God. Without each individual walking with God, the fellowship between Christians will not be godly (Stevens 2007c:261-262). Stevens states that God wants to impart the nature of Christ to the individual members of the Body of Christ (Stevens 1986:2-3). In this way, spiritual formation functions on a collective, as well as individual level.

Stevens explains that the believer's relationships with others will be determined by each

one's relationship with God. If a person has a strong relationship with God, he will relate correctly to others. Relationships between believers only function correctly when the individual believer recognizes that he is ultimately serving Christ when he serves his brothers (cf. Col 3:24b). Every person must maintain their own walk with God, but it can be helpful nonetheless to know there is love and support among the brethren (Stevens 1986:308-310). It is important to note that community relationships cannot replace the individual's personal walk with God. However, when each individual is walking with God, the true Christian community is formed.

In contextualizing church leadership in terms of walking with God, Stevens states that elders, apostles, and prophets are meant to help the believer mature in the Lord. This means that they must encourage and enable the individual in his or her own walk with God, rather than providing direct answers (Stevens 1986:615). Stevens states that true ministers in Christ will not relate to the people in a way which makes them dependent upon him. Stevens (1987:871-872) writes, "A true ministry leads believers to be mature. He rejoices when he sees spiritual sons and daughters coming forth to maturity in the spirit. This is the purpose for which God has given ministries. We think in terms of God having raised up ministries, but in a sense He has lowered them down from the right hand of the Father, directly from the throne of Christ's authority, to bring believers into a maturity in Christ." Ephesians 4:11-15 is an important passage for Stevens in this effort to define the purpose of ministers in the context of Christian spiritual formation. Stevens states that there must be a correct balance in relationships among Christians in order to avoid allowing any believer to be overly dependent on ministries in maintaining their walk with God. Ministries who allow such an imbalance of dependency will inadvertently prolong the immaturity of those they minister to (Stevens n.d.:12). Each person is responsible to initiate their own seeking of God in the effort to mature. Each member of the Body of Christ is responsible to do this individually in order for the entire Body to function correctly. Stevens (2007b:1346) writes, "The whole Body must develop their capacity to hear the Word of the Lord themselves and to walk with God." The process of "weaning" must be done by leaders in order for believers to truly walk with God on their own and embark on their journey of spiritual formation.

The previous nine aspects of an individual walk with God are mirrored in communally walking with God, albeit in a modified manner. The principles of relationship, the Lordship of Christ, love, hunger, dedication, submission, progressive direction, testings, and authenticity all come to bear on the relationships between members of the Body of Christ.

These principles must first be activated in a personal relationship with God. However, God does not intend for a walk with Him to lead to independence. As the believer matures in his or her relationship with God, so too must the community relationships grow deeper (Stevens 2007b:548). For Stevens, the Body of Christ is the communal reflection of a shared commitment to the Lordship of Christ. The principle of relationship has both a divine and human expression in the Church, for relationships among believers contribute to the spiritual formation of each believer. This is also true in the expression of divine love, which is not meant to remain isolated in the believers' individual relationship with God. One cannot love God without loving one's brothers (1 Jn 4:20). Further, Stevens notes that in Ephesians 4:14-16, there is a connection between the mature Christian and the command to love (cf. Jn 15:12, 17; Col 3:12-14; 1 Th 3:12; 1 Jn 3:11). The revelation of the Body of Christ cannot be received unless the believer recognizes the pivotal role of divine love (Stevens 1975c:9). Relatedly, each believer must be dedicated to the other members of the Body of Christ, and function together in inter-submission.

Kierkegaard's most conspicuous discussion of community is his concept of "the crowd," which stands in negative opposition to the single individual. Stevens similarly uses the scriptural term "mixed multitude"—a terminology taken from the description of those who left Egypt in the time of the Exodus (Ex 12:38). The mixed multitude included those who followed Moses and God for selfish reasons. Their lack of dedication to God affected the Israelites as a whole. The mixed multitude constantly needed reassurance and convincing. This is the proof of a lack of dedication (Stevens 1987:522-523). For Kierkegaard, the crowd withstands the process of becoming. For Stevens, the mixed multitude skews the whole of God's people toward the lowest common denominator, as humans cannot help but be influenced by the unbelief around them.

However, Kierkegaard is not wholly negative in his view of community. He sees the individual as the basis of community. He writes, "The cohesiveness of community comes from each one's being a single individual before the eternal" (Kierkegaard 1975a:318). Every person's task of becoming an individual before God must be pursued as the foundation of community. Without each person's spiritual formation into maturity in relation to God, there is no such thing as true community, but only the crowd. Kierkegaard viewed unity in the human race as expressed in the individual. His concept of the single individual, while contrasted with the dispassionate crowd, is still representative of humanity as a whole, and vice-verse. This truth is first seen in Adam, but extends to all of humanity. Walsh (2009:85) writes: "The mutual participation of the individual and the race in one

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another is a contradiction that constitutes both a present reality and the ideal perfection of human beings, inasmuch as at every moment individuals are both themselves and the race and have the perfection of themselves as participants in the race as their ethical task." Certainly, Kierkegaard emphasized the individualistic nature of the existential God relation, but its universal encompassing of the human race cannot be dismissed. In explaining the relation between the individual and the communal, Kierkegaard provides the example of a violinist, who must practice solo for many hours before playing with an orchestra. He states that this is similar to faith, which must be practiced and ironed out on an individual level prior to attempting to practice it in a communal setting (Kierkegaard 1975b:602). It seems Kierkegaard's views are closely related to Stevens' on this point, for Stevens maintains that the community relationships in the Body of Christ only function correctly when each individual has established his or her own consistent walk with God. However, Stevens seems to deviate from Kierkegaard's view in that he sees the individual/ collective as a sort of dialectic, in which the relationships with God and believing community function concurrently. No individual can walk with God for long without a community expression within the Body of Christ. Putting maturity into action is of fundamental importance to Stevens in the overall spiritual formation process. Community provides the potential for such application.

3.3.3 Summary and Reflection

This section has attempted to provide a synthetic identification of Stevens' paradigm of a walk with God, which functions as the paradigmatic concept of his theory of spiritual formation. A walk with God is fundamentally an active relationship with God enabled by the believer's reception of the revelation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Steven's theory of spiritual formation focuses not on the process of maturing, but rather on relating to God and walking with Him. Spiritual formation must be pursued relationally because God is the only source of true change (1981a:61). The opposite approach, according to Stevens, is to function "mechanically", in which the believer attempts to act in a Christian manner without relying on God. Such an approach would be inauthentic and therefore impotent. Stevens quotes 1 John 1:7 in this regard, stating that walking in the light with Jesus ("as He is in the light") allows the blood of Christ to cleanse us of unrighteousness, thereby causing change and transformation (1986:613-614). A walk with God is the daily process of walking in Christ's light. Stevens therefore sees the walk with God as being definitionally concerned with expressing God's righteousness (Stevens 1987:554–555).

Each of the ten major facets of this paradigm reviewed in this section is interrelated to the others and must all be enacted by the believer in a holistic fashion. One might be able to discuss all ten aspects in this way: A revelational commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ leads to the ability to form and maintain a relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son. This relationship is founded on love, driven by spiritual hunger, maintained by dedication, and expressed in submission. These aspects must stem from an authentic internal desire. This leads to a life characterized by progressive direction in which the believer moves toward both a personal and universal *telos.* However, the relationship is not without its difficulties, as God intends to mature those who choose to relate to him using means which are not always pleasant from the human perspective. Finally, each aspect comes into play both individually and collectively, as God intends for those who walk with him to do so together in a believing community.

While speaking with ministers and those who wish to come into the ministry, Stevens asserts: "We are not raised up for what we can do, but for what we can be unto the Lord. Although you will be very busy working, you will accomplish more work if you realize that basically you were raised up for a walk with God, and it is what you are to the Lord that counts" (1974e:124-126). This emphasis on doing emerging from being is a rather existential view. Christian activity cannot be divorced from the believer's state of being and relationship with the Lord. For this reason, spiritual formation cannot be divorced from the enacting of God's will. The concept of a walk with God keeps these poles (relational being and action) together. Stevens states that ministry—including signs and miracles—is the "effect" which stems from a relationship with God, who is the cause. The spiritually formative walk with God places the God relationship through Christ at its center, doubly so for those who are ministers seeking to aid others in their spiritual formation (1974e:126). In this way, the spiritually formative relationship with God has a profound effect on the spiritual formation of others in the Body of Christ.

In some ways, the paradigmatic concept of a walk with God is similar to the paradigmatic concepts of journey often used in the context of spiritual formation. While Kierkegaard is aware of the paradigm of journey as it is used to exemplify human life, his treatment of it is peculiarly Kierkegaardian. He states that the spiritual road we must walk only exists "when we walk on it. That is, the road is how it is walked" (Kierkegaard 2005:289-290). Kierkegaard often emphasizes the how over the what, but here he seems to state that we must see the how as the what. The individual who seeks truth will not just determine where the road is, but ask how to travel it. He writes, "Worldly wisdom is very willing to deceive by

answering correctly the question, 'Where is the road?' while life's true task is omitted, that spiritually understood the road is: how it is walked" (2005:290-291). The task of determining the location of the road can often be a substitute for actually traveling the road. However, for Kierkegaard, the road is only present when it is walked on. It seems this corresponds with Stevens' emphasis on the relationship with God (Kierkegaard's "how") over the orbiting trappings of a walk with God. For Stevens, spiritual formation is so highly dependent upon the individual's relationship with God that attempting to identify the path through activity or direction first is not only counterproductive but nonsensical. Stevens (1976a:168) writes, "God wants us to be just as dedicated to the means as we are to the end that we seek." The "means" is the relationship with God. The road of walking with God is forged by a maintained relationship. In this way, Stevens also seems to prioritize the "how" of spiritual formation over the "what". There is a destination and a path, but these cease to exist if the individual is not walking with God. There is no path unless there is first a walk with God. Kierkegaard reiterates the biblical truth that Christ is the way in this context (1967:150). Stevens would certainly agree with the application of this Scripture.

Perhaps, though, the most dialogically insightful comparison regarding the paradigms of Kierkegaard and Stevens comes in Kierkegaard's concept of the knight of faith. Kierkegaard holds that the defining moment which proved Abraham esteemed his relationship with God above all else was not actually his willingness to sacrifice Isaac. Rather, it was his ability to hear God stopping him from following through, and his resulting choice to stay his hand. Abraham's true obedience was his ability to change his mind quickly once he heard the voice of the Lord. Kierkegaard (2007:89-90) writes, "The decision whether to sacrifice one's only child or to spare him, oh, this is indeed great! Greater still, however, is it to retain, even at the last moment, the obedience, and if I may venture to say so, the agile willingness of an obedient soldier." The fixation on this moment of staying his hand is helpful in pinpointing Stevens' purposes in situating Christian growth as a relational endeavor. Abraham, as the greatest example of faith, reveals that God's idea of maturity not only involves a willingness to obey difficult commands, but also the determination to continue listening for God's voice even after committing to His prior command. The hallmark of each paradigm is not necessarily the obedience to God beyond all other considerations, but rather the ongoing relationship which becomes the definition of the individual's being and choices. If, as Kierkegaard states, it was Abraham's relational focus which kept him from carrying out to completion what God intended only as a test, and Abraham was transformed in this tumultuous encounter with God, then it is the

continual focus on God and His guidance which ultimately determines the spiritual formation of the believer and his faith. Stevens' paradigmatic concept of a walk with God would place each believer in a similar position, in which the relationship with God stands above all things, even God's prior commands! This ongoing attitude in a walk with God keeps the believer in a process of successive transformation, for the relationship itself is the path of Christian maturity.

3.4 The Theology: Not by Strength, but by the Spirit

3.4.1 Kierkegaard's Theo-Philosophical Foundations of Spiritual Formation

This section reviews the major theological and philosophical concepts which undergird Kierkegaard's approach to spiritual formation. In this context, "theology" refers to the study of God and His relationship with His creation. "Philosophy" refers to the attempt to define and communicate fundamental truths of human existence. The two are highly interrelated for Kierkegaard. His works are highly philosophical, but his views are deeply informed by Christian theology. Kierkegaard generally subscribed to most standard doctrines held by the Lutheranism of his day. So while he disagrees that simply understanding and assenting to doctrinal truth was a genuine form of Christianity, he nevertheless did not reject Lutheran doctrine wholesale (Walsh 2009:26). His view on Christian doctrine is multicolored, as seen in the wide range of remarks he makes on the subject: that Christianity has no doctrine, that doctrine itself stands in contrast to true Christianity, and that Christian doctrine is good and sound (Barrett 2013:5). The most straightforward way to reconcile these statements is that Kierkegaard was primarily interested in lived Christianity on an individual level. He was more interested in the "how" than the "what" of Christianity. For Kierkegaard, theo-philosophical concepts must be assessed based upon their commensurability with the phenomena they attempt to describe (Carlsson 2014:16-17). In other words, the assessment of proposed truth cannot be divorced from its application. Extrapolating from Kierkegaard's view, then, the philosophical and theological underpinnings of any theory of spiritual formation are only adequate to the task if they, in fact, describe true, experiential reality. While lived Christianity must be founded on a true understanding of Christian theology—certainly informed by good and sound doctrine—it cannot rest solely upon the knowledge of Christian doctrine. There is a coherence to Christian doctrine, but it at best represents a second-hand understanding of truth, rather than an accurate depth of knowledge based on revelation (Gouwens 1988:20).

Kierkegaard's concern with existence—the lived temporal reality—is very instructive on this point. Doctrine divorced from existence is a distraction from the true work of Christianity. Kierkegaard (1975a:404) writes, "Christianity entered into the world not to be understood but to be existed in." The major theo-philosophical components of Kierkegaard's approach to spiritual formation include the incarnation, particularly as it relates to existence; subjective epistemology; the God relation; and the interrelated concepts of self and inwardness.

3.4.1.1 Incarnation and Existence

As Kierkegaard is considered the father of existentialism, it is no surprise that the concept of existence is a core theo-philosophical foundation of his approach to spiritual formation. Kierkegaard saw existence as the medium in which the individual is able to become. However, Kierkegaard's prioritization of existence as a necessary element of the maturing process cannot be divorced from his view of Christ's incarnation, which he saw as the origination of the possibility of human transformation. Kierkegaard views the temporal as being defined by changeableness, which is the precise opposite of God, who is changeless (Walsh 2009:78). Temporality—essentially, existence—allows for spiritual formation precisely because it is characterized by its mutability. For this reason, the formation of the spiritual cannot occur without its intrusion into the finite. The work of Christ reifies this truth. The Son of God's earthly form broke the barrier between finite humanity and infinite divinity. The incarnation therefore initiated the potential marriage of the infinite and the finite within the human being. Dunning (2014:208) writes, "Incarnation posits the objective, external, historical event as the Moment in which the incommensurable eternal makes itself commensurable within time." Only by the incarnation is the individual able to relate to the eternal within existence—the medium of mutability—and thereby come into the same state of existence as Christ.

Christ's incarnation is the historical point of departure in Kierkegaard's conception of Christian formation, and it is for this reason that existence itself is of utmost importance to him. Law (2010:230) writes, "Existence is no longer an impediment which obscures the human being's innate relationship to the eternal, but *is the place where the individual first comes to know the eternal*…. The task is not to recollect oneself out of existence and into the eternal, but to establish a relationship to the eternal within and through existence itself." The eternal aspects of the human spirit are manifested through a process of synthesis which can only occur through Christ in temporal existence. However, this

synthesis is impossible outside of a relationship with God. The end of existential despair "occurs when the self, in relating to itself and in wanting to be itself, is grounded nakedly in the power that established it" (Kierkegaard 2007:136). This relational view maintains the importance of a focus on the development of self through the medium of existence grounded in God. Christ was the eternal in finite form, and this is the example we are meant to follow in this life.

This existential view of Christianity is thoroughly formational. Kierkegaard (1989a:604-605) writes: "we must do everything we can to guard against changing Christianity into a beautiful, innocent recollection, instead of being what is most decisive in a person's becoming." This Christian worldview and lifestyle is required for the human to move through the spheres of life to become a single individual. Kierkegaard's views here represent a formation-centric view of the Christian faith, for they emphasize transformation as an inextricable aspect of the participation in genuine Christianity. The spiritual formation of the character of the believer is of utmost importance in the true practice of the Christian religion (Gouwens 1988:21). Walsh (2009:26) summarizes:

> Kierkegaard maintained that Christianity is not a doctrine but an 'existence-communication'. By this he meant that what Christianity seeks to communicate to individuals is not knowledge about Christianity, although some preliminary information must first be imparted, but an inward capability for existing authentically through a relation to God or the eternal in time in the form of an individual human being, Jesus Christ.

For Kierkegaard, Christianity is not primarily grasped epistemologically, but rather ontologically. In this view, the only way for the believer to truly know the truth of Christianity is to become it. This dependency of theological epistemology upon spiritual ontology is perhaps the quintessential theo-philosophical idea behind Kierkegaard's brand of existentialism.

The theological incitation for the incarnation is sin, and one purpose of the incarnation is the end of sinfulness itself. The very nature of the incarnation bespeaks spiritual formation. Sin represents an untraversable gulf between God and humanity, for it corrupts the human faculties of knowledge to such a degree that God's immanence cannot be recognized (Walsh 2009:64). The only way to retrieve the human from complete alienation from God and subsequently brought back into the potentiality of the eternal is through Jesus Christ.

The incarnation represents the transformational power of Christianity as the ultimate solution to sin (Rae 1997:32). Christ does not want to only forgive our sins, but wants to save us from sinning altogether. Kierkegaard (1975b:258) writes, "There is a Savior, not merely so that we can resort to him when we have sinned, receiving forgiveness, but precisely for the purpose of saving us from sinning." This is the ultimate end of the incarnation: the complete formation of the believer into a sinless state. Barrett (2013:6) writes, "Kierkegaard's primary interest in the atonement was in the way in which truly understanding it involves a transformation of the passions of the believer."

Kierkegaard further recognizes the formative importance of viewing Christ as the emulatable paragon of Christian ontology (Kierkegaard 1991:238-239; cf. Barrett 2013:19). Kierkegaard states that the Church of his day overemphasized the triumph of Christ's death while not giving adequate attention to Christ's status as the pattern. He writes: "I and every Christian are to strive to model our lives in likeness to it, and this should be the primary subject of preaching" (Kierkegaard 1991:107). By placing the growth of the believer toward the pattern of Christ as the locus of Christian teaching, Kierkegaard characterizes the true observance of Christianity as being primarily formative in nature. Kierkegaard writes, "What then, is the difference between an admirer and a follower? A follower is or strives to be what he admires. An admirer, however, keeps himself personally detached" (1991:241). All Christians, according to Kierkegaard, must truly follow Christ, and in so doing, strive to become like Him. However, if we only admire Jesus from afar, there is no intent to emulate him. Kierkegaard further states that admirers "refuse to accept that Christ's life is a demand. In actual fact, they are offended at him" (1991:242). In emphasizing this point, Kierkegaard offers Judas and Nicodemus as admirers of Jesus, representing incorrect ways to relate to Christ (1991:246-247). Mere admirers will not be spiritually formed.

3.4.1.2 Subjective Epistemology

Kierkegaard's existential pursuit of the Christian life is not only definitionally concerned with the state of the believer, but also interested in the methods by which that ontological state can be affected by God and His truth. Kierkegaard's conceptions of incarnation and existence require a subjective mode of Christianity. Walsh (2009:34) writes, "If Christianity is an existence-communication rather than a doctrine, a truth to be appropriated in existence rather than comprehended by thought, then it must be regarded as being essentially subjective rather than objective in nature". Existential Christianity calls for

subjective epistemology because subjective epistemology is ontologically relevant. To be clear, Kierkegaard is not an advocate of subjectivism, a worldview in which there is no objective truth. However, he does assert that the "how" of the truth determines the existential makeup of the human being (Walsh 2009:34-35). The "how" is found in subjectivity—that is, "how" salvation is true to the individual. This is a subjective approach to Christian spiritual formation.

Perhaps the most foundational theo-philosophical concept which informs Kierkegaard's prioritization of subjectivity is the nature of God Himself. God, as the Supreme Being who defines creation, cannot be an object, but is forever a subject. For this reason, humans cannot perceive or interact with God objectively. Objective reason is insufficient to the task of finding a formative relationship with God (Rae 1997:3). This, then, explains the need for internal subjectivity, for God cannot be known externally, that is, as an object (Walsh 2009:54). Kierkegaard's subjectivity prioritizes existential knowledge in the Christian context, particularly in the idea of "being the truth". This entails the involvement with "a personal God who, with authority, calls people to undergo transformation toward God's morally perfect character," from which "(sacred) knowledge and evidence follow suit" (Moser and McCreary 2010:131). The recognition of Christian truth, therefore, first requires an attendant spiritual formation which brings the human into an ontological state of such truth. The understanding of and belief in God's truth can only be found by first becoming according to that truth. Kierkegaard believes that "the 'what' of Christian faith, the salvific self-disclosure of God in Jesus Christ, cannot be understood except under the condition of the individual's being transformed by that event itself" (Rae 1997:172). The individual's true interaction with absolute truth, therefore, must be found through subjective internalization rather than objective reasoning (Walsh 2009:36-37; Malantschuk 2015:307). The existing individual must be transformed by an encounter with divine truth. This is a genuine understanding of the divine. Thus, objective approaches to God or Christianity are ineffective in the individual's apprehension of truth (Allison 1998:130). In this way, true Christianity is inherently formational. Kierkegaard (2007:73) writes, "To know a creed by rote is, quite simply, paganism. This is because Christianity is inwardness. Christianity is paradox, and paradox requires but one thing: the passion of faith."

In Kierkegaard's view of Christianity, the very being of the human must be changed in order to comprehend God. True faith is only found in those who have been transformed. Barrett summarizes: "Christianity assumes that faith, the capacity to understand and embrace the truth, is not an achievement of the individual or an activation of a latent

human power. Christianity's foregrounding of gratitude to the Teacher implies that humanity needs to be transformed, not merely actualized" (Barrett 2010:67). Relating to the Word subjectively allows the believer to relate the Word to self. An existing individual cannot interact with any objective truth that is not rendered subjectively interactive. This subjective mode of human comprehension can be readily understood by the example of Kierkegaard's treatment of sin. Holmer (1957:27) states that Kierkegaard desired to "make clear that no one is a sinner deductively and only because the dogma says that all men are sinners". Rather, each person's recognition of sin is achieved through the subjective personal experience of sinning. Subjectivity is required to properly recognize the truth that the human being needs salvation from sin.

Further, the need for subjective epistemology arises due to the absurdity of Christian doctrine. Kierkegaard states that the incarnation is a paradox which seems absurd by human logic, and therefore exemplifies the practical limitations of doctrine to convey the truth of Christianity in rational terms. The incarnation brings the divine eternal into finite time and human history, and this is a paradox which reasoning alone cannot grasp (Rae 1997:78). Walsh (2009:36) summarizes Kierkegaard view: "Christianity is the most improbable of historical facts." For this reason, the human's rational faculties are inadequate to the task of receiving its truth. The paradoxical absurdity of the most important event in history causes Kierkegaard to look at Christian truths as irrational propositions. For Kierkegaard, the ramifications of Christ's incarnation, applied in the life of the individual, was of supreme importance in a genuine understanding of Christianity. As Stokes (2010:163) writes, "A dispassionate, detached, and objective approach to Christian doctrine is wholly inappropriate to the central meaning of Christianity; if a person were ostensibly to enquire into their personal salvation in a dispassionate mode we would be entitled to wonder if such a person really understood the object." Salvation must be divinely imputed knowledge, rather than conceptual knowledge. Kierkegaard characterizes ontological subjectivity as a prerequisite to the epistemological concerns of orthodoxy.

If Christian truth is not informational but ontological, then it must be appropriated subjectively. The subjective, inward approach appropriates God's truth, inculcating it into the believer's being. Kierkegaard contrasts Christ's metaphor of the truth as food (Jn 6:48-51) with the attempt to impart true Christianity through lectures. He writes, "The truth is lived before it is understood. It must be fought for, tested, and appropriated. Truth is the way" (Kierkegaard 1991:211). Eating is a metaphor for the appropriation of truth. This appropriation cannot be anything other than spiritually formative for the process of

acquiring divine truth is, in itself, the process of spiritual formation. Kierkegaard (1989a:91–92) writes: "The subjective thinker is continually striving, is always in the process of becoming. How far the subjective thinker might be along that road, whether a long way or a short, makes no essential difference (it is, after all, just a finitely relative comparison); as long as he is existing, he is in the process of becoming." The pursuit of existential truth positions the individual in a consistent, ongoing process of becoming (Allison 2998:145). The subjective truth of the divine is never able to be completely comprehended, for it is infinite. However, it is inexhaustibly the source of formation which leads to epistemological satisfaction.

Objective thinking, for Kierkegaard, intentionally ignores the subjective, hoping instead to find truth outside of, and without reference to, the self. Kierkegaard (1989a:192) writes, "By contrast, in subjective reflection truth becomes personal appropriation, a life, inwardness, and the point is to immerse oneself in this subjectivity." Subjective modes of approaching truth inculcate that truth into the self as a process of discovery through internalization. Kierkegaard (2007:58-59) writes:

> It is true that subjective reflection turns inward, but in this inward deepening there is truth. Lest we forget, the subject, the individual, is an existing self, and existing is a process of becoming. Therefore truth as the identity of thought and being is an illusion of the abstract. The knower is first and foremost an existing person. In other words, thinking and being are not automatically one and the same. If the existing person could actually be outside himself, the truth would then be something concluded for him. However, for the truly existing person, passion, not thought, is existence at its very highest: true knowing pertains essentially to existence, to a life of decision and responsibility. Only ethical and ethicalreligious knowing is essential knowing. Only truth that matters to me, to you, is of significance.

Subjectivity and ontology form major bases of Kierkegaard's theo-philosophical foundation of spiritual formation. Belief and faith are not primarily about thinking, but rather being. The objective approach to truth renders all gained knowledge personally meaningless (Welstead 2014:812). Therefore, such meaningless knowledge does not aid the human being in any truly beneficial way—that is, existentially. This view necessarily elevates spiritual formation to be a foundational Christian principle (cf. Kierkegaard 1970:13–14). The fight of faith and the believer's conflict with the world is a conflict surrounding the

growth of character. The seeking of truth is, in itself, the means by which transformation occurs. Kierkegaard writes, "Seeking the truth means that the seeker himself is changed, so that he may become the place where the object of his search can be" (Kierkegaard 1939:28). This jarring explanation of this inward search playfully asserts that the focus of the individual search for truth must be performed in such a way that the object of the search, truth itself, becomes located internally. If this is not accomplished, divine truth is never truly apprehended. Walsh (2009:33-34) writes, "Insofar as Christianity has doctrines, such as the doctrines of the incarnation and atonement…it is a doctrine that is to be actualized in existence rather than speculatively comprehended." The pursuit of self-authenticity, through the development of personal faith, was of highest import to Kierkegaard (Golomb 1992:65; McDonald 2016:n.p.). Kierkegaard (1989a:560) clarifies: "The difficulty is not to understand what Christianity is but to become and to be a Christian." Theological speculations are not only futile, but miss the entire point of Christianity. The nature of Christian truth requires a subjective epistemological mode in which ontological transformation leads to true comprehension.

3.4.1.3 The God Relation

In his later works—often not pseudonymous—as well as his journals, Kierkegaard characterizes God as loving and desirous of a relationship with humans (Moser and McCreary 2010:127). Kierkegaard's concept of a relationship with God is an outgrowth of his characterization of Christianity as primarily a subjective enterprise. God is a subject, not an object, therefore the comprehension of the divine requires a personal approach. God must be related to as subject. Moser and McCreary (2010:132) write of Kierkegaard's view: "God is a personal agent, a subject with definite redemptive purposes for humans. Human knowledge of God, therefore, ought to be characterized by subjectivity and relationality, not by impersonal or detached forms of objective knowledge." God, as Spirit, can only be known in an inward spiritual relationship (Evans 2006:180-181). For Kierkegaard the concept of relationship is of fundamental importance in the act of believing. Kierkegaard (1975b:346) writes, "To believe is not an indifferent relation to something that is true. It is an infinitely decisive relationship. The accent always falls upon the relationship." The individual cannot believe the truth without relating himself to it. This is the "how" (relationship) and the "what" (truth) which comes together in the individual of faith. In this way, the believer comes to understand objective realities through the subjective mode of relationality. Particularly, the Christian reaches to relate to God in the

subjective recognition of his "radical need of forgiveness, of transformation, and of new life" (Rae 2010:41). While the God relation results in the knowledge of Christian truth, the directional emphasis is on spiritual formation.

God's motivation for the relationship with humanity is the same motivation which causes God to transform humanity: love. Kierkegaard states that it is because of God's infinite, unconditional love that he wishes to bring humanity into some state of equality with him (Kierkegaard 2007:44). Love, therefore, is a motivation for God in seeing his children mature. Kierkegaard (2007:94) writes, "If equality cannot be established, love becomes unhappy and incomplete. The revelation of God's love becomes meaningless, the two cannot understand each other." Kierkegaard believes that humans must in some way become "equal" to God in order for His love to be complete. The divine-human relationship culminates in the individual coming into union with God (Barrett 2015:102). This union requires some sort of ontological parity between the two parties. If the human cannot mature into the requirements of equality, God's love cannot be reciprocated. Countervalent to human reason, God's solution to this problem was to humble himself to appear in time as a servant. An integral part of the God relation is Christ himself. Kierkegaard (2007:95-96) writes, "For this is the unfathomable nature of boundless love, that it desires to be equal with the beloved; not in jest, but in truth. And this is the omnipotence of resolving love, deciding to be equal with the beloved." Walsh (2009:65) states that Kierkegaard views the incarnation as motivated by God's love in order to establish a relationship of understanding between himself and humanity. Through the established model of Christ, God desires to place his divinity within the human believer. This is spiritual formation at its most magisterial, for the implantation of the divine creates "a new person and a new vessel" (Kierkegaard 2007:96).

Not only must God be understood relationally, but further, the formation of the Christian is inextricably tied into the believer's relationship with God. The process of becoming an authentic single individual can only be done in relation to God. Golomb (1992:79) writes, "It is this formative relation that creates the self's authenticity." In this way, relationship is a defining theo-philosophical foundation of Kierkegaard's approach to spiritual formation. However, the knowledge of God is dependent first upon the believer's becoming. Evans (2006:10) writes, "Kierkegaard thinks that human beings can know God's reality, and in fact the reason no rational proof of God's reality is necessary is because God can become present to human beings. This is only possible, however, when humans are spiritually and inwardly developed. Thus, the discovery of metaphysical truth cannot be divorced from the

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process of personal transformation." Once again, Kierkegaard places ontology before epistemology. However, the tie between the two must be understood relationally. The human's relationship to God leads to transformation, and with successive transformation, the believer comes to know God in deeper and deeper ways. Walsh (2009:51; cf. Moser and McCreary 2010:131) writes "As Kierkegaard sees it, a relation to God is 'a voyage of discovery' in which one comes to know God through an 'inland journey' into oneself." The knowledge of God, therefore, functions in two directions. Firstly, the believer's knowledge of God is required for his or her own formation. Resultantly, the more the believer comes to know himself by drawing upon God in the divine relationship, the more the believer knows God.

The pursuit of formation in authentic Christianity requires the deep recognition of the human's inability to change and of God's commensurate power of enabling transformation. There is an infinite gulf between humans and God, and humans can accomplish nothing of true significance aside from God. Kierkegaard (1970:113) writes, "The law of relationship between us humans and God is as follows: Major Premise: There is an infinite, radical, qualitative difference between God and humans. This means that we can achieve absolutely nothing; it is God who gives everything…. This is grace, and this is Christianity's major premise. Minor Premise: Although we can merit nothing, unconditionally nothing, we can, in faith, dare in all childlikeness to be involved with God." For Kierkegaard, these two premises must be kept in mind together, for the first premise alone forbids a true relationship with God. The human's inward understanding of the need for God in the process of transformation must propel the believer into a relationship with God. Kierkegaard (1990:325) writes: "Just as knowing ourselves in our own nothingness is the condition for knowing God, so knowing God is the condition for the sanctification of a human being by God's assistance and according to his intention. Wherever God is, there he is always creating." God is always creating, and the individual who relates himself to the Absolute will naturally be formed by the connection.

3.4.1.4 Self and Inwardness

Kierkegaard sees the self as a spiritual interior entity, discovered and maintained in relationship, and dynamically formed by choice and activity. He writes that "the self is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity. The self is the conscious unity of these factors, which relates to itself, whose task is to become itself. This, of course, can only be done in relationship to God, who holds

the synthesis together" (Kierkegaard 1989b:59). The true self is a synthesis of the finite and infinite, and is exclusively formed and held in the God relationship. The self is ultimately created by God, and therefore the self is wholly dependent upon God. Evans (2006:285) writes of Kierkegaard: "He describes the self *both* as something I am *and* something I must become, *both* as a substance *and* as something to be achieved. This is not confusion on his part, because to understand the self it is imperative to see the self in both of these dimensions." In this way, the relationship with God which stands at the center of the single individual is both something which presently exists, and something which must be further established. Kierkegaard (1989b:79) writes, "And what infinite reality the self gets by being conscious of existing before God, by becoming a human self whose criterion is God!" In this way, the relationship between God and the individual is a sort of feedback loop in which a stronger connection with God creates a stronger sense of self, which then leads to a stronger connection with God (Walsh 2009:104).

The problem which requires the single individual to find transformation in God is the emergence of their spirit. Kierkegaard defines the spirit as a "self" (Hannay 2003:64). The issue of spirit is important to Kierkegaard because God is a Spirit. Humans, therefore, must be "transformed into spirit." This does not happen through temporal blessings, but rather through a spiritual relationship (Kierkegaard 2007:44). Elsewhere, Kierkegaard states, "In the world of spirit, to change place is to be changed yourself" (1989a:281–282). In this way, spiritual movement is spiritual growth. Progress and transformation are equivalent in the realm of spirit.

For Kierkegaard, the human soul and body are naturally unified. Each person must first recognize these limitations of soul and body in order to break into a true spirituality (Hannay 2003:72). The human who never comes to the border of temporal limitation will never encounter an existential crisis which leads to change. However, spiritual consciousness is predicated on the human recognizing the infinitude of a superlative consciousness which exists over and above the soul and body. This increased awareness comes with it a set of new and specific problems, in which the human must address the existential opposites such as "infinity and finitude, eternity and temporality" (Hannay 2003:72). There is a conflict which emerges from the person finding this self, the spiritual consciousness, and moving from the limitations of immediacy to eternality. This is the process in which the rational faculties collapse under the strain of paradox. The spiritual self only thrives on inner subjectivity.

Kierkegaard views the self as being constantly in transition, formed either by estrangement from God in sin or by a relationship with God. Just as maturity in God can grow, so too can sin. Sin leads to despair, which then leads to the breaking of the relationship with God's grace and with the self (Puchniak 2011:189). The unstable malleability of the human being can be both conducive and detrimental to the process of spiritual formation. However, the self will always be moving in one direction or the other.

It is important to recognize that Kierkegaard's conception of the natural state of self is one of disunity and incompleteness. "The actual self God creates includes within it diverse possibilities, and with these are given the possibility of forming a unified self" (Evans 2006:287). The unified self only exists in relation to God, who imputes infinitude to the individual. The self must relate both to itself and to the God which created it in order to emerge as the true self (Kierkegaard 1989b:13-14). As Walsh (2009:98; original emphasis) summarizes, "This means that *one can become oneself only through a relation to God*, who defines what it means to be a human self and makes it possible for one to become that self." The incomplete self acutely feels the despair of sin. However, in relation to God, the true self emerges as newly divine due to the addition of God himself as a *telos* (Kierkegaard 1989b:77-85). The antidote to the futile despair of sinfulness and disunity is a creative despair which drives the individual toward selfhood in God. However, people are most often not aware of their own lack of self, and of living in a state of spiritlessness (Kierkegaard 2007:134-135). Those who live in the immediacy of the soul life have not attained selfhood, for they have no regard for their eternal potentiality. Futile despair is therefore "the spiritual subject unwilling to conform to its true self" (Hannay 2003:71).

Counterintuitively, Kierkegaard holds that the self must relate to God inwardly. Kierkegaard writes, "The human self is such a derived, established relation, a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates itself to an other" (1989b:13-14). Utmost inwardness is the only mode of objectivity in matters of faith (Allison 2998:139). The theo-philosophical foundation of subjectivity and the God relation requires inwardness in transforming the self. An inward focus recognizes the person's individual relation with God, and only this focus is spiritually constructive (Allison 1998:130). Kierkegaard (2007:71-73) states that faith, and Christianity itself, is an inner reality. The believer's inner being determines how that person will react to the events of life. Kierkegaard (1975b:354) writes, "Therefore, your whole view of life actually is a confession of the state of your inner being." The ontological status of the individual affects their entire worldview. The inward focus in relation to God gives God access to change the self. Kierkegaard characterizes this inner

relationship with the divine as a spring of water in the desert found within the inner self (Kierkegaard 1970:118). This is the application of subjectivity to the principle of the God relation. Spiritual formation hinges not only on establishing a relationship with God, but also on doing so in an inwardly authentic way in which the self is allowed to flourish under God's hand.

3.4.2 Stevens' Theology

The theo-philosophical underpinnings of Stevens' theory reflect Stevens' emphasis on the Bible as the foundation of Christian life and truth. Further, they touch on the most foundational theological elements of Christianity, including Christology, anthropology, soteriology, and the nature of sin. The paradigmatic concept of a walk with God emerges from basic tenets of Christianity. However, Stevens was more concerned with how such basic tenets were lived out than with the formulation of doctrinal statements (cf. Stevens 1974d:129; 1981:424). Referencing John 7:17, Stevens (1977e:146) writes, "The basis for knowing the truth is not the fact that you know doctrine and theology; it is the dedication of your spirit to do the truth." The enacting of God's Word was an overarching concern of Stevens. Stevens states that his ministry emphasizes a walk with God over doctrine, but that the greatest doctrinal emphasis it has is on the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Stevens 1986:420).

Stevens decision to downplay doctrinal theology must be tempered with an emphasis of his love of the Bible. Stevens (2007b:813) writes, "I love the Bible very much; I love it with all my heart. But I am not going to put it up on a pedestal and worship it. I please God best by honoring it as His Word and transferring it away from a Book and letting it be written on the tablets of my heart (II Corinthians 3:2–3)." This quote perhaps best summarizes how Stevens approached theological truth overall. The point of studying the Bible is to be transformed by it. Stevens could generally be said to follow an applied theology approach in his teachings, with a consistent concern for the spiritual formation of the believer. For this reason, the theo-philosophical foundations of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation are readily packaged toward application. Stevens rarely discussed a scriptural truth without also giving attendant comments on practical ramifications. The relevant theological topics covered in this section include Christlikeness, the sin nature, God's role in spiritual transformation, the Holy Spirit, relationship, revelation, and the nature of the human being. This section does not attempt to provide a complete account of Stevens' views on these theological principles. Rather, they are presented here only as they are relevant to his

concept of a walk with God and to spiritual formation.

Summary Proposition: *The theological basis of spiritual formation reflects the complete salvific power of Christ manifested through a relationship with God, which removes the sin nature and imparts Christlikeness.*

Scriptures: Ps 51:5; Is 53:6; Jer 13:23; Mt 6:33, 16:16-18; Lk 5:6-11; Jn 1:12, 3:1-7, 30, 4:23-24, 7:17, 14:25-26, 16:13; Acts 2; Rom 6:6, 7, 8:1-2, 6-14, 17, 29, 32, 10:3-4, 12:1-2; 1 Cor 2:7-13, 3:2-3, 12:3; 2 Cor 3:2-3, 12-18, 4:11, 5:17, 6:1-18, 8:9; Gal 2:16-21, 3:3, 5:13-24, 6:12-16; Eph 1:3, 2:2-10, 3:14-19, 4:10, 13, 22-24; Phil 1:6, 2:13, 3:7-21; Col 1:24-29, 3:1-5, 9-10; 1 Th 5:23; 2 Th 1:10; 2 Tim 2:11; Heb 2:10, 12:2; 2 Pet 1:4a, 20-21; 1 Jn 2:17, 3:1-2; Rev 12:11

3.4.2.1 Christlikeness

Stevens' presentation of the goal of spiritual formation heavily features Christlikeness, and his paradigmatic concept heavily features the Lordship of Christ. While the previous discussion of Christlikeness was from the standpoint of the goal of spiritual formation, this section approaches the topic as it pertains to the theological underpinnings of Stevens' theory. Stevens sees Philippians 3:10—in which Paul connects knowing Christ, fellowshipping in his sufferings, and conforming to his death—as a model of Christian maturity. However, Stevens holds that believers are not meant to merely imitate Christ, but rather to let Him live within them. Stevens (1987: 562–563) writes, "Do not imitate Christ. Insist that He live in you and that His nature come forth in you. There has to be an impartation of His divine nature to make you a new creation in Christ Jesus." Spiritual formation, for Stevens, is the genuine transformation of the believer into the authentic likeness of Christ. It does not entail a simple emulation, but an impartation of the nature of Christ. Romans 8:32 is also a foundational Scripture for Stevens regarding Christlikeness, wherein Stevens sees a clear link between the sacrifice of Jesus and the Lord's determination to give to His people. The Lord's sacrifice is itself a power of change available to the believer (Stevens 1977c:104). For Stevens, though, what this promise specifically entails is that God will give to each believer what He first gave to Jesus. After reading Ephesians 4:10, Stevens (1983:337-338) writes:

The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ must not be viewed in terms of doctrine alone, or you will miss the meaning. If you think Jesus died

for your sins, was buried, and rose again just so you could be delivered out of your sin and that is all, you have missed it. That is only one phase of what He is doing. What He is really intending to do is to fill all things. Christ intends to fill everything. The Lordship of Jesus Christ means that He will invade one area after another in your life. He will fill it. You will have nothing to retain to yourself; everything is subject to Christ.

The process of spiritual formation, for Stevens, is a reflection of the theological foundation of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, which allows for every area of the believer's life to be progressively filled with Jesus Christ.

Stevens understands that some Christian perspectives may view the partaking of the divine nature as a heretical idea. In response to this, he quotes John 1:12 (that those who receive Jesus are able to become sons of God), 2 Peter 1:4a (that we can be partakers of the divine nature), Romans 8:17 (that we are to be joint heirs with Christ), and Hebrews 2:10-11 (that we are Jesus' brethren and he is bringing us to glory). Stevens (1983:346-347; cf. 1987:67) explains this issue from God's perspective: "God does not want to have fellowship with an inferior creature. He is invading us and filling us to bring us into deity…. To me this is not sacrilegious; it is the most humbling truth I have ever heard. If He came down and experienced the dregs of my humanity, it was so that I could partake of the glory of what He is, and He is God." In discussing all of this, however, Stevens is clear that in no way does this brand of spiritual formation take away from Christ's position or being. Christ holds a unique relationship with the Father that will never be competed with or disrupted by the reduplication of His nature in Christian individuals.

Stevens' view of Christ's role in the believer's life extends far beyond initial salvation from sin. The walk with God involves the process of coming into conformity with Jesus. Stevens asserts that every believer has "the right to become." By this he means to become like Christ. The phrase is borrowed from John 1:12. Stevens (1987:67-68) explains: "The Lord is doing more than forgiving us of our acts and our attitudes. He is putting to death our old nature. The flesh is being crucified and He is taking over. Let the Lord take over! Let Him invade your being, for to as many as receive Him, to them He gave the right to become— that is yours! But remember, the right to become and the responsibility to be go hand in hand." Ephesians 3:14-19 also discusses the indwelling of Christ in the believer that he may have the fulness of God (Stevens 1983:346). Second Thessalonians 1:10 also speaks to this theme, for Christ is coming to be admired in his saints (Stevens 1983:344). After

reading Colossians 1:24-29, Stevens concludes that Paul had a spiritual formation focus in his ministry, for he desired to present each person complete in Christ.

The particular way in which this happens is through the identification with Christ, and the subsequent experience of appropriating the spiritual power of His death, burial, and resurrection. Stevens holds that the NT emphasizes the efficacy of the believer's identification with Christ on the cross, rather than human religious efforts (2007c:521-522). The believer is meant to see the old nature crucified according to the power of Christ's sacrifice. The spiritually formed new nature is not meant to coexist with the old flesh nature. As Colossians 3:3-5 states, the earthly nature is put to death in Christ. Galatians 5:24 and 6:14 states that the flesh and its lusts are to be crucified, and that we are to be crucified to the world. In Galatians we are promised new life through the cross of Jesus (2:16-21), the crucifixion of the flesh (5:13-24), and the world crucified to us (6:12-16). The work of the cross was about Christ's suffering under all of man's iniquity (Is 53:6) in order for the very nature of iniquity to be removed. God works the complete fulfillment of the cross in the believer's life, but this must be understood to be Christ's cross experience reduplicated within the believer. In other words, the individual does not produce his own experience of the cross, but rather appropriates the fullness of Christ's (Stevens 2007c:467-468). Stevens states that Romans 6:6, Philippians 3:7-21, 2 Corinthians 4:11, Galatians 2:20, and 2 Timothy 2:11 discuss how this is established in the believer's life (Stevens 2007c:524). The process of crucifying the flesh and the growth of the new nature within the believer are concurrent, as described in John 3:30. The old nature decreases, while Christ increases (Stevens 1983:340-341). This is the process toward Christlikeness which beats at the heart of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation.

Stevens states that one application of Christlikeness is in spiritual warfare. The armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-11 are qualities of Christ's righteousness. The human cannot work up such righteousness, therefore "Unless we put on Christ and appropriate Him, unless we clothe ourselves with what He really is, we aren't able to meet Satan properly" (Stevens 1973a:42-43). Putting on the armor of God is therefore a metaphor for appropriating the nature of Christ. Stevens continues, "The more we appropriate Him, the more we are positioning ourselves in the Lord. This means that every time Satan comes against you, you must refuse to rise to debate, to meet him in your own strength, in your own feelings, and in your own qualifications." In this way, Stevens presents Christlikeness as the proper positioning of the believer in dealing with spiritual warfare.

Kierkegaard also places Christ at the center of his theory, although his approach is focused on Christ's incarnation, rather than sacrifice. The incarnation, for Kierkegaard, was the foundation of all Christian theology (Walsh 2009:111). Kierkegaard characterizes the incarnation as a paradox. Rae (1997:92) writes of Kierkegaard's characterization of the incarnation: "the revelation of God disturbs the natural order, calls into question the sinful organization of human life and requires transformation and repentance from those to whom the revelation is addressed." The incarnation is a revelation of God by which the finite human is invited to find relationship with God, and further, acts as the paragon of human life united with the divine. The incarnation is itself the model of spiritual formation.

> The distinguishing mark of a truly Christian existence is, according to Kierkegaard, the central paradox of the Gospel – the fact that God, the Eternal, becomes a human being. This, unlike the truths of the ethical life or religious insight, cannot be known by means of intuition only. It comes in revelation and is received by faith: the highest passion of inwardness. (Moore 2007:xxiv; cf. McDonald 2016:n.p.)

The eternal in temporal form is the same language Kierkegaard uses for the human who has become a single individual. The philosophical conception of Christ's incarnation as paradox allows for a process of spiritual formation to lead the individual into realization of that same paradox: becoming a spiritually mature entity in temporal existence. It seems that Kierkegaard and Stevens arrive in similar territory in their handling of Christ's role in spiritual formation. However, the paths they take to get there differ. Stevens emphasizes the Lordship of Christ as the defining role of man's relationship to God. This theo-philosophical priority guides the believer's formative walk with God in every aspect. Kierkegaard emphasizes that the paradox of the incarnation leads the human toward a subjective approach to the God relation. This articulation leads to an inward focus on becoming as the only means by which truth is apprehended. While Kierkegaard's approach to the incarnation primarily addresses its philosophical and cognitive implications, Stevens' theory is more directly resonant with the biblical text.

3.4.2.2 The Sin Nature

The sinful nature of humanity is the opposite of Christlikeness and the underlying reason why the believer must pursue spiritual formation. The greatest scriptural principle which describes the state of spiritual immaturity is the sin nature (cf. Ps 51:5; Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22-

24; Col 3:9-10). For Stevens, the individual actions of sin are much less important than addressing the sin nature itself. Rather than pruning leaves and branches of a tree which must be removed, the effective choice is to destroy the root. This is what the process of spiritual formation is meant to do regarding the sin nature. Repentance should not be exclusively focused on actions of sin, but should be an act of seeking God for transformation into the nature of Christ (Stevens 2007c:279-281). The reduction of the sin nature in favor of Christ's nature is the scriptural model of the process of maturity favored by Stevens (1982a:206-207). Spiritual maturity reflects the minimization of the sin nature and the increased internalized nature of God.

Stevens characterizes the conflict between the old flesh nature and the new divine nature as being a "civil war". Galatians 5:16-17 state that the spirit and the flesh war against each other (1987:193). This civil war is also enumerated in Romans 7, and solved by the first few verses of Romans 8. Those in Christ Jesus are set free from the law of sin and death. Stevens suggests that Christians often attempt to war against the flesh with flesh—that is through human strength. This will never lead to spiritual transformation. The effective approach is to focus on strengthening the new nature and crucifying the flesh nature (cf Col 3:1-2; Stevens 2007c:522). Stevens emphasizes that in this process, the believer should focus on the fullness of Christ, rather than the process of emptying of the flesh (Stevens 1989:491-492; cf. Gal 2:20). Focusing on the sins of the flesh can lead to an attempt to regulate the old nature rather than seeing it die. However, focusing on Jesus and partaking of him will naturally kill the flesh nature. Stevens (1983:347-348) states, "Sanctification is largely a matter of displacement. The fuller I become of God, the more I displace the flesh, and the more the other thing goes. The more we become full in Him, the more the other things are eliminated in our lives." For Stevens, the flesh nature cannot be reformed. It must be reckoned dead on the cross.

Philippians 3:9 states that our righteousness is not from the Law, but from Christ. Similarly, Galatians 6:15 explains that religious actions (circumcision or uncircumcision) are not effective; instead, the believer must become a new creature. The old nature must be crucified (Stevens 2007c:281). Attempting to control the old nature is not genuine spiritual formation. A mere reformation of the sin nature does not equate to spiritual maturity (Stevens 2007c:283-284). The NT teaches that the human nature must be crucified in order to bring forth Christ's divine nature. A legalistic approach, however, attempts to perfect the old nature. Stevens opines that the condemnation mentioned in Romans 8:1-2 is representative of the attempt to address sin through religious discipline. This is similar to

the attempt to establish righteousness through human means rather than seeing first God's righteousness (Rom 10:3-4; Mt 6:33; Stevens 2007c:691-692). Stevens (2007c:692) states that when humans attempt to rule over the sin nature, the result is "a very highly refined old Adamic nature!" 2 Corinthians 5:17, however, emphasizes a new nature, rather than a new version of the old nature. As Galatians 3:3 states, the process of maturity began by the Holy Spirit, and cannot be completed in the strength of the flesh. When the believer stops focusing on God, that is when the process of formation ceases. Walking with God consistently, however, allows for a progressive spiritual transformation. Stevens' theological understanding of spiritual formation is the process of destroying the spiritual immaturity of the sin nature and replacing it with Christ's nature.

Kierkegaard explains that his conception of anxiety (angst) encompasses the Christian doctrine of sin. Kierkegaard's idea of universal illness of despair—which is a fundamental characteristic of the human relationship with God—arises from the sin nature (Kierkegaard 1967:94; Walsh 2009:80, 90). Humans naturally exist in a state of untruth, which is the state of sin. This is a separation from God, who is the truth. Transformation cannot occur until this initial state is overcome (Walsh 2009:42-43). The only kind of entity effective toward addressing this universal condition of sinful humanity is one which can transform the human into a being which can grasp the truth. "Only the God [sic] himself could so re-create the person; hence the teacher must be the God himself" (Evans 2006:100). In this paradigm, spiritual formation can only result from a Being which exists outside of human limitation. Sinful humans cannot rescue themselves from their sin precisely because they are stuck in the impotence of sinfulness. Rae (1997:107) writes "the gulf of sin which separates men and women from God is not overcome by the offering of some new teaching but by an ontological transformation of the individual which God alone may accomplish." The very ontological state of sinfulness prohibits the human capacity to recognize the truth of God's Word. The human faculties of religious consciousness are not naturally able to grasp divine truth without the external aid from God. Therefore, this sinful state must be changed through ontological transformation to achieve an authentic recognition of Christianity. This requires a maintained relationship with the eternal, who rescues the human from the limitations of the sin nature. Both Stevens and Kierkegaard portray sin as an integral part of human ontology which withstands the process of transformation. For Stevens, the sin nature is the opposite of Christlikeness. For Kierkegaard, sinfulness prohibits the understanding of God's truth. Stevens seems to see the sin nature and Christ's nature as two opposite poles in the process of spiritual

formation. Kierkegaard seems to see the genuine comprehension of Christian truth as an ontological proposition, and therefore his theo-philosophical foundation of sinfulness is primarily characterized as a roadblock to the correct observance of Christianity. Both views, however, require the God relation in order to be freed from the limitations of sin. In this way, sin is the bottom starting point of spiritual formation. It is what the believer must move away from in the process of maturity.

3.4.2.3 God as the Source of Transformation

Stevens is adamant that transformation comes directly from God. Stevens explains that no amount of human effort will ever produce lasting change. A walk with God involves a dedicated reliance on Him in every attempt at orthopraxy and ortho-ontology. Stevens (1987:568-569) writes, "He is able right now to subdue anything in us unto Himself. Being transformed is so much better than the self-discipline of the religious. We can be subdued and changed because God changes us. When we walk with God, God happens to us." Stevens states that trying to "do better" will always be ineffective. Rather, the effective route is to "appropriate His goodness, His righteousness" (1987:568-569). This is how God's righteousness is correctly appropriated by the believer. Even the internal desire to do God's will must originate from God (Stevens 1976m:42). This is one way that believers find the fulfillment of Revelation 12:11. This is done through submitting areas of needed change directly to Jesus in the ongoing context of a walk with God. Stevens (1989:81) writes, "Our awareness of the Lord and His overwhelming presence is the only way to effectively change," as Philippians 2:13 states, "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Spiritual formation, therefore, falls under the purview of God. Stevens states that if anyone honestly seeks the Lord and attempts to work out his salvation, God will work His will in the believer, who will naturally grow spiritually out of this process (Stevens 1981a:61-62). Stevens (1981a:66) writes, "To maintain this walk with God, a continual appropriation of the life of Christ for yourself is an essential thing."

Stevens views self-discipline as primarily resulting in the suppression of the sin nature, rather than a genuine addressing of the sin nature (2007c:582-583). Only the power of God can break this impasse. As Paul observes in Romans 7:19-20, humans will always end up doing what they do not wish, born out of the indwelling sin nature (Stevens 1987:191-192). Stevens (1987:319-320) writes, "This process is not a sanctifying of human personality; it is an absolute change. It creates a new person, a new creature." Spiritual

formation is not about reforming the human nature, but rather bringing about an entirely new nature. Attempts at self-improvement will always fail because they are inhibited by the limitations of human ability (cf. Jer 13:23; 1974e:7). Galatians 3:3 shows that transformation does not occur by human willpower. Stevens states that human effort to attain the nature of God is exactly the motivating drive behind building the tower of Babel. Attempting to establish a new divine nature without the assistance and leading of God is an offense to him (1987:319-320). Stevens (1980:222) writes,

> I have talked with those who wanted to know self-realization, understand themselves and know their potential. The trouble is that they are trying to develop the psychic, mental, and certain mystical qualities inherent in man, in the old nature, and refine them highly. But they don't start with the new creation: they're just trying to work the old one over. The whole purpose of Christ's coming as a Savior was to open up a regeneration of the human spirit so that it would acquire divine qualities.

For Stevens, true Christianity seeks the death of the old nature on the cross of Christ. Arrogance and self-confidence are enemies of spiritual formation for they resist and/or break the believer's relational connection with God, the source of all transformation (Stevens 1983:154; 1987:562-563). Further, Stevens explains that Satan attempts to induce a sense of unworthiness or false humility in the believer in order to derail true reliance on God. Stevens quotes Romans 7:18 and states that an attitude of true humility is exclusively focused on God with the knowledge that nothing good exists in the flesh (Stevens 1973a:37). This is the theological foundation upon which Stevens recognizes the need for complete reliance upon God in the pursuit of spiritual formation, for human effort in this endeavor is ultimately futile.

The spiritual formation Stevens has in mind is core change of nature, and this requires the intervention of God. Stevens (1974e:7) writes, "You cannot change by your own efforts—by resolving to get hold of that weakness and keep it under control. It will still get away from you. You must change in your nature, and that you cannot do by yourself. You change only by the grace of God, by exposing yourself to God as the only source of change." For Stevens, spiritual formation is not really about changing human actions, but rather changing the nature which gives rise to action. As Stevens reminds us, what is born of flesh is flesh (Jn 3:6). However, what is born of spirit is spirit. Spiritual formation must definitionally be the product of spirit. The growth of the believer is the purview of God. "The

only real release we have from the old nature is the righteousness that comes from God" (1987:562-563). As confirmation to this, Stevens reviews 2 Peter 1:4, in which believers are able to partake of the divine nature through the promises given to us by God. Rather than attempting to imitate Christ through human strength, the believer must ask that Jesus dwell within the believer so that His nature might be established therein. Stevens (1987:562-563) summarizes: "There has to be an impartation of His divine nature to make you a new creation in Christ Jesus." Stevens states that this is the process of being conformed to the death of Christ, and thereby knowing the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10). After reading Galatians 2:20-21, Stevens (1974d:197-198) writes, "This becomes the key of righteousness. It becomes the key of change. When you see a man who is walking holy before the Lord and you love him, do not give him any credit. God did it. It is the Lord and His love that is coming forth, and He should have all the praise and all the glory, for He is coming to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe." Stevens' theological understanding of the nature of change underlines Stevens' emphasis on the relationship with God. Stevens states that 2 Corinthians 6 is about a walk with God as it relates to change. God's dwelling in his people causes change (2007a:27). In coming to know him relationally, the natural consequence is transformation. Stevens explains that by relating to Him in love, His nature is revealed to the believer, and the believer then changes (2007c:586-587).

Stevens states that this recognition of the extent to which God wishes to spiritually form believers is equally as important as believing in the incarnation (cf. 2 Cor 8:9). Christ Himself maintains the goal of reduplicating Himself in His followers, according to Romans 8:29 (Stevens 1989:168-169). One of God's purposes in the human life is to bring us into His glory—and His very nature (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:12-18; 2 Peter 1:4). Stevens states that the key to spiritual formation is found in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. His summary of the principle contained therein is: "We are transformed by exposing ourselves to God" (1974e:7-8; cf. 2007c:583-584). Stevens (1980:221-222) states that the sanctification discussed by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 comes from a relationship with God. Relatedly, 1 John 3:2 states that seeing God as he is transforms the believer to be just like Him (Stevens 2007c:585). Stevens (1974e:8) writes, "To the extent that the Lord is revealed to you, to that extent you change. There is no other key to change." Devotional activity only leads to formation if it brings the believer into this exposure to God (Stevens 1974e:8, 2007c:583). The only true spiritual change occurs when the believer connects with God in spirit, allowing for the transference of God's very nature (Stevens 1972a:176-177).

Stevens (1972a:175) writes, "As we drink of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. God is communicable; He's contagious. To the extent that you receive a revelation of the Lord, to that extent you change. The secret of our present and future potential is based on God communicating Himself by revelation." Stevens is adamant that true spiritual formation is the result of God's action, not man's action.

Stevens sees the phrase "mercies of God" as being a key to understanding the process of transformation laid out in Romans 12:1-2. As with Philippians 1:6 and Hebrews 12:2, the believer is transformed by God, and therefore must rely on his grace. Stevens sees an error in thinking that grace is only meant to bring us into salvation. Stevens (1988:12) writes, "People must be taught that when they begin a walk with God, they are bargaining for the finished product just as God is. We are to become conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). We are to come to the full measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). How do we get there? We are entreated all the way by the grace and the mercies of God." God does not expect the believer to carry the full load of his or her spiritual formation. Instead, Christ is meant to be a continual source of growth through the appropriation of his nature provided by grace (Stevens 1988:12-13).

In Kierkegaard's theory, existence is the key to change. Christianity is an existential religion, in which the human comes to the completeness of his being while in a temporal state. For Kierkegaard, the uniquely existential aspect of Christianity is "the development of a sharpened pathos or deeper expression of subjectivity by undergoing an inward development and transformation in relation to eternal happiness and by confronting certain dialectical factors that contradict one's essential understanding of oneself and the eternal, thereby requiring subjective passion and reflection to the utmost" (Walsh 2009:42). The nature of existence requires subjectivity and relationship in order to change.

Both Kierkegaard and Stevens view God as the ultimate originator of transformation, but there is some disagreement on why. Stevens focuses on the limitations of the human nature, while Kierkegaard focuses on the limitations of utilizing objective rationality to achieve Christian transformation. Kierkegaard emphasizes inwardness in the pursuit of genuine Christianity, primarily due to his lionization of subjectivity in matters of spiritual truth. Objective understanding of doctrine can only approximate Christian truth, but an encounter with God himself causes an internalization of the truth and leads directly to transformation. Stevens, on the other hand, emphasizes the sin nature and the impotence of human ability to cause self-transformation. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ points to the

utter reliance the human must have upon God. Genuine transformation is therefore solely the purview of God. For this reason, a walk with God—in which the believer maintains a daily spiritual relationship with the source of change—is a perfect context for effective spiritual formation. Stevens' theological view of the sin nature and the utter impossibility of self-change leads to the prioritization of relationship with God in the pursuit of spiritual transformation. While Stevens and Kierkegaard differ in their characterization of the nature of change, both approaches eventually come to recognize the relationship with God as the only true solution.

3.4.2.4 The Holy Spirit

Genuine change, according to Stevens, is aided by the Holy Spirit. After quoting Galatians 6:14-15, and referencing Galatians 3:3, Stevens states that the Holy Spirit helps believers become a new creation. The enterprise of walking with God begins in the Spirit and must continue in the Spirit. Perfection does not come by the efforts of the flesh (Stevens 2007a:410). Galatians 5:25 states that we must both live and walk by the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit entails the crucifying of the flesh nature, and a conjunctive appropriation of the Word (Stevens 2007a:407; cf. Stevens 1980:297). Stevens believes we can read the term "Spirit" of Galatians 5:16-18 in the original Greek as referring to both the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the human believer. In this reading, mature believers are filled with the Holy Spirit via their own spirits. Stevens connects this with Romans 7, which discusses the war between flesh and spirit, stating that we must allow the Holy Spirit to maintain dominance in our being in order to overcome the deficiencies of the flesh nature and grow out of them. Attempting to discipline the flesh will not result in change. However, walking in the Spirit minimizes the sin nature and results in spiritual formation (Stevens 2007a:405-406).

Reviewing Acts 2, Stevens states that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulted in immediate conviction and call to repentance in those who were present. The Holy Spirit therefore aids in bringing the believer to repentance and change. Similarly, immediately following Jesus' receipt of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, He was driven into the wilderness. Stevens sees this as a "transition period" which equipped Jesus to progress into a new ministry (Stevens 1980:303-304). In these two examples, Stevens sees the formative power of the Holy Spirit in the directional progress of a walk with God.

Stevens characterizes the gifts of the Spirit not as resulting from maturity, but rather given by God to counterbalance the believer's immaturity through supernatural aid. However, the

process of receiving and walking in the gifts brings about maturity (Stevens 1982b:372-373). The gifts must become internalized in a process of spiritual formation. Relatedly, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) are the expressions of the nature of God and Christ. The believer is meant to appropriate these qualities by the Holy Spirit. This is a form of spiritual formation, for by receiving and expressing these fruits "It will be the Lord's nature coming forth in your life" (Stevens 2007a:407). Stevens states that this function of the Holy Spirit is the opposite of attempting to reproduce the nature of Jesus through human ability. According to Ephesians 1:3, the Holy Spirit makes available the blessings of the heavenly places. Similarly, 1 Corinthians 2:12 states that the Holy Spirit discloses what is available to believers in God. The Holy Spirit aids in making it clear to believers what God has provided in order to prompt believers to claim it and become it (Stevens 1974g:26). One formative power of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is to provide the spiritual faculty by which to appropriate and internalize the promises of God, thereby leading to Christian growth and maturity.

For Stevens, the receipt of the Holy Spirit is an integral aspect of being spiritually formed into a new nature. Stevens (1974b:28) writes, "We receive the Holy Spirit and forget that we're not just receiving the Holy Spirit so much as the Spirit Himself comes to generate and develop a whole new nature; to bring to us a new heredity, a new environment, new abilities, new capacities, new attributes. He is to bring a whole new plane of existence, a sphere of life we've never known before." Stevens associates John 3:6 and Ephesians 2:2-10, positing that the experience of being born again by the Spirit removes us from the grip of the flesh nature and brings us into union with Christ as God's workmanship (Stevens 1974b:34-35). God's attributes are brought into the being of the believer by the Holy Spirit. This brings sons to glory (Heb 2:10) and conforms believers to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). Stevens (1974b:35) writes, "We are going to be exactly like Jesus Christ—in nature, in life, in everything. It is the purpose of the Holy Spirit that when you accept Christ, the Holy Spirit generates that same spirit within us. We are His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10)!" The Holy Spirit is also involved in the transformation of the mind (cf. Rom 12:1-2). Stevens states that walking by the Spirit involves setting the mind of the things of the spirit. This leads to spiritual formation as the mind is renewed (Stevens 1978c:15-16). Stevens makes a direct link between the Holy Spirit with the Lordship of Christ with I Corinthians 12:3 which states that only by the Holy Spirit can someone proclaim Jesus' Lordship (Stevens 1982b:372).

Walsh (2009:53054) maintains that Kierkegaard understood the relationship with God in

trinitarian terms: "This relationship begins with an unmediated relation to God the Father, whose fatherliness is not just a metaphor but 'the truest and most literal expression' of his being…. The Father then directs us to the Son as our personal mediator and prototype, and the Son in turn directs us to the Holy Spirit for help in striving to become like the prototype." Kierkegaard identifies the Holy Spirit as the agent who brings the human from a state of unbelief into faith. For Kierkegaard, conversion itself was a transformative event, and the transformation is seen in the newly imparted ability for the believer to recognize the truth of Christian claims. Kierkegaard discusses the Holy Spirit most directly in the third part of *For Self-Examination* (1851). Kierkegaard argues that the true expression of lived Christianity cannot be followed except by the aid of the Holy Spirit. In this context, the Holy Spirit is an agent of spiritual formation, for He brings death to selfishness and the world, as well as bringing the believer into a new life in God (Moser and McCreary 2010:129). For Kierkegaard, believers first relate to the Father, who directs them to the Son, who, in turn, directs them to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit aids the individual in becoming like Christ, the prototype (Walsh 2009:53-54). The spiritually formative work of the Holy Spirit is therefore an integral aspect of the theories of both Kierkegaard and Stevens. Kierkegaard views the relationship with the Holy Spirit as an outgrowth of a relationship with Father and Son. Stevens similarly views the Holy Spirit as a relational entity who is able to directly guide and impart a change of nature within the human being. For both Kierkegaard and Stevens, Christ embodies the ontological *telos* of spiritual formation, while the Holy Spirit is an active agent of aiding the individual's formation into Christlikeness.

3.4.2.5 Relationship by Revelation

Stevens' analysis of the sin nature and the view of God as the agent of change form the basis of Stevens' theological understanding of the believer's relationship with God. The core principle which enables this relationship is divine revelation (1976d:n.p.). Stevens (1986:607) writes, "He is not known apart from divine revelation." The transformative relationship with Christ begins with a deep recognition of who He is, and this only occurs by revelation. Stevens (1986:608) summarizes, "Your walk begins by accepting Jesus Christ for what He says He is and what He reveals Himself to be." The authentic acceptance of a personal revelation of the Lord is a requirement to maintain the formative walk with God. Stevens presents as examples Peter, James, and John, who all received a revelation of Jesus Christ in Luke 5:6-11, and became dedicated disciples (1987:524-525). The entire direction of their lives changed irrevocably, and they walked with Jesus based

on that revelation. For Stevens, Peter's recognition of Jesus as the Christ is the epitome of the phenomenon of revelation (Mt 16:16-17). No human taught Peter about the doctrine of Jesus as Christ. Rather, he had a direct communication from God to his spirit which resulted in a life-changing revelation (Stevens 1972a:177). That revelation is the bedrock of the Christian Church (v18). Stevens connects the importance of revelation with the primacy of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in stating that a walk with God is based upon a revelation of Jesus Christ. Stevens (1986:428) writes, "If you have a revelation of the Lordship of Christ, then the walk with Him becomes real." The nature of this revelation is similar to that which Peter had (Stevens 1976a:157-158). Such revelation is required for a believer to find a personal relationship with God.

The believer's relationship with God will be based upon the nature of the revelation held by the believer. Stevens (1986:613) writes: "If you believe Him to be your sanctifier, then you must walk a sanctified life. If you believe Him to be the Lord of lords, you must walk as a bond-servant. The revelation of what He is comes to you out of the Word, and from that moment on a walk with God means the complete embracing of everything that He has revealed Himself to be." In a walk with God, the Christian believes in the aspects of God's personality that are revealed in the Word. Such revelation allows for a genuine relationship with God, for it is an accurate description of Him, based as it is on his Word. Such revelational belief is of a personal nature—not only of God's person, but also in the believer's individualized response to revelation. One cannot walk with God without trusting that He is who He says He is. Revelation, therefore, is required in the attempt to form an authentic relationship with God.

The receipt of such revelation causes a transformation in the believer in the context of a relationship with God. The internal acceptance of revelation is a transformative act. Stevens (1972a:175-176) writes, "You can be transformed in no other way than by a direct revelation of God to your heart." The revelation of God exposes the believer to the only catalyst of true change, that is, God himself. The spiritual formation of the believer therefore occurs concurrently in the believer's growing revelation of God. Stevens (1988:618) explains how the process of revelation in a walk with God is connected to spiritual formation: "I John 3:2 says that as He appears we will be like Him. We will be like Him in whatever way we have a revelation of Him…. As the revelation grows, the image of Christ within us grows. As the revelation of Christ grows in our hearts, we become more like Him." Through this revelation—the revealing of God—the believer finds an effective, progressive process of spiritual formation as he is conformed to Christ by seeing Him in

the revelation (Stevens 1988:618). This transformative exposure is spiritual in nature. Further, Stevens states that revelation fuels a progressive walk with God, for it continually brings the believer into a deeper relationship with him (Stevens 1976:n.p.). Revelation exposes the believer directly to God in a relational connection.

Stevens sees illumination as a related to revelation. However, he sees it as functioning on a lower level than revelation. For Stevens, illumination is a fairly common experience in which the truth of the Scriptures is made clear to the believer by the help of the Holy Spirit (Stevens 1976g:1). Revelation, on the other hand, is a divine revealing which uncovers God and His truth. For Stevens, this revealing primarily happens by the Holy Spirit. In Stevens' view, the NT authors were not illuminating the OT passages they quote or reference them, but rather revealing the OT by revelation (Stevens 1976g:6). This is why the hermeneutics of the NT authors often do not conform to modern-day practices. Both illumination and revelation come by the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 14:25-26, 16:13; 1 Cor 2:7-13; 2 Pet 1:20-21; 1 Jn 2:17; Stevens 1976d:8-11).

For Kierkegaard, the paradoxical nature of Christ's incarnation necessitates revelation in the observance of authentic Christianity (cf. Law 2010:229). The "absolute paradox" of the divine in human form is the defining example of why the Christian truth cannot be grasped by reason alone (Gouwens 1988:16). Religiousness B therefore requires a leap from understanding to believing via revelation. Dunning (2014:208) writes, "Revelation requires a subjective appropriation of that objective event [the incarnation], the inward establishment of a relation to eternal happiness on the basis of that event." Rather than attempting to explain how Christ was God in the form of man, Kierkegaard's position is that the incarnation cannot be given a satisfactorily rational resolution, and therefore requires a revelation of God's love and relational desire toward man to be understood (Walsh 2009: 113, 116). For Kierkegaard, the concepts of revelation and relationship come together in the attempt to grasp the incarnation. While it is a much more philosophical approach than Stevens, it shares a similar prioritization of revelation as a mode of spiritual, formative connection with God. Both assert that Christ's being must be understood relationally via revelation for it to have any formative effect on the human. Stevens, however, is much more expansive in his treatment of revelation, for it is done within the scope of the Word of God. The entire Bible is full of relational and transformational possibility, and the means by which it is internalized is through revelation. Revelation by the Word is of Christ Himself, and the growth in the personal knowledge of the Lord will naturally correspond with progressive maturity.

3.4.2.6 Biblical Anthropology

Stevens maintains a trichotomist view of the human being, that is: spirit, soul, and body (Stevens 1972a:174). Stevens (1972a:174) writes, "The spirit, soul, and body form the triune nature of man…. God cannot be approached through the physical or the soul, although most religions are soulish in nature." Stevens (1972a:174) states that walking with God "is a thing of spirit rather than of soul." God is a spirit, and it is therefore impossible for the human to communicate with God through any other human faculty than the spirit. The walk with God occurs primarily by the spirit, for it is the spirit which allows for the relationship with God (Stevens 1982:21). Genuine Christian spiritual formation, therefore, must function primarily through the use of the spirit. Stevens reviews Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:1-7 as an explanation of this, for the experience of being born again is described by Jesus as an experience of spirit (1980:222-223). In being born again, the spirit is made alive in Christ and the believer becomes a new creature. Eventually, the soul and even the body are regenerated. Stevens' approach to spiritual formation, therefore, accounts for the process of maturing and transformation in all aspects of the human being.

Stevens states that those who pursue the gratification of the flesh place their bodies in the dominant role of their beings. These are the ones discussed in Philippians 3:18-19, who keep their attention on earthly things and become enemies of Christ. Paul explains that it is possible to be a professed Christian, yet still be an enemy of the cross of Christ by focusing on the appetites of the flesh and setting the mind on "earthly things". Elsewhere, Paul states that the Corinthians were walking in a fleshly manner as "mere men", rather than being spiritual (1 Cor 3:2-3; Stevens 1977e:99). For those who indulge the flesh, they have made the physical aspects of the predominate element of their being, to the suppression of soul and spirit (Stevens 1977b:98). He uses the worship of Baal as an example of a primarily physical religion, expressed in such things as the mutilation of the flesh (Stevens 1972a:174). Stevens sees the spirit as the answer to the eccentric emphasis on the body. Romans 8:6-14 explains that the mind must be set on the spirit in order to find the life of God. Those who live in the flesh, rather than the spirit, do not please God. The Spirit of Jesus aids us in walking with God, rather than living according to the flesh, for the spirit puts the flesh to death. Galatians 5:16-17 similarly states that a spiritual focus saves us from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, which war against the spirit (Stevens 1976a:4-6).

The soul has been corrupted by the fall. The human propensity for murder, lust, and evil usually originate in the soul. The incorrect focus of the human attempting to change or grow through self-reliance skews toward reforming aspects of the soul. Those who live primarily by the soul are immature. Those whose souls predominate will be excited about God for a period of time before losing interest and withdrawing. Soulish believers become excited emotionally about God, but they are unable to sustain it because it is not genuine spiritual hunger. Soulish people live from blessing to blessing, requiring encouragement and support from others in their Christian faith. Paul discusses the immaturity of focusing on body or soul in 1 Corinthians 3:2-3, in which he explains that the fleshliness of the Corinthians church requires him to deliver the Word in milk form (for babies), rather than solid food (for the mature) (Stevens 1977b:98-100). For Stevens, the terminology of "flesh" in the Scriptures can refer both to body and soul, for the soul contains the flesh nature itself.

Stevens equates soulishness with legalistic religiosity. The soulish approach to Christianity emphasizes rituals and emotion. Whether exuberant or austere, emotional ritual does not connect directly with God. Stevens characterizes some of the Pentecostal experience as being primarily soulish. Particularly, the emotional baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the violent shaking that would accompany it at times, were due to the soulish approach to the experience. He characterizes Buddhism as a primarily soulish religion, focused on philosophy and contemplation. He also states that psychology functions primarily on the soulish level (Stevens 1972a:174).

Stevens believes that a primarily soulish approach to the believer's relationship with God is reflective of a selfish motivation in walking with God. Stevens (1987:523) writes, "You cannot serve God for personal reasons…. Doing the will of God always involves a total work of the cross in your life, and nothing less. If you live on the level of the flesh and on the soulish level of emotions, being encouraged and discouraged by every wind that blows, this indicates that something is wrong." Here we see that spiritual formation, for Stevens, is not about the human's desire for growth or the overcoming of problems. Instead, spiritual formation is the result of the spiritual power of the cross of Christ worked within the believer. This cannot occur through the human's physical being, nor in the human soul. Rather, revelation occurs by the human spirit (Stevens 1971b:75-76). Stevens (1982:27-28) writes, "Do you want to walk with God and talk with God? Do you want God to talk with you? Do you want to know the voice of the Lord? It's a thing of spirit, not of soul." The spirit is the God-given element of the human being which is able to connect with

him relationally. Stevens (1976m:108) writes, "a man does not know the truth because of his intellect; he knows it from the instinctive witness of the Holy Spirit to his spirit."

Stevens maintains that the use of the human spirit is a central requirement of a walk with God. He bases this primarily on John 4:23-24. The spirit is the component which allows mankind to communicate with God. Jesus states that anyone who wishes to worship God must do so in spirit and in truth precisely because God is a Spirit. The communion with the Lord which is so necessary in spiritual formation occurs by the connection of the human spirit with God, who is a Spirit. The spirit is the facet of the human being which is able to hear the voice of God and truly know Him in a relationship. He states that someone can have experiences with God on the soulish realm, but that this approach does not produce a genuine walk with God (Stevens 1971b:73-74). Stevens writes that the Holy Spirit functions with the human spirit:

> When you receive the Holy Spirit, it's to make alive and further quicken the faculties you are to have in your spirit. Your spirit has the faculty of hearing and seeing. The more highly developed and open your spirit is, the more it will superimpose upon the physical senses, feelings and awareness of what is taking place in the spirit realm. What you call the gifts of the Holy Spirit are often divine endowments of grace that enable you to tune in to the mind of Christ, so that superimposed upon your mind is what God sees or is thinking about a thing. Then you are given an ability to see something—not with human prejudice—but with divine understanding. How important it is that we learn to walk in the spirit and come out of the realm of soul. (Stevens 1971b:74)

The Spirit to spirit communication between God and man is the point of contact by which spiritual formation occurs. Stevens explains that revelation comes to the human spirit. So, also, do the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Stevens 1989:298). Stevens (1972a:174-175) writes, "When your spirit, created in the image of God, communicates with the Lord Who is a Spirit, changes take place in your spirit by transference….. The secret of our present and future potential is based on God communicating Himself by revelation." This is the process by which the human is transformed into the image of the Lord, from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18). In this view, spiritual formation occurs by the appropriation of God's nature through a spiritual connection with him. Stevens quips that God is "communicable" and "contagious". This is all made possible by the human spirit. Similarly, 1 John 3:1-2 states that there is a

connection between seeing God and becoming like him, and that this occurs in a loving relationship between Father and children. Humans take on the qualities of God through a spiritual relationship connection with him, based on the communicative qualities of the human spirit (Stevens 1972a:175).

While Kierkegaard states that the spirit is the self, he is not consistent in this characterization. He postulates that the human is a synthesis of body and soul, but that this synthesis is unified by a third element, which is spirit (Kierkegaard 200:146). However, he states that spirit can be both hostile and friendly in that it "disturbs" the soul/body synthesis, while also being the substance of the relationship between the two (Tsakiri 2006:35). Kierkegaard seems to see spirit as not a facet of human ontology, but rather a mode of relational synthesis of body/soul and finitude/infinitude (cf. Kierkegaard 2000:39-40, 42, 200). Spirit "emerges" when the self relates to the self. In this way the spirit is itself a relationship. The synthesis of body and soul is not a self. Rather, the self only exists when the self-reflective relationship of spirit is undertaken. Stevens would strongly reject this notion as being unbiblical. For Stevens, the spirit is a particular ontological aspect of man which has the unique quality of connecting to God. While the highly relational qualities of both theories are a point of great similarity, perhaps Kierkegaard's conception of spirit as a relationship is a bridge too far for Stevens. Stevens' continual touchstone is the believer's ongoing connection with God. The spirit must be involved in order to find this relationship. Attempting to define the spirit as a self-relation is therefore incompatible with Stevens' theology.

3.4.3 Summary and Reflection

This section has systematically identified, via synthesis, the theo-philosophical ideas underlying the spiritual formation theories of John Robert Stevens in dialogue with Søren Kierkegaard. The foremost general difference between the two authors is perhaps the weighting between philosophy and theology. Kierkegaard is more philosophical in his approach. Stevens is more biblical. Regardless, there is much dialogical overlap in their respective theories. Particularly, the role of the incarnation and of Jesus Christ is central to both. The requirement of a relationship with God in the pursuit of transformation—while recognized from different angles—is also agreed upon as being of superlative importance.

Stevens' theological foundations are primarily standard Christian tenets viewed from the angle of relational spiritual formation. The central theological foundation of Stevens' theory

is the salvation through Christ provided by the Father. This foundation includes the process of becoming like Christ—for His salvation is meant to completely transform the believer into a new creature. This foundation addresses the sin nature and the need to remove it in favor of Christ's nature. This foundation also places God as the originator of transformation. God sent Christ to the earth to reconcile man back to God. The reconciliation of relationship is both a means and end of spiritual formation. The relationship with God through Christ generates change. However, the mature believer is equipped to relate to God in deeper ways. The related theological concerns of revelation and the nature of man describe how the salvific, transformative power of Christ is applied in the believer's being. Revelation is the experiential internalization of God's Word. Receiving revelation not only enables the God relation, but also is a source of transformation in itself. This all must occur through the use of the believer's spirit, rather than his soul or body. God is a Spirit, and He can only be related to by spirit.

Both Kierkegaard and Stevens discuss spiritual realities in ways which help the believer find a relationship with God which causes growth. Kierkegaard pursues philosophical paradoxes and absurdities in order to show that pure rationality is insufficient in addressing the spiritual reality of a relationship with God. Stevens takes a different approach in that he focuses on systematically connecting scriptures in order to present a holistic view of a spiritual relationship with God in the Christian context. While Stevens certainly addresses the apparent paradoxes of the spiritual Christian life, he does so in passing, without making them central to his theory, as Kierkegaard does. Kierkegaard desires to disrupt his reader's rationality with the intent to focus the believer on a subjective faith, which he sees as the only effective approach in attempting to achieve a true relationship with the Christian God. Stevens on the other hand desires to work with the reader's understanding in order to present practical applications of spiritual biblical truths. However, Stevens does state that a walk with God is not appealing to the human nature, and therefore people cannot be "reasoned into it" (Stevens:1986:427-428). For Kierkegaard, the impotency of reason in the context of Christian truth leads to the need for subjectivity and inwardness. Stevens, however, comes to the conclusion that walking with God must be based on a revelation (1987:886). Stevens (1987:529) writes, "If a person does not bother to find help and to seek a deeper revelation of the Lordship of Christ, he can be shaken out of a walk with God." For Stevens, revelation stands as the spiritual principle which answers the deficiencies of reason. Stevens might characterize and reject Kierkegaard's treatment of paradox as itself an overuse of reason. However, Kierkegaard might view revelation as a

subjective epistemic mode. Regardless, it is certainly true that Stevens sees revelation as a deep and transformative recognition of the Word of God in personal application which stands as an answer to the failures of the carnal mind in the face of spiritual truth.

Most of Kierkegaard's theo-philosophical foundations of spiritual formation which are not directly addressed by Stevens are still generally helpful in shedding greater light on Stevens' theory. Stevens did not emphasize existence itself, but Kierkegaard's notion of existence as the medium of change seems compatible in that its roots are in the nature of the incarnation. Stevens recognizes the Son of God as the paragon of spiritual formation, and the existence of this paragon's human form sets a precedent for ultimate maturity in God. Kierkegaard's requirement of subjective epistemology is also compatible with Stevens' theory in that the believer must be personal in the application of the Word of God. Stevens would never assert that God's truth is subjective, but he would certainly agree that pure rationality is insufficient to the task of an authentic, spiritual reception of the Word.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Kierkegaard's emphasis on the self aids in recognizing the importance of ontology in Stevens' theory. Stevens is careful not to overemphasize the self, for the believer's focus should primarily be on God. However, viewing Stevens' theory through an ontological lens of Kierkegaard's inward self accents the importance of an authentic relationship with God as a state of being. Kierkegaard presents self and relationship as being highly interconnected. This aids in detailing Stevens' view of the formative nature of God. The human self cannot be made complete without maintaining a direct relationship with God. For Stevens', the epitome of this principle is the walk with God. The interconnectivity of self and relationship reveals the underlying reasons for Stevens' characterization of a walk with God as being the paradigm of spiritual formation, for it is ontological, existential, subjective, and relational. Stevens did not use such terminology in categorizing his theological views of spiritual formation. But in reviewing Kierkegaard's writings in conjunction with Stevens, it is clear that such categorical terminology is eminently applicable, although not always in ways that correspond directly with Kierkegaard's theory. If approached scripturally, inquiries into the ontological and existential aspects of Christianity are indispensable in the pursuit of describing the nature of Christian spiritual formation.

3.5 The Formative Activities

3.5.1 Kierkegaard's Activities

For Kierkegaard, action was of utmost importance. Kierkegaard sees a close link between action, truth, and becoming. He writes (Kierkegaard 1989:138),

> Truth is the work of freedom and in such a way that freedom constantly brings forth truth. What I am referring to is very plain and simple, namely, that truth exists for a particular individual only as he himself produces it in action…. Truth has always had many loud proclaimers, but the question is whether a person will in the deepest sense acknowledge the truth, allow it to permeate his whole being, accept all its consequences, and not have an emergency hiding place for himself and a Judas kiss for the consequence.

The acknowledgement of truth involves becoming that truth by putting it into action. Unless the human is putting truth into action, there is no spiritual movement toward being an individual. This connection between action, being, and truth is reflective of Kierkegaard's relational approach to God and existence. Kierkegaard (1975b:525) writes, "It is no good for us to bow and scrape before God in words and phrases and in such activities as building churches and binding Bibles in velvet. God has a particular language for addressing him – the language of action, the transformation of the mind, the course of one's life." Genuine Christianity is about "the course of one's life", and attempting to serve God without action and willing transformation is a futile effort.

A life of actively following Christ is required in order to come to the understanding of His teachings (Kierkegaard 2007:78-79). Kierkegaard quotes John 7:17, stating that actions of obedience are required in order to know the divine origins of Jesus' words. Kierkegaard characterizes Christ as a Savior who favored action over lectures. Jesus' existence—embodied in action—was itself his teaching. Humans must mirror the example of Christ's enacted truth by venturing "a decisive act" (Kierkegaard 2007:78). Christians do not come to their belief through knowledge, but through activity. Kierkegaard's prioritization of action is also seen in his discussion of the scribes who told the wise men where Christ was to be born. While the scribes had more knowledge of the messiah than the wise men, they did not act on that knowledge. The wise men, on the other hand, had little knowledge, but they acted upon it. Kierkegaard states that the wise men's action showed the internalization of that truth (Kierkegaard 2007:218).

Kierkegaard's characterizations of formative activities are primarily situated internal to the human being. Kierkegaard did not prescribe much in the way of specific external actions for spiritual formation. However, existential principles such as passion and choice are "activities" within the context of Kierkegaard's overall project. This is reflective of Kierkegaard's view of Christianity. Gouwens (1988:18) summarizes: "by attending to the context of existence, Kierkegaard shows us the error of thinking that Christianity is simply its doctrines. 'Christianity' is rather a host of conceptually specific passions, attitudes, policies, emotions, and activities as well as beliefs; it is a stage of life that can be adequately seen only when these factors are given equal—indeed, greater—weight than the doctrinal statements themselves." For Kierkegaard, the "activities" of spiritual formation are more likely to be attitudes or emotional stances than devotional or sacramental activities. The activities discussed in this section include passion, choice, the will, suffering, the death to self, obedience, humility, prayer, contemplative silence, and repentance.

3.5.1.1 Passion

For Kierkegaard, passion (pathos) guides subjective action. While objective modes of thinking consider concrete realities in abstract ways, the subjective mode approaches abstract realities in concrete ways (Walsh 2009:38). Passion is the driving force behind such concrete exploration. The passion Kierkegaard has in mind is existential in nature and is itself a transformative power in existence (Law 2010:228). Kierkegaard (1989a:33) writes, "Christianity is spirit; spirit is inwardness; inwardness is subjectivity; subjectivity is essentially passion, and at its maximum an infinite, personally interested passion for one's eternal happiness." Passion is the internal driving force behind Kierkegaard's formative principles of spirit, inwardness, and subjectivity. Passion creates cohesion of the finite and infinite within the individual (Welstead 2014:815). In so doing, passion drives the individual toward formation. Kierkegaard (1989a:203) writes,

> How shall we understand the truth in terms of subjectivity? Here is a definition: The truth is an objective uncertainty held fast through personal appropriation with the most passionate inwardness. This is the highest truth there can be for an existing person. At the point where the road divides, objective knowledge is suspended, and one has only uncertainty, but this is precisely what intensifies the infinite passion of inwardness. Subjective truth is precisely the daring venture of choosing the objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite.

Spiritual truth cannot be understood without action, and action will never be undertaken without passion. The lack of passion is a result of the human losing touch with his or her ontological status as an existing subject. In such a state, no divine truth can be apprehended because knowledge without personal significance is useless (Kierkegaard 2007:58-59; Moore 2007:xxv). Subjectivity is concerned with the subject's relation to the truth, and passion forms that relational connection. Kierkegaard states that the pathos of Religiousness A is the absolute relationship with God in which the person is transformed by aligning everything in life toward the highest good (Gouwens 1996:111).

Passion is the element which allows the person to function in existence. The human cannot explore the formative potentiality of existence without an inward passion. Kierkegaard states that most people have forgotten how to exist, and that subjectivity and passionate inwardness is the antidote to this malady (Welstead 2014:809). Objectivity is a dispassionate approach to truth, and therefore causes a dispassionate view of life. Authenticity does not emerge from objectivity, but from a passion which stems from an inward search for truth. The choice to live with passion gives rise to all other authentic activity. Golomb (1992:70) writes, "since being true to oneself lies in the 'how' of the subject's relationship, the fullest authenticity attainable by human beings is in the relationship where the subjective element—the passion with which one holds to an object—is most intense". Relationship is impossible without passion. The object of this passion, for Kierkegaard, is God. This directed, personal passion for God drives the individual's connection to the divine. Golomb (1992:70) continues: "This truth is not cognitive but conative. It has to do with actions, emotions, passions, feelings, in short with the pathos of inwardness and authenticity."

The two primary passions are faith and love. Evans (2004:28-29) writes, "For Kierkegaard there are two passions that are specially crucial in the formation of the self God intends one to be: faith and love. The two are so closely connected that it is perhaps a mistake to separate them." Evans argues that Kierkegaard sees love as the *telos* of faith.

For Kierkegaard, the highest human passion is faith (Kierkegaard 1986:145–146). Moore states that for Kierkegaard "faith is not a belief but a certain way of being in the truth that extends beyond reason's ability to grasp…. At its highest pitch, subjectivity culminates in faith – an infinite passion that is both rationally uncertain and paradoxical" (Moore 2007:xxv). Faith is an ontological reality. It is an internal passion which moves beyond the limitations of reason and finitude. The "leap" of faith required from the believer is a

response to the paradox of the incarnation—to either receive it or reject it (Barrett 2010:67-68). The believer must accept Christ's status as fully God in human form, particularly because Christ represents the goal of the process of Christian maturity. Faith is the passionate vector of the relationship with God.

The second passion, love, functions toward the cultivation of the self because God is love. Kierkegaard characterizes God's love as fundamentally transformative and a force of upbuilding (Kierkegaard 1962:224). The increasing reflection of divine love within the individual is a product of the process of spiritual formation. Kierkegaard (1962:279) writes of a believer who has given himself over completely in love and dedication: "in his self-sacrifice he is willing to perish, that is, he is completely and wholly transformed into simply being an active power in the hands of God." Love, as an expression of passion, is an activity which allows God to transform the individual in a relational connection. Kierkegaard viewed Christ's life as an example to all of humanity regarding the fulfillment of human existence. This fulfillment requires obedience and suffering. However, it is undertaken in love. Self-denial may be the ideal, but love is the motivation. Barrett (2013:20) writes: "What the imitation of Christ requires is an enduring and comprehensive disposition to renounce worldly happiness and comfort in order to love the neighbor." Love is an integral passion of Christianity and an increase in love reflects the genuine imitation of Christ. Relatedly, the imitation of Christ is motivated by God's love—first the human's joy at the receipt of love, then in the motivation to be pleasing to the one who loves (Kierkegaard 1970:340).

3.5.1.2 Choice

For Kierkegaard, human choice is central to Christian spiritual formation. When a choice is not made, and the human does not commit to anything, the self is indeterminate. This lack of commitment results in despair due to the missing sense of fulfilled *telos.* In this state, "One's inherent need for transcendence and meaning is repressed" (Golomb 1992:76). Kierkegaard characterizes the criticalness of choice as primarily an expression of passion and energy. Indeed, he sees the choice to live with earnest passion as more formative than making the right ethical choice (Kierkegaard 1959:171–173). The individual must make committed choices in order to become. Kierkegaard (1989a:350–351) writes, "Merely existing is like a drunken peasant who lies in the wagon and sleeps and lets the horses shift for themselves. But true existence has to do with the one who drives." An authentic existence as an individual requires that the individual be active in making choices

which steer his life.

Choice is the natural result of developed passion. Passion awakens the individual to true existence. Once that occurs, the individual is now responsible to exercise his will toward becoming a single individual. Golomb (1992:73-74) writes, "Kierkegaard stresses that we 'receive' or accept ourselves by becoming what we genuinely are, namely individuals prepared for the pathos of authentic faith. This is not pre-determined becoming (as in the biological model) but is achieved by free acts of will. Thus one may deny or repress one's inclination to transcendence and be alienated from one's genuine self." In Golomb's view, then, Kierkegaard's concept of spiritual formation entails finding the true self through self-defining acts of free will. As the human elements which are not the true self are rejected, the human progresses toward the reception of the true self. Further, the self is continually reformed and recreated by further choices in the authentic life.

It seems that Kierkegaard sees the formed self as resulting from choosing the ethical over the aesthetic, and the religious over the ethical (Rudd 2008:184). This is why the will is of utmost important in the formation of the Christian. The act of choosing is not done once, but rather is an ongoing process. Kierkegaard writes, "Whoever remains faithful to his decision will realize that his whole life is a struggle…. He knows full well that at decisive moments you have to renew your resolve again and again and that this alone makes good the decision and the decision good" (Kierkegaard 2007:4). Kierkegaard contrasts this decisive way of life with cowardice. Those who realize God is there, yet shrink away from him foster cowardice in their lives. Cowardice resists all decision-making, for fear overpowers other passions. While cowardice always looks to tomorrow, God always acts today. Further, Kierkegaard (2007:5-6) draws on 1 Timothy 1:7 in emphasizing the ungodly nature of cowardice. Passion and commitment must overcome cowardice if the believer wishes to make the choices required for spiritual formation. Particularly, Kierkegaard encourages his readers to make the decision to serve God completely, regardless of their state of being. He states, "the greatest thing each person can do is to give himself to God utterly and unconditionally – weaknesses, fears, and all. For God loves obedience more than good intentions or second-best offerings, which are all too often made under the guise of weakness" (Kierkegaard 2007:7). This decision to give the self to God is one which must be made consistently, for it forms the basis of the relationship with God, which, in turn, forms the basis of spiritual formation. Kierkegaard calls this consistent, determined decision-making "resolution" or "resolve". Resolution is a "golden key" by which "the door is opened to the noblest powers of the soul" (Kierkegaard 1938:268; 2012:126). The spiritual

formation of the human, which grows the maturity to wield the "noblest powers", is only achieved through a committed resolve to continually venture choices in a brave use of the human will.

3.5.1.3 Purity and Will

Choice is based upon will, and Kierkegaard sees formative power in the focus of the will. One of Kierkegaard's formulations of Christian transformation is fundamentally based upon the human will: "A Christian is a person of will who no longer wills his own will but with the passion of his crushed will – radically changed – wills another's will" (Kierkegaard 1975b:569). The transformation of the will is a central concern for true Christianity. The instructions found in the Bible are meant to bring us to this transformation, but they must be willed by the human and put into action in order for transformation to take place (Kierkegaard 1978:570). The reason why a focused will on God is so powerfully formative is that the object of the will—whether God or anything else—guides the process of becoming. Kierkegaard writes, "The one who wills anything other than the Good will become divided. And as the coveted object is, so becomes the coveter" (Kierkegaard 2007:36). The focus of the will is the objective of the self's existential becoming. Willing anything other than God's good leads to double-mindedness, which is impurity. By willing anything other than God, the process of formation moves away from God and His righteousness. Only God can help the believer maintain the purity the heart called for in James 4:8. Drawing near to God in relationship is the transformative act of will that keeps the believer in a state of purity (Kierkegaard 2007:34). The set of the will must be wholehearted. He writes, "the Christian's sacrifice is his whole heart. The Christian's holy day is every day" (Kierkegaard 1967:174–175).

Kierkegaard characterizes the willing of one thing as being in a state of purity of heart. Kierkegaard uses the metaphor of the sea as a way to demonstrate his concept of willing one thing. He writes,

> If you should see it so, and contemplate the purity of the sea, you would be drawn upwards. As the sea, when it lies calm and deeply transparent, yearns for heaven, so may the pure heart, when it is calm and deeply transparent, yearn for the Good. As the sea is made pure by yearning for heaven alone, so may the heart become pure by yearning only for the Good. As the sea mirrors the elevation of heaven in its pure depths, so may the heart when it is

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calm and deeply transparent mirror the divine elevation of the Good in its pure depths. (Kierkegaard 1975b:288)

The related metrics of upward yearning (will), the process of formative cleansing (made pure), and transparency are all interrelated. The depths of the sea (the heart) are purified only when its fathoms reflect the height of heaven (God, as the Good). Curiously, Kierkegaard's principle of willing one thing functions even if the one thing willed is not in the perfect will of God. Kierkegaard writes: "Though it may sometimes be that a person innocently begins by willing one thing that is not in the deepest sense the Good, he will, little by little, be transformed so as to will the Good" (Kierkegaard 2007:35). Exercising the will with a focused intensity activates the process of becoming a single individual.

However, purity of heart (understood as maturity) also leads to a greater ability to focus on the divine. Kierkegaard (1970:403-405) writes, "Always remember that the task is toward being able to hold fast to the thought of God more and more for a longer time." Continually exercising the focus of the will on God is an act of spiritual formation, for the growth in this ability corresponds to a relational *telos* of Christianity. Kierkegaard (1962:294) writes:

> What is all our striving but a half-finished work if we do not know you: the One, who are one thing and who are all! Therefore, give to the intellect, wisdom to comprehend that one thing; to the heart, sincerity to receive this one thing; to the will, purity that wills only one thing. In prosperity may you grant perseverance to will one thing; amid distractions, collectedness to will one thing; in suffering, patience to will one thing.

This prayerful entreaty reveals a teleological and methodological unity in the individual's desire for a relationship with God. The activity of willing to know God—as a continual focus—brings the believer into proximity with the eternal source of transformation. Kierkegaard states that the means and the end are one: "There is only one end: the genuine Good; and only one means: to be willing only to use those means which are genuinely good" (Kierkegaard 1956:201-202). The relational knowledge of God is the means by which the believer grows in the eternal Good. However, the God relation is also the *telos* of human existence.

However, his discussion of the will seems to exist as a paradox. He both encourages the believer's own activity in acquiring faith and "strengthening the inner being," while simultaneously stating that everything is given by God, and that no growth occurs except

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by God (Barrett 2010:66, 69-70). These two views are often separated as "task" and "gift," or sometimes as the tension between free will and grace. Kierkegaard does not attempt to reconcile these two, but instead allows them to exist in contemporaneous importance.

3.5.1.4 Suffering and the Death to Self

Kierkegaard's concept of an inward journey of self discovery is a difficult one to pursue. It requires suffering and self-denial (Walsh 2009:51). Kierkegaard characterizes Christian suffering as voluntary. The disciples choose to abandon their lives for Christ. Suffering without choosing such suffering is meaningless in Kierkegaard's eyes. He writes, "To lose everything and give up everything are not synonymous" (Kierkegaard 2007:165). The cooperation with divine suffering is not equivalent to banality of the average brutish and short existence of humanity. The choice to suffer along with Christ is not any easy one to make. However, avoiding suffering is equivalent to avoiding the process of Christian formation. By avoiding the willingness to suffer, the human avoids "the real offense, that is, in order to become new and enter into life" (Kierkegaard 2007:166). Quoting Matthew 18:8-9 and 19:12, Kierkegaard recognizes the human predilection for offense at God's Word. According to Kierkegaard, the status quo of western Christianity requires no commitment and no possibility for offense. Yet this stands in stark contrast to what Jesus told his disciples in John 16:1 and Matthew 16:23 (Kierkegaard 2007:167). The choice to serve God is dangerous, for it requires that the individual carry Jesus' cross. Kierkegaard also offers Christ's requirement of rich young ruler (Mk 10:21) as an example of what Christ requires: giving up of property, taking up the cross, and daily carrying the cross (Kierkegaard 2005:222). The self-denial of the individual, therefore, is one way that the transformative God relationship functions.

Snow argues that Kierkegaard developed an "economy of suffering" in which suffering is defined foremost in relation to the eternal. This economy of suffering "is thus a key element of the individual subject's self-development: The subject is transformed, and transforms herself, in suffering" (Snow 2016:161). Suffering is an ongoing component of life in the religious sphere (Snow 2016:165-168). It follows an inverse dialectic in the context of Christianity, bringing the believer from weakness to strength, and adversity to prosperity (Snow 2016:167-168). Suffering is a time of transition in which the individual's soul is cleansed. The suffering is fleeting, but it functions in service to eternal victory and joy. Snow further argues that Kierkegaard presents suffering as a mode of action in relating to the "absolute telos" of eternal happiness.

The activity of suffering pursued by the believer is an imitation of Christ which produces a contemporaneity with Him. This is the relational action undertaken by the believer which results in transformational suffering. This choice to maintain contemporaneity with Christ—and thus suffer—must be made continually (Snow 2016:174-175). Snow (2016:176) summarizing the formative power of suffering in Kierkegaard's account states: "The subject transforms herself and is transformed through suffering, and is at once an active contributor to and passive recipient of the achievement and maintenance of its relationship to the eternal, or the absolute telos." Kierkegaard states that Christ is, in Himself, the meaning of "dying-to-the-world". He did not teach this, but rather lived it (Kierkegaard 1970:326). This is an example of how truth of Christ is not seen in his teachings, but rather in his life. The sacrificial death of Christ should be galvanizing to the believer. Through pathos, the believer finds a willingness to imitate that process of death. Further, this is driven by love. First, in Christ's motivating love to suffer for the world, and second, in the individual's reflection of that love (Barrett 2013:20). Walsh summarizes that Kierkegaard's view of Christ as prototype forms the foundation of his view of suffering. The growth that occurs in our suffering is the same that occurred in Jesus' suffering: obedience. For humans, growing in obedience results in the established knowledge that God is master (Walsh 2009:73).

Applying Hebrews 5:8, Kierkegaard states that the individual learns obedience through suffering, just as Christ did. This is a necessary aspect of spiritual formation, for Kierkegaard (2007:162) states: "If in suffering you do not learn obedience, you will continue to be a riddle to yourself." Suffering directs the attention of the believer inward in order to cultivate obedience. This is the process in which the necessary obedience to God is learned. The only end to suffering is a total surrender of obedience to God, allowing Him to rule in all things. This is the *telos* of the suffering, which is meant as an existential education on eternity (Kierkegaard 2007:164, 381). Kierkegaard (2007:380) states: "If a person is actually to be an instrument of God's will, then God must first of all take his will from him. A fearful operation!" Kierkegaard contrasts a true obedience to God to self-willfulness, which does not allow God to be master over the will.

Kierkegaard emphasizes a creative inner being death experience which comes by the life-giving Spirit. Kierkegaard states that new life cannot be received until there is a process of death to the self. This process of death occurs because "Your power must be dismantled" (Kierkegaard 2007:149). Human power is given up in order to receive God's. This death is to "earthly hope", "human confidence", and selfishness (Kierkegaard 2007:149). This death

is not mere deprivation, however. This death is the end of human desire and fulfillment. This death occurred for Abraham when he was willing to sacrifice Isaac (Kierkegaard 2007:150). Only when "you are dead to everything else" and "come to the end of your own strength" does the new life of the Spirit come (Kierkegaard 2007:150-151). The death to the self is motivated by a desire for the truth. It specifically arises when the individual looks at himself in "the mirror of the Word" (Kierkegaard 1975:40). The death to self is therefore a central activity which promotes spiritual formation. For the believer to truly love God, he must allow God to "shatter" him. The dying to the world is a requirement for an absolute relationship with God (Kierkegaard 2007:369-370). Kierkegaard (2007:363) writes, "God creates everything out of nothing – and all God is to use he first turns to nothing." This sense of human nothingness is not meant to be nihilistic, but rather to create a more obvious contrast which elevates the knowledge of the power of God's goodness (Kierkegaard 2007:363). Kierkegaard (2007:163) writes: "Only when a person suffers and wills to learn from what he suffers does he come to know something about himself and about his relationship to God. This is the sign that he is being educated for eternity."

3.5.1.5 Miscellaneous Activities

There are five further miscellaneous activities that Kierkegaard associates with spiritual formation: obedience, humility, prayer, contemplative silence, and repentance.

Kierkegaard holds that the individual must live in obedience to God in order to find any sort of teleological satisfaction. The individual can never craft his own satisfactory life. He writes: "Oh God, teach me so deeply to understand myself that I may understand how utterly impossible it is to be satisfied with the mere fact that I am master of my own destiny, and that there is no satisfaction and joy and happiness for a person except in obedience" (Kierkegaard 2007:333). Obedience is a self-denial that God requires. The individual's relationship with God is demonstrated by submission. If the Christian states that God is King, he must prove his sincerity by submitting to him as King (Kierkegaard 2007:72-73). Living with this attitude activates the principle that God's command can, in itself, move the human beyond his limits and into a process of formation. Kierkegaard writes:

> *This you shall* is the saving element, purifying, elevating. There where the merely human wants to storm forth, the command still holds. Just when the merely human would lose courage, the command strengthens. Just when the merely human would become tired and clever, the command flames up and

gives wisdom. The command consumes and burns out what is unsound and impure in your love, but through it you shall be able to kindle it again, even when, humanly considered, all has been lost. (Kierkegaard 1962:42-43)

In particular, this passage centers on the command to love. The combination of the power of the command itself with the human's obedience to the command is a formula for spiritual formation. The individual is formed in greater divine love through the choice of obedience. Kierkegaard (1991:209–227) states that the Church must always be in a process of becoming as it follows Christ in "humble obedience". The Christian Church must maintain the priorities of obedience and becoming.

True humility, according to Kierkegaard, is the deep realization that humans can do nothing of spiritual consequence independent of God (Kierkegaard 2007:30). Human beings can never achieve God's highest will without His divine assistance. Just as Moses knew he was not the one causing the miracles of God, "for the work was the Lord's" (Kierkegaard 2007:31), so too must the individual recognize, in humility, the limits of his capability in the face of God. The individual must come to this discouraging conclusion as an internal truth (Kierkegaard 2007:31). This is true humility. Without this attitude, growth is stymied because the human is self-deceived and alienated from the formative power of the God relation. For Kierkegaard, God, in His great eminence, must paradoxically be found by the achievement of lower and lower humility. Humans cannot attempt to become greater in order to come closer to God (Walsh 2009:62-63). After reading Luke 18:13, Kierkegaard (1952:371-372) characterizes the tax collector's positioning (standing far off) as being humble and alone with God. He contrasts this positioning with the Pharisee, who stands by himself and compares himself to other men. The Pharisee is therefore prideful and not alone with God. The Pharisee saw the tax collector, but not vice-versa. The tax collector was focused only on God. Kierkegaard (1952:374-5) writes: "Proudly the Pharisee found satisfaction in seeing the tax collector; humbly the tax collector saw no one. With eyes cast down and turned inward he was in truth before God." The example of the tax collector shows the relational power of humility. Humility allows for the closeness with God in maintaining an inner focus which reaches to God from a sense of the severe limits of human ability.

Kierkegaard characterizes prayer as being primarily concerned with the believer listening for the voice of God. Kierkegaard takes into account the relational dynamic between human and divine in this activity, stating that "the true relation in prayer is not when God

hears what is prayed for, but when the person praying continues to pray until he is the one who hears, who hears what God is asking for" (Kierkegaard 1938:154). Rather than praying until the individual feels heard by God, the emphasis is on listening for God's directive voice, shifting the emphasis of the activity to receiving from God. In some senses this could be characterized as a conversation which ends in God's directive communication. Kierkegaard (1956:51) writes, "Prayer does not change God, it changes the one who offers it." The spiritually formative nature of prayer, therefore, arises due to its relational quality which brings the believer into contact with the transformative power of God. Kierkegaard states that the growth in prayer life eventually concludes with silence. The spiritual formation which accompanies prayer leads to a mature listening for God's voice in abandonment of human works (Kierkegaard 1952:323). The process of prayer forms the individual toward greater and greater focus only on God's will, for the supplicant continually learns to abandon what is unimportant in his seeking of God (Kierkegaard 1990:394). Further, prayer is formative in that it exercises and strengthens the human's ability to continue to will one thing (Kierkegaard 1970:403-405). The focus required in prayer keeps the individual continually connected with God. The supplicant must pray with "a yielding of himself in the inner being"—that is, authentically and personally (Kierkegaard 1990:383). Kierkegaard sees prayer through a relational lens.

Kierkegaard's characterization of mature prayer as a silent listening is significant, for he also emphasizes the importance of silence in the believer's relationship with God. Kierkegaard (1993:224) writes, "God loves silence. Silence in relation to God is strengthening. Absolute silence is like a lever, or like the point outside the world which Archimedes talks about. To talk lightly about God, therefore, is a depletion that weakens. God hates it when we gossip with others about our relationship with him." Silence is the solution to the problem of being unable to hear the Word of God amidst the distractions of life. Modern life—even in Kierkegaard's day—is full of noisy sensory demands which proliferate insignificance. Kierkegaard (2007:372) writes, "The means of communication have been perfected, but what is publicized with such hot haste is rubbish! Oh, create silence!" This is even more true today in the age of instant informational and communicational access. Similarly, talkativeness fritters away inward authenticity. "Silence is the essence of inwardness, of the inner life. Mere gossip mocks real talk, and to express what is yet in thought weakens action by forestalling it" (Kierkegaard 2007:373). Those who do not have a requisite inner focus turn to gossiping to find venal satisfaction, fearing of the truth of silence (Kierkegaard 2007:373). Kierkegaard links silence with the power of action. He writes, "Every person understands very well that to act is something far greater

than to talk about it. If, therefore, a person is sure that he can do the thing in question, and if he is resolved that he will do it, he does not talk about it" (Kierkegaard 2007:374). Talkativeness is really just a measure of unwillingness. Contrarily, the individual who is committed to action will remain silent (Kierkegaard 2007:374). This attitude of silence is a hallmark of a mature individual who acts upon God's Word.

Kierkegaard sees repentance and remorse as helpful activities in formation. He believes that while repentance calls us forward to God, remorse calls us back from evil. He writes, "This is precisely why there are two of them, because in order to make our journey secure we must look ahead as well as look back" (Kierkegaard 1956:53). Kierkegaard considers true repentance ("eternal" repentance), to be "a quiet daily commitment before God". Sustained, inward repentance reveals a maturity on the part of the penitent. Further, repentance in preparation for confession causes inward change. It seems Kierkegaard considers the voicing of the sin to be the final outworking of an internal process of transformation through repentance (Kierkegaard 2007:41-42). The act of confession does not benefit God, who knows all. Rather, the process of confession aids the believer to discover more about themselves (Kierkegaard 2007:42). The spiritual formation of the believer depends upon the growing recognition of the impotency of human abilities to even approximate God's holiness. This is the Kierkegaardian process of "infinite resignation". Yet, throughout this ongoing process of illuminating the failures of the human nature of sin, the believer continues to function with passionate inwardness in a relationship with Christ (Allison 2998:138). Further, the forgiveness of God is meant to be transformative. Kierkegaard (1970:45-46) writes, "Forgiveness does not mean to be placed in more fortunate circumstances but to become a new person in the reassuring awareness that your guilt is forgiven even if the consequences of guilt remain." In his view, guilt may remain even after true repentance and forgiveness has occurred. This is perhaps because the consciousness of sin is meant to lead the believer closer to God (Kierkegaard 2007:364). This is the repentant attitude required toward a relational approach to spiritual formation.

3.5.2 Stevens' Account of Formative Activities

Stevens relates a story about a famous author who once gave a lecture on writing. The lecturer arrived at the podium and immediately asked who in the audience wanted to be writers. Everyone raised their hand. He then responded "Then why aren't you home writing?" and immediately left the auditorium (Stevens 1981b:227-228). Stevens states that

this is a perfect analogy for those who wish to walk with God. There is no teaching which substitutes for taking action in pursuit of the goal. At the foundation of Stevens' view of spiritual formation is the responsibility of the individual believer to act. He (Stevens 2007a:487-498) writes,

> Jesus could do everything for you. He could teach you, appear before you, and give you a thousand Sermons on the Mount. He could even wash your feet. But when it was all finished, He would say, "Now you have seen what I did. Blessed are you if you do it" (John 13:17). It comes right back to what you do. Any truth you have becomes effective when you put it into action. Walk in that truth.

The response of obedience to God is of utmost concern for Stevens. There is no Christian spiritual formation without it. The truth of Christianity must be internalized and enacted.

For Stevens, all devotional activity is only effective when pursued relationally in the context of communing with God (1981b:78). The exposure to God in such acts as the study of the Word, prayer, and waiting on God is what causes such devotional activity to have any formative results (Stevens 1974e:8). In other words, devotional activity is only formative insofar as it brings the believer into an exposure to God. The most basic purpose for all activity recommended by Stevens is to pursue a walk with God. However, in doing so, the believer is brought into contact with God, who is the source of all transformation. The attitudes and activities in Stevens' theory of spiritual formation bring the believer into relational experiences which fundamentally alter the person (cf. Stevens 1980:62). These experiences are the natural product of undertaking Christian activities such as reading the Word, repentance, and waiting on the Lord.

However Stevens maintains that both devotional and ministerial activities do not in themselves constitute a walk with God (cf. Stevens 1981:67). It is possible to perform the actions of prayer or worship without connecting to God, and doing so will ultimately be ineffective, both relationally and formatively. A walk with God is a lifestyle of spiritually connecting with the Lord. While it is meant to be a daily undertaking, Stevens warns against allowing walking with God to become routine. He writes, "If walking with God is a labor, there is something wrong in your spirit. When there is a lessening of joy, and your walk with God sinks to a routine way of living, you are walking with Him on too low a level. Then you must find what is causing you to walk on that level" (Stevens 1983:681-682). The

principle of authenticity is therefore a requirement in the pursuit of effective devotion. The believer must genuinely desire to walk with God, or the endeavor will fail.

While this section attempts to identify via synthesis the most important activities relevant in Stevens' theory of spiritual formation, it is important to note that he maintains that there is no stereotypical way in which God causes formation for those who walk with him. Stevens (2007a:814) writes,

> God uses many vessels in many ways to mold and shape us. When you get your eyes upon the method or the thing that is happening, you are getting your eyes off the vision. Do not get your eyes upon the method that God uses. Keep your eyes upon the vision and see why He is doing it. Do not say, "Why did this happen to me?" Look at the vision. Look at the goal. Then you will know why it happened. God is bringing you forth in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26).

The goal is Christlikeness. If the believer's focus rests primarily upon particular methods of spiritual formation, the believer will be distracted from seeking the One who makes any method effective toward transformation.

Similar to Kierkegaard, Stevens' theory does not rely on conventional activities of spiritual formation as much as on attitudinal or relational activities. For this reason, some of the activities discussed in this section may not at first seem to fit the descriptor of "activities". However, principles which must be willfully chosen or performed by the individual—whether of internal or external expression—are fairly categorized as activities in Stevens' relational theory. The activities covered in this section are authenticity, intensity, awareness and focus, God's dealings, transference, the Word, repentance, and waiting on the Lord. The principles of authenticity, intensity, and awareness are attitudinal choices the believer must make. God's dealings and transference are relational activities. The reading of the Word, repentance, and waiting on the Lord are traditional devotional activities. An advantage of this approach is that the activities are not presented as mechanical actions but rather as organic expressions of a human being pursuing a relationship with God.

> **Summary proposition:** *Activities which promote spiritual formation must be understood and undertaken primarily as the tools and attitudes with which to effectively pursue and maintain a relationship with God.*

Scriptures: Gen 1:26; 2 Sam 6:16; Job 42:6; Ps 16:8, 27:13, 34:5, 51:1-2, 6-10, 57:7, 107:20, 139:23-24; Is 6:1-7, 40:31, 49:25, 53:6; Jer 29:13; Hos 6:1-3; Mt 4:1-11; 6:22-23, 10:39, 11:12, 13:1-9, 18-23, 14:28-30, 16:24, 22:37, 28:20; Mk 12:30; Lk 4:1-13; 8:5-15; 10:27; Jn 1:14, 47, 5:24, 8:56-58, 12:27, 13:17, 15:3; Acts 2:42-47; Rom 8:28; 10:17, 13:14; 1 Cor 3:1-2, 5:1-8, 7:1, 15:31, 58; 2 Cor 3:6-7, 17-18; Gal 2:20, 5:3-4, 24, 6:14; Eph 3:20, 5:16, 6:10; Phil 2:13, 3:10-11; Col 3:1-3; 2 Tim 2:4, 4:7; Heb 4:12, 5:12-13, 11:15, 12:1-29, 13:8; Jas 4:8; 1 Jn 1:7, 9, 2:16, 3:2; Ju 12, 14-15, 20; Rev 19:7-8

3.5.2.1 Authenticity

While authenticity was listed as an integral aspect of Stevens' definition of the paradigm of a walk with God, it is important to also recognize it as an efficacious attitude in the believer's activity toward spiritual formation. Perhaps it is not an activity as one might commonly expect in spiritual formation—such as prayer—but Stevens presents it as an attitude which must be intentionally enacted. Stevens states that the description of Nathanael in John 1:47, as a man with no guile, is an example of the spiritual principle of being authentic. Those who are authentic are transparent, frank, open, and without pretense (Stevens 1972a:154-155). This important attitude is also described in Hebrews 4:12, which suggests that God helps the believer find the authenticity of honesty in the power of his Word, which judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The attitude of authenticity therefore allows God the access to the believer's heart (Stevens 1974d:67-68), which is a requirement in the context of Stevens' relational brand of spiritual formation.

Authenticity is required in the relationship with God, but it must also be maintained in community relationships. Stevens states that believers should relate together with intentional authenticity. Stevens (1974e:25-26) writes, "Honesty, openness, and frankness are without a religious air. I thank God that we do not find it necessary to put on or create an image that appears religious—not to any one, at any time, or in any place. All we need is to walk with God in honesty and simplicity of heart. Do not try to impress anyone. Just walk with God and let the fullness of the Lord come forth." Rather than attempting to impress fellow Christians, each believer should walk with God together in authenticity. The honesty and openness to address problems together is an important aspects of spiritual formation in the context of community. Stevens quotes Jude 12, stating that the "hidden rocks" are problems which lead to destructive consequences in the Christian community. Believers must relate with humility and honesty, and cannot be "phonies". Hypocrisy and

legalism are enemies of authenticity in community relationships. Stevens points to the Pharisees as examples of such inauthentic relating which runs counter to Jesus and His teachings (Stevens 1972a:112). Particularly in the context of discussing sin, Stevens recommends an open and honest communication in the Christian community. Confession toward the cleansing of unrighteousness (cf. 1 Jn 1:7, 9) is a spiritually formative activity which can occur in community relationships (Stevens 1982a:263). Stevens sees confession as an outgrowth of the attitude of authenticity, and such honest communication as an act of submission to God and His Word (Stevens 1972a:113).

Authenticity is further contrasted with legalism. A legalistic attitude presents all the right words and actions in order to seem spiritually mature (Stevens 1971a:4-5). Stevens states that the worst thing about the religious is that they are self-deceived, thinking that they are doing the will of God when they may not be (1987:29-30). A religious attitude emphasizes works to the exclusion of genuine contact with God (Stevens 1989:83). Doing the "right thing" without an anticipation of meeting God reflects an empty religiosity and will never produce change. Legalism is therefore the opposite pole of authenticity in that it estranges the believer from God and his transformation. The attempt to hide from God behind religious affectations prolongs spiritual immaturity, for in doing so the believer withholds internal access from God (1982:28). An attitude of authenticity, however, will maintain a relationship with God through openness and honesty. This is also true in community relationships. The attitude of religious legalism is inauthentic, for it relies on pretense among fellow Christians. Attempting to present oneself as superior to or more spiritual than brothers and sisters reflects a lack of relating in Christ's love (cf. Stevens 1982a:264).

This attitude of authenticity is applicable to all devotional activities. Stevens dismisses the formative efficacy of prayer or the reading of the Bible if they are pursued as obligations or empty ritual. The believer with an attitude of authenticity will pursue such devotions in a genuine, rather than perfunctory, manner. Regarding the reading of the Bible, he states that it should not only be read every day, but that the believer must "Read it until it lives; read it until you eat it; read it until you begin to feel the Author breathe down your neck as He whispers into your ears what it is all about, what He really meant when He wrote it. Read it until the fire that burns in the prophet's heart burns in your heart as the Word is transferred from a cold page to the tablets of the heart" (Stevens 1980:110). The authentic believer maintains a passionate, genuine pursuit of God in all activity. Such authenticity requires what Stevens calls an "open heart" (1974d:67).

As a practical way to enact this principle of authenticity, Stevens recommends that those who are looking for spiritual formation examine themselves and write down their needs. Such needs might range from a deeper experience of Christ's salvation or the infilling of the Holy Spirit. He recommends that believers do this once a month—looking honestly at how often they pray and wait on the Lord (Stevens 1981:66-67). In this honesty, the believer is able to gauge his or her needs, and respond with commensurate activity. Relatedly, Stevens suggests that the believer allow the Holy Spirit to "probe the depths" of his or her heart in order to be honest about the underlying motivations for seeking God (Stevens 1974e:27-28). Those who seek blessings more than God Himself will not progress. Such honesty allows the believer to maintain authenticity in a walk with God.

Though they both use the term, there are some important differences between Stevens' concept of authenticity and Kierkegaard's. While Kierkegaard sees authenticity primarily as a goal of spiritual formation—that is, to become an authentic individual—Stevens sees it as an ongoing attitude which aids in maintaining a formative relationship with God. Kierkegaard's view of authenticity is that it "is formed endlessly by ceaseless effort and self-overcomings" (Golomb 1992:78). For Kierkegaard, authenticity is the result of becoming. It is a product of formation. For Stevens, however, it is an ongoing attitude required in the pursuit of spiritual formation. An authentic believer has not necessarily achieved the end of spiritual formation, but rather reflects a dedication to honesty, truth, and a wholehearted approach to God and his commandments. In Stevens view, authenticity is a requirement for a relationship with God, and is therefore a prerequisite to spiritual formation. However, spiritual formation will, of course, result in an increase of authenticity within the believer.

3.5.2.2 Intensity

A true walk with God is maintained through intensity. The greatest commandment requires this, for intensity is involved in loving God with all our heart, our soul, our strength, and our mind (Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27; Stevens 1977f:28-29, 1986:615-616). According to the greatest commandment, Christians cannot walk with God halfheartedly. The intensity required by the greatest commandment is not common in this age, according to Stevens. He states that most people choose to diminish the strength of their emotions and responses (Stevens 1976m:31-32). However, a relationship with God requires intensity. Such intensity inspires the believer to actively seek the Lord in all aspects of life. Intensity is required to consistently and dependably enact the formative devotional activities of a

walk with God. This intensity is an "unwavering determination" to walk obediently with God and thereby obtain his promises (Stevens 1988:222). Stevens sees the intensity of Jacob as he wrestled with the angel of God as an example of the tenacious attitude the believer should have toward God. To receive from the Lord requires the attitude that the believer will not let go of God until the blessing is given (Stevens 1988:224).

Stevens uses the term "violence" from Matthew 11:12 as a synonym for the attitude of intensity the believer must have. To seek the Kingdom requires an attitude of spiritual violence. This violence may be positioned against principalities and powers, but also "the foes within" (Stevens 1988:225). The violence of one who walks with God is oriented toward the defeat of all things that stand against the establishment of the Kingdom, including internal problems or deficiencies. Spiritual violence therefore positions the believer to be intense in the pursuit of spiritual formation, to see destroyed the internal problems which resist the will of God. In reading Jeremiah 29:13, Stevens (1977f:28) writes, "As a believer, you must attain a violence strong enough to break through to God. Then God will meet you. He waits for that violence. He meets you every time you get down to business. People who halfheartedly seek God will not discover any answers." The wholehearted seeking of God will garner God's response. His answers will not only rearrange circumstances, but also the internal nature of the believer. Stevens also sees the term "contend" (Is 49:25) as a synonym for intensity and violence (cf. Stevens 1988:224).

Stevens states that one of the most practical ways to pursue growth is to maintain an aggressive submission. He defines aggressive submission as the active seeking of God's will and the immediate acting upon that will. This aggressive submission allows the progressive cleansing of the filthiness of flesh toward holiness in the fear of the Lord (1 Cor 7:1; Stevens 1971b:84-85). Such aggressive submission requires intensity. However, Stevens believes that most people do not appreciate intensity. He cites Michal's reaction to David's intense dance of worship (2 Sam 6:16) as an example (Stevens 1977f:32). Stevens states that humans have a difficult time sustaining any particular emotion for an extended period of time. The usual human solution is to suppress feelings in order to not be overwhelmed by them. However, to walk with God requires a sustained violent intensity to push through distractions and resistances to enacting God's will (Stevens 1977f:27).

The Kierkegaardian concept of passion is highly relevant in this discussion. According to Kierkegaard, humanity often willfully chooses a life in which "Sensitive organs are shielded

and not in immediate contact with objects, so us ordinary people are afraid to come into personal, immediate contact with the eternal" (Kierkegaard 2007:20). In this way, the individual is removed from his "individual responsibility before the Truth." Internal intensity is required to break out of the dullness of normal religiosity and into the formative connection with God. Kierkegaard (1993:330) writes, "If it is hard to bear the world's persecution, it is harder still to bear the responsibility for not having acted, to stand ashamed in eternity because you did not win the bold confidence that transforms shame into honor." The transformation of the human cannot come without an intensity to choose uncomfortable actions which leap over the barriers of common passivity and into the passionate love of God. This perspective seems to complement and add dimension to Stevens' concept of intensity. For Stevens, an attitude of spiritual violence is required to move beyond the inertia of human passivity and into a formative relationship with God. A walk with God goes nowhere without the required intensity which propels action. The passions of the individual must therefore be stirred in order to escape the stunting effects of a milquetoast attitude.

3.5.2.3 Awareness and Focus

Another attitude required in a walk with God is awareness, particularly, an awareness of God. Stevens goes so far as to state that the "key" to a walk with God is awareness (1983:501). Awareness allows for communing with God (1971b:73-74; 1981b:78-79). A walk with God is the expression of a wholehearted focus on God (Stevens 2007b:829). Stevens (1983:508) writes, "An awareness of the Lord has always made the difference between the people who succeeded in God and the people who did not. The people who succeeded, according to the Word of God, were the people who tuned in to God. They became aware of Him." Stevens characterizes Abraham—"the friend of God"—as being "out of tune" with the world around him. Instead, he was consistently focused on God. Conversely, the Bible illustrates that those who were not aware of God more than anything else were the ones who failed. Stevens sees this principle illustrated in II Corinthians 3:7, and states that the believer must actively pull the veil off his perception in order to see God. Stevens (2007a:497) writes, "You pull the curtain from your spiritual sight if you want to see God. You draw near if you want to sense Him." Awareness is not only an attitude, but an initiative which must be taken in order to pursue a walk with God.

Stevens states that awareness is a necessary foundation for an enriching devotional life. If the believer is not "tuned in" to God, all devotional activity will fail to be effective (Stevens

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n.d.:1-2). He quotes James 4:8 and Matthew 28:20 in this respect. Although God is omnipresent, there is no conscious connection made with Him unless we exercise awareness. As a corollary, because God is omnipresent, the only thing required for a believer to encounter Him is to become spiritually aware of Him (Stevens 2007a:496-497). God is not afar off. Rather, it is the unawareness of the believer which causes the distance between God and supplicant. Stevens (n.d.:11-12) writes,

> There are some aids that will help you develop your devotional life and growth in the Lord. Read the Scriptures. Pray a great deal. Wait on the Lord. Sing songs in the Spirit. Worship in the Spirit. All of these activities will help, and yet they can all be done almost mechanically without an awareness of the Lord. You can prophesy and be aware of the prophecy, but not of the Lord. You can sing a psalm, aware that you are singing a beautiful psalm, but not aware of the Lord to whom you sing it. Memorizing Scripture can become merely an activity of rote. You can read a great deal of the Scripture and be thoroughly intrigued with it, and yet not have an awareness of the Lord in everything you read. Your devotional life may include memorizing Scripture, reading the Bible, praying, waiting on the Lord, singing psalms, prophesying in the house of the Lord, worshiping in every service — and still it may not be very rich, because there is not any great awareness of the Lord. You may be doing all of these things and yet not have much of a walk with God.

The awareness of God is therefore a supportive attitude which must undergird all formative activities. Without an awareness of God, there is no connection to the very source of transformation.

The awareness of God is necessary in order to maintain an organic relationship with Him. Stevens (1972b:178) writes, "There isn't a walk with God unless you are aware of Him. You cannot walk with God mechanically; you must commune with Him. This is a practiced, deliberate setting of your heart and mind upon Him. You worship Him with everything within your being; you love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength, determined to change into all that He wants you to be." This quote explains in more depth what Stevens means by awareness. His use of the term seems to encompass the focus of the human heart and mind on God. It also contains elements of wholehearted worship, as well as the exercising of the greatest commandment, which includes all aspects of the human being. Finally, it includes a determination to change

according to God's will. Stevens (1982:370-371; emphasis his) writes, "you must practice the presence of the Lord. You must develop your awareness of the Lord. This is something YOU do. As you sense how close He is, He will be real to you. It will just flow. The curtain is there, an insensitivity in us toward God, but by the Spirit we can see that taken away until we can walk and talk with the Lord." Stevens sees awareness as an attitude which must be intentionally enacted. This focus is what David identified in Psalm 16:8 and 57:7, in which he declares that the Lord is always before him and his heart is fixed (Stevens 1981b:31). This awareness of God, therefore, is of central importance as an attitude which enables the actions of spiritual formation in a relationship with God.

Similar to this spiritual awareness required to connect with God is the related principle of "focus". Focus is the active determination to be aware. Stevens states that the believer must focus on God, rather than the passing circumstances. If we focus on our problems, they are magnified (Stevens 1987:652; 1988:389). When Peter attempted to walk on water, he was able to do so until his focus was removed from Christ (Mt 14:28-30). Stevens quips: "if you want to move a mountain, you must ignore the mountain and keep looking to the Lord" (Stevens 1986:421). In this way, the believer's focus on the Lord allows God to enact the miraculous. This attitude is necessary for the miraculous transformation desired in Stevens' conception of spiritual formation. Stevens (1976h:33) writes, "The goals that are within are best attained by focusing your eyes upon the Lord. By having a fuller revelation of Him, you will appropriate the grace necessary to take care of the internal problem." The internal goals of spiritual formation can be achieved through the act of focusing on God. Relying on Galatians 5:16, Stevens states that the removal of problems in the process of spiritual formation occurs when the believer is focused on God and walking with him. In doing so, "the old habits and attitudes of the flesh will drop off" (Stevens 1976:34). This transformation out of the old nature and into the newness of Christ's nature is the result of a concerted focus which maintains a relational connection. After quoting Psalm 34:5, Stevens writes: "This fixed focus on Him, the focus that draws strength, the focus that is a living contact with Him, is vital to your walk with God. The only way you will be able to meet your responsibilities and fulfill the ministry God gives you is by focusing completely upon the Lord." Those who keep their focus on God are given all they need to act on what God is leading them to do. In this process, spiritual formation occurs, maturing the believer in his daily walk with God (1988:7). Stevens references Ephesians 3:20 as another Scripture regarding the enabling which comes from God, and the reason why we must focus on him. The believer's needs are met by God, who is able to do greater

than we can imagine. The power of God is able to overcome all human limitations, but only a focus on him allows the believer to partake of this power (Stevens 1988:9). Stevens (1988:10) writes, "This focus on the Lord is the key to the changes that will come to those who walk with God." He states that praise and worship are the best activities by which this focus can be maintained. He views Acts 2:42-47 as proof of this, for the early church continually praised God, and there were many miracles which came surrounding their focus on God together (1988:10).

Kierkegaard also places the cultivation of awareness as a high priority in his writings. This awareness leads to "inward deepening" in which the knowledge of the interior self is expanded (Moore 2007:ix). However, Kierkegaard emphasized the distractions of the world which impede this awareness. Kierkegaard treats the avoidance of distraction to be a formative activity in itself. The business of life and the tendency toward impatience resist the process of becoming a single individual. Particularly in the needed consciousness of sin, staying embroiled in the trivial effectively distracts the human from addressing the deeper problems of human existence. Kierkegaard (2007:19) writes, "Likewise, in the world of spirit, busyness, keeping up with others, hustling hither and yon, makes it almost impossible for an individual to form a heart, to become a responsible, alive self." By avoiding the distractions of the world in this way, the believer breaks away from the world so that spirit "comes into existence" (Kierkegaard 1970:119-120). Stevens maintains, in a similar way to Kierkegaard, that the believer must become disentangled from the world in order to truly walk with God. Those who are so busy with work and family commitments are caught up in a worldly life and are too busy for a walk with God. Stevens (1976d:38) writes, "Whom the Lord loves He troubles a little, lest such a man be destroyed by his attachment to the world." Stevens looks to 1 John 2:16 as an explanation of this principle, for the lust of the flesh is of the world, and the world passes away. Contrarily, the one who does the will of the Father lives forever. Stevens also relies on 2 Timothy 2:4, which states that to please God, the believer must not be entangled with the affairs of life. Stevens states that those who truly walk with God will not live perfect lives according to the standards of the world, for the trappings thereof will be an "adverse bondage" (1976d:39). While both Kierkegaard and Stevens cast the awareness of God in opposition to the distractions of the world, Stevens takes the concept further in treating it as an attitude to be maintained and enacted. While awareness for Kierkegaard is primarily the antidote to distraction, for Stevens awareness is an ongoing relational principle which must be consistently applied in a walk with God in order to maintain a formative connection with

God.

3.5.2.4 God's Dealings

The principle of God's dealings was previously discussed as an integral aspect of the paradigm of a walk with God. Here it will be discussed as a formative activity, particularly in how the believer must respond to God's dealings. Stevens (1976m:33-34) explains that there is no such thing as a walk with God without the "dealings of God". God-given circumstantial or emotional pressures challenge the believer toward increasing growth and maturity. Stevens (1982:318) writes, "If you want to walk with God, if you want to change, if you want things to be different, He knows how to do it—He puts the pressure on." The dealings of God are therefore God's activity of spiritual formation, rather than the believer's. However, the believer must respond to God's dealings correctly. Stevens (1982:319) writes, "Change has come because the Lord has worked the change, and you have learned to live in the Lord." The effectiveness of the dealings is dependent upon the believer maintaining his or her relationship with God. This is the dedication to "live in the Lord" regardless of the difficulty of His dealings. Through such dealings, God works in us to do His will (cf. Phil 2:13). The dealings of God are essential in the reception of God's impartation. Stevens (1976m:65) writes, "The dealings of the Lord must go deep; God must plow the ground. You cry, 'Why must this be?' The deeper He can plow, the more rain you can absorb. Everything that God wants in your life will grow faster and better."

Hebrews 12 and 2 Timothy 4:7 both state that there are objectives in the Christian life which God expects the believer to complete. The dealings of God are meant to produce the growth necessary in all believers that they might be equipped to reach these divine goals. Stevens dismisses the human attitude of wanting immediate results, and states that "Real faith walks with God. God brings many delays in order to accomplish His will for your life. For instance, you pray for patience, and He gives you tribulation (Romans 5:3). You may pray for wisdom, and the Lord brings you problems" (Stevens 1976a:167-168). When believers pray to walk with God, God responds by exposing Himself to them and "crippling" them. This terminology emerges from Stevens' formative reading of the story of Jacob wrestling with God (Stevens 1982:201-202). While God transformed Jacob into Israel, he limped the rest of his life, reminding himself and others of God's dealings. Stevens (1976m:63) writes, "I am learning that when I pray for something, He deals deeply with my heart until I am ready for it." In this way, formation occurs in the process of contending with God that He fulfill His Word.

The pressures of God sometimes cause the areas of immaturity to "erupt". This can, at times, result in the believer reacting in a sinful way. However, Stevens does not see this as a difficulty for God, who provides the provision for salvation and forgiveness. Stevens (1982:205) writes, "In my opinion, if God puts pressure on a man and what is in him erupts, either in an expression of sin, or an emotion, or a failure, and God deals with it, it's forgiven. And that man is better off than if God had never dealt with him and those weaknesses had remained within him and kept him from what God had for him." The dealings of God bring immaturity to the surface, where it can be addressed and removed. This is essentially the process David asked for in Psalm 139:23-24, which exemplifies how believers should pray for God to test their hearts to find any "wicked way" within. Similarly, Psalm 51:8 recommends the believer to rejoice when God breaks his or her bones. Stevens (1982:205) writes, "When a little lamb becomes willful, tending to stray, the shepherd sometimes has to break its leg. He then binds it up. The little lamb now can do nothing but stay close to the shepherd, and it learns not to wander." Hosea 6:1-3 uses similar language, stating that God tears his people, but will heal them (Stevens 1977a:55). The dealings of God presage maturity.

God uses affliction to perfect the believer's motivation. Stevens cites 1 Corinthians 15:58 in this, stating that God wishes to work in us the ability to be steadfast and immovable, never falling away from God's will. Will the believer keep his focus on God, or be distracted by the circumstances (Stevens 1976a:172-173)? Such dealings inspire a progressive deepening of dedication (2007a:35-36). Those who truly walk with God will be unmoved by the outward appearance of their circumstances. Instead, they will focus only on the Word of God, trusting that Word with an absolute faith.

However in the course of these dealings, Stevens admonishes his readers to keep their hearts pliable. He states that the pressures of God toward formation may sometimes cause reactions of bitterness or heard-heartedness, even though God's intention is to form mature sons (Stevens 1974e:58-59). Toward this end, the believer must look for an experience similar to the one described in Psalm 27:13—for the believer must see God at work in His dealings (1981a:12-13). The believer's faith must be in God, even when experiencing the dealings.

Ultimately, these dealings of God are the enacted experience of the cross of Christ. Stevens cites John 5:24 and 12:27 that Jesus sacrificed himself in order to remove all sin from humanity, which moves those who believe in Him from death into life (Stevens

2007c:470-471). Galatians 2:20, 5:24, and 6:14 all point to the necessary experience of seeing the flesh nature crucified with Christ (Stevens 1983:160). Philippians 3:10-11 states that we will be conformed to Christ's death and resurrection. The death working in believers, according to 1 Corinthians 15:31, is the death of the flesh—including greed, selfishness, and carnal thinking. This does not occur by disciplining the flesh, but rather in the appropriation of Jesus' crucifixion. As Jesus states in Matthew 10:39, the human life must be lost in order to live in Him. The human life that is lost in God's dealings is the sin nature. No true change occurs without this death. Stevens (2007c:471) writes, "We have to suffer a little in order to live a lot." The death of the flesh, and the subsequent transformation toward Christlikeness, is the purpose of God's dealings (Stevens 1987:67-68). This is Stevens' view of Jesus' command, "Take up your cross, and follow Me" (Mt 16:24). It is because the sin nature is so imbedded in the human that anyone who wishes to walk with God will find that God must deal with him or her in seemingly harsh ways in order to produce a transformation of nature (Stevens 1982a:206-207; cf. Stevens 1987:64). Those who hunger to walk with Him will find themselves under the discipline of God to remove the sin nature. God may very well "break bones" in His dealings in order to accomplish this (cf. Ps 51:8; 1982a:206-207).

It seems that Stevens primarily uses the term "dealings" in reference to God's activity, and "testings" in reference to satanic activity which is allowed by God. Stevens states that in following the pattern of Jesus, the Body of Christ will also have its own wilderness experience in which Satan's testings occur (cf. Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13; Stevens 2007b:1330). The story of Job shows that God at times allows Satan to test believers. The testings were meant to get Job to grow, and to see himself in a humble light (cf. Job 42:6). The testings will bring imperfections to the surface, even with those like Job who seem perfect at the outset. In bringing imperfections to the surface, God is then able to remove them and bring us further into the divine nature (Stevens 2007a:751). Stevens contextualizes satanic testings with the principle in Romans 8:28, that God can turn all things toward the good of His purposes (Stevens 1976a:180–181).

A prominent aspect of spiritual warfare is Satan's concerted attempt to test believers who receive the Word of God. After citing the parable of the sower in Luke 8:5-15, Stevens states that Satan battles the growth of the believer by the Word. Stevens (1983:647–648) writes, "God allows the testing, and Satan becomes the unwilling tool by which the word of God is refined like gold, tried by fire in the crucible of your life." The response of the believer when tested in this way must be like Christ's: "it is written" (cf. Mt 4:10b). By

standing upon the Word of God, the believer comes into greater righteousness and withstands the temptations of evil (1987:489). According to Stevens, Satan attempts to thwart a genuine walk with God. Satan will use such tactics as distraction, conflict, and confusion. However, those who walk with God will keep His Word (Stevens 1976n:7-8). If the believer takes his or her focus off God in response to satanic activity, the formative relationship with God is broken, at least for a time (Stevens 1982b:743; 1988:123-124). However, for Stevens, Satan is ultimately powerless before God, and all satanic activity is only allowed by God for His own purposes.

Kierkegaard sees Christianity as necessarily involving an experience of death. Kierkegaard (1975:508-509) writes, "Committing yourself to Christ, which is a matter of the spirit and of dying to the world, means that you run the risk of Christ making things so tangled for you that you almost despair." Similar to Stevens, Kierkegaard sees a true commitment to Christ as the instigator of difficulties. The Kierkegaardian concepts of suffering, resignation, despair, and the death to self are all appropriate here, for these existential experiences lead the believer toward a formative relationship with God. The main thrust of Kierkegaard's handling of these issues is the human coming to the end of his own human power. This clarifies Stevens' purpose in highlighting the role of God's dealings in that the difficulties orchestrated by God illuminate human limitations and produce a deeper reliance on God. Change does not occur by human strength. God's dealings make that truth experientially clear. However, It seems that Stevens emphasizes God's role in instigating such creative suffering more than Kierkegaard. It is not the dealings themselves—nor the human reaction to those dealings—that Stevens values, but rather the enacting of God's will and the enabling of his formative power in the context of such dealings. This again reveals Stevens' overarching determination to keep God at the center of his theory of spiritual formation. The dealings of God are a relational expression of spiritual formation, initiated by God.

3.5.2.5 Transference, Impartation, and Appropriation

The dealings of God do not independently produce change. Rather, they provide opportunities for the human to seek God for more of an appropriation of his nature. Stevens (2007c:349-350) writes, "Devastation was never designed as an instrument of perfection. It was to be an exposure of unbelief and a stirring up of faith in your heart in the Word that had been committed to you—in order that now you can appropriate it." The dealings of God expose the areas which need to be transformed and lead the believer

toward needed change. However, the believer is still responsible to seek God to complete the transaction. The spiritual activity by which this occurs is the believer's intentional appropriation and internalization of God's nature. Stevens continues: "It is the chastening that leads you to become a partaker of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10). It is an appropriation of another nature, of an attribute of God. His righteousness becomes ours." The transformation into Christlikeness occurs when the Lord's dealings lead the believer to recognize his or her deep need for an impartation of Christ's nature. The cross of Christ, if allowed to function fully in spiritual transference, causes spiritual formation into a new creature. The dealings of God are utilized by God Himself to bring the devastation of the cross which removes the old nature. The cross of Christ must be appropriated by the believer in order to be spiritually formed (Stevens 2007c:482-484). Stevens explains that a walk with God involves a daily appropriation from God. Other Scriptures which Stevens states describe the principle of transference include John 15:3, Psalm 107:20, and Ephesians 6:10 (1074a:4). Stevens states that transference is also seen in the OT sacrifices which removed the sins of the Israelites (Stevens 1986:18).

Impartation is the act of giving by transference, but appropriation is the act of receiving through transference. Stevens states that the propitiation of Christ is the foremost example of transference. All sin has been placed upon the Savior (Is 53:6). This is the transference of sin from the human to Jesus. However, Christ's righteousness must also be transferred to the believer. The cross of Christ both removes the old nature, but also imparts the new nature (Stevens 2007d:349). Stevens (1974a:1) writes, "Everything in your salvation depends upon the righteousness of Jesus being transferred to you." Elsewhere, Stevens (2007c:497) writes, "The cross is an experience for us, a way that our faith can identify with what He did and we can possess it (Galatians 2:20). The greatest appropriation a person can make is to appropriate the work of the cross that Christ accomplished." As Paul explained to the Galatians, he is—and believers are—crucified with Christ, and thereby, Christ lives in him (Stevens 1974a:2). For Stevens, the principle of the Lordship of Christ is applied alongside transference in that the blood of Jesus is constantly applied to the believer, and this application results in a progressive growth in righteousness (Stevens 1976a:218). The process of transformation is ultimately a process by which God transfers his nature to the human being through Christ (Stevens 1986:19-20). Romans 13:14 states that we should put on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a foundational explanation of the principle of transference. Such constant appropriation will strengthen the spirit and weaken the flesh (Stevens 1987:198-199). The initiative of the believer to pursue the appropriation of this new nature is an essential activity of spiritual formation. Such appropriation can

occur in concert with prayer, waiting on the Lord, repentance, and is often expressed through the attitude of hunger. Ultimately, transference occurs as a divine activity, but it must be intentionally elicited by the believer.

Stevens explains that those who attempt to mature by self-reliant, religious means cut themselves off from "substitutionary righteousness, transference of righteousness, and identification with Christ's righteousness.... A spiritual walk with God cannot be a program of discipline. It has to be an appropriation from God" (Stevens 1987:24). After reading Galatians 5:3-4, Stevens explains that being "severed from Christ" ends the believer's growth. Stevens writes,

> Righteousness has to come from an outside source by a miracle transference of nature until you are no longer unrighteous, but righteous by virtue of the endowment of a nature from an outside source. Otherwise, you will try to generate righteousness within yourself. Religious people without faith set about to build up their own righteousness through discipline, asserting that every day in every way they are becoming better and better. In their eyes and by the standards which they have established, they claim to be accepted by God. That typifies the oldest religious effort there is. (1977e:25)

Stevens states that the reliance on impartation stems from a clear recognition that the believer must receive from God in order to be spiritually formed. Discipline itself will not lead to lasting or deep changes. Rather, Lord himself imparts his nature (2007c:584). A proper spiritual relationship with Christ, therefore, is itself a mode of transference. Believers are responsible to pursue Christ's righteousness, rather than their own.

While Kierkegaard did not discuss transference directly, his discussion of the atonement seems to align with Stevens' treatment of transference. Kierkegaard viewed Christ's atoning work as an act of unmerited grace which resolves the conflict of the dialectic of guilt and forgiveness through the transformation of the believer out of a sinful state. Kierkegaard agrees with Anselm's view of the atonement as a "satisfaction", in which God's forgiveness is not just an overlooking of sin, but a complete solution to sin. Along with a number of his contemporaries, Kierkegaard viewed "the atonement as the heart-transforming manifestation of divine compassion and the consequent transformation of human subjectivity. He claimed that Christ's voluntary suffering reveals the extreme depths

to which God was willing to go in order to be in relationship with humanity" (Barrett 2013:16). However, Kierkegaard presents the atonement as both something which is given (or imparted) to the individual by God, as well as something which must be accomplished through individual effort. He does not attempt to reconcile these two—eschewing doctrinal formulations as he does—but rather allows gift and task to exist as a paradoxical pair which together reveal the difficult positioning of the believer in a relationship with God (Barrett 2010:70). Kierkegaard did not wish to overemphasize the atonement as a gift of grace, fearing that this negates the necessary task of the believer pursuing Christlikeness. It seems that the "gift" and the "task" can roughly equate to Stevens' use of impartation and appropriation. While God imparts the transformation through the work of Christ, it is still up to the believer to receive it through appropriation. Further, Stevens' principle of God's dealings relates to transference in a similar way to how Kierkegaard's principle of despair relates to the atonement. Prior to truly receiving the gift of salvation, according to Kierkegaard, the human must come to despair through a human attempt at enacting the task of emulating Christ. However, once the human recognizes the limits of his or her abilities within this despair, the grace of the atonement can truly begin to function as Christ comes to the believer's aid (Barrett 2013:22-23). The impossibility of the task requires the reception of the gift. But first, the human must experientially recognize this impossibility through despair. Similarly, the dealings of God lead the human to recognize the need for change, which leads to the appropriation of Christ's provision. Both authors recognize the centrality of Christ and the necessity of transferring his work on the cross directly to the individual. Doing so has deep formative consequences as it progresses the believer toward Christlikeness.

3.5.2.6 Appropriation of the Word

Another formative activity recommended by Stevens is the exposure to the Word of God. After reading John 15:3, Stevens states that the Word itself has power to transform (1974f:101). Stevens states that those who read the Word of God become bold to walk out God's will, and resist going down the path of being fearful and unbelieving (1981a:67). Stevens (1989:99) writes, "There is nothing so wrong with you that it cannot be helped if you press into the Word." His view of the formative power of the Word of God is informed by Jude 20 and Romans 10:17. Faith is received by hearing the Word. Therefore, a consistent exposure to the Word of God results in the growth of faith. Such exposure may occur in reading the Bible or listening to a sermon (Stevens 1982:133). For Stevens, true

faith in a walk with God constantly reaches beyond limitations (or immaturity) toward the establishment of God's Word. In this way, faith appropriates further maturity from God in the process of formation. Stevens (1982:691) writes, "Your faith is best exhibited when you believe what God has said and provided for you. You look realistically upon what you have, and you are not self-conscious. You don't withdraw; you walk as fully in what you can have as you are able today." For Stevens, faith is not an abstract belief in God, but an active appropriation of his Word and his nature. This faith is not a belief in God's future moving, but a determination to see the Word of God function in the present-day on a personal level. Even if God intends for fulfillment in the future, Stevens states that we should dare to believe in it for today. This kind of faith is seen in Abraham, who saw ahead into the days of Christ and rejoiced (Jn 8:56-58; Stevens 1982:692).

Stevens explains that the believer's understanding of the Word must not only be that it is a true account of the past, but must also include a faith in "the repeatable nature of that history" (1986:116). Stevens' theological position is that anything that God has done in the past is repeatable today. A walk with God, according to Stevens, is impossible without this attitude. He states that we do not walk with the Jesus of history, but the Jesus of today. This conforms to Jesus' statement "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58) which places Jesus in the continual present. Yes, we must see and accept what Jesus did historically, but this is ineffective toward application unless the believer brings it into the present day. Further, Stevens is adamant that it is a grave theological mistake to place all promises of God's Word in the future. Either in maintaining a focus on the heavenly hereafter or on the tribulations, such attitudes often preclude a current, formative relationship with God. As Ephesians 5:16 teaches, we must redeem the time (Stevens 1986:290). The believer must have a faith that God can move upon him today, or no Word will be fulfilled and no transformation will occur. Stevens (1986:116) quips, "Right now He is the I Am—not the great I Was."

Stevens maintains that the correct relationship to the Word involves the faith that it can be applied personally by the believer in the immediate present. The foremost example of this applicable nature of God's Word is the spiritually formative work of the cross in the life of the believer. Christ's death and resurrection must not only be understood by the Word, but must also be spiritually established in the life of the believer (cf. Col 3:1-3). This is a true faith in the Word of God—not that it was true in the past, but that it is true now (1986:118-119; cf. 1981b:232). The view of the Word as having present-day potentiality is a cornerstone of Stevens' view of transformation. God is the same yesterday, today, and

forever (Heb 13:8), therefore anything in God which occurred yesterday is still available in God today. For Stevens, any theological positions which renders inadmissible the present application of past activities of God is reflective of a lack of genuine faith in God and his Word. The truth of this "repeatability" aspect of faith is also seen in Enoch, who walked and talked with God in a way similar to Adam and Eve's Edenic relationship with God. Further, he even reached into the future promise of Christ and was translated to heaven (Heb 11:15; cf. Ju 1:14-15; Stevens 1980:107). This attitude of faith concerning the Word must be regarded as an inherent aspect of a walk with God, for Enoch is the primary biblical figure associated with that terminology.

Stevens contrasts the transformative power of a revelational approach to the Word with a doctrinal approach. He explains that the believer must have "a living experience" with the Word of God in order to truly walk with him (2007a:775-776). This is essentially the distinction Stevens makes between the living experience of revelation and the mental assent to doctrine. A revelation of the Word leads to genuine change, while mere orthodoxy appeals to rationality without the requirement of discipleship (Stevens 1986:311-312; cf. Stevens 1986:16). Stevens uses the example of the Pharisees as a cautionary tale concerning the propensity of those who have a great knowledge of doctrine to miss the significance of the personal Christ (1976d:45). Stevens approach to theology must be understood as the seeking of revelation in the Scriptures, motivated from the desire to be close to God. The revealing of God's truth by the Holy Spirit makes the Scriptures alive and applicable to the believer. Stevens (1986:608) writes, "Believe them personally, not lightheartedly as theories of Scriptural truths. Do not assent to the Word and still ignore its relationship to your own life. Believe that He is, and that He is to you what He says He is in the Word. Then be to Him what He demands of you in that relationship." Stevens states that humans forget the majority of what they hear. For this reason, it is not the memorization or understanding of the Word which causes change, but rather the internal, ontological absorption of it. He states that receiving the Word leads to a building of "deposits" from God which change the believer internally. Stevens offers 2 Corinthians 3:6 as an explanation of this differentiation, for it is the Spirit, rather than the letter of the Law, which gives life. A deep reception of the intangible aspect of the Word is required to find change (Stevens 1989:171-172).

Stevens states that the reception of the Word is one thing that believers can actually take responsibility for in the process of spiritual formation. As discussed in Hebrews 5:12-13, there is a range of presentation of the Word of God based upon maturity. As Paul states in

1 Corinthians 3:1-2, the Corinthians' mark of immaturity was that they could not receive the Word on a higher level. The implication here, according to Stevens, is that they had not been "eating" the milk of the Word. If they had, they would have been maturing. The Corinthians should have been at a higher level of maturity, but they had not been receiving the Word in a way that caused growth. Stevens (1989269-270) writes, "It is the way you hear the Word that changes you. Take heed how you hear, because the amount of revelation of the Lord that comes to your heart is based on the Word that you hear. Even when the Word is sown in the best of soil, there is a varied degree of fruitfulness: thirty-, sixty-, and one hundredfold." Stevens states that the believer today, responding to the failings of the Corinthian church, should examine himself to see whether his should indeed already be more mature. Those who are unsatisfied with their Christian growth should then recognize the need to receive the Word in a deeper way. Stevens states that while the ministers in the Church can set the table with the Word of God, it is up to each individual to eat and grow thereby (Stevens 1989:271-272). The eating of the Word is one way to be exposed to God, and therefore one way to be spiritually formed.

Stevens states that the focus on a relationship with God must be present when reading the Word. Knowing God in a deeper way through the Word causes true change (1971:80-81). Stevens advocates that every person must present themselves to God and allow Him to change them (1974e:1-3). The requirement of this process is the believer's determination to see our thinking conformed to God's truth. With this attitude, the believer "reads God's Word to learn God's attitudes about every situation because he is determined to think, to act, and to respond that way too" (1974e:3-4). Those who devote themselves to God's Word must be determined to let it purify them. Without this desire, the Word will not have the formative effect that it should (Stevens 2007a:26). Stevens connects this to the admonition in Hebrews 12:1 that we lay aside every weight in order to win the race. Stevens is clear that he does not read this verse as a requirement for those who wish to go to heaven, but rather the following of God's will in a walk with him (1974e:3-4).

Kierkegaard asserts that the Bible cannot be understood except relationally (cf. Rae 1997:148). He uses an analogy of receiving a letter from a beloved in order to explain how we should read the Bible. He states that the reader should not be concerned with the passages he does not understand, but rather with responding to the ones which he does understand. Kierkegaard (2007:83) concludes, "God's Word is given in order that you shall act according to it, not that you gain expertise in interpreting it." Kierkegaard also maintains that the Word of God is like a mirror which exposes the true self. Reading the Word of God

in honesty brings the believer into a recognition of his or her ontological state (Kierkegaard 2007:219). In so doing, the believer relates to the Word of God personally, and is transformed by it (Rae 2010:114-115). Kierkegaard's interrelated issues of relationship, obedience, self, and transformation all fit well in the context of Stevens' view of the Word. Stevens, however, further emphasizes the powerful nature of the Word as being an expression of Jesus Christ. For Stevens, the Word of God conveys the person of Christ, for he is the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14; Stevens 2007b:809). When believers are exposed to the power of God's Word "they see a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ as it comes in the Word; and they change. If Christ is preached to you and is manifested to you as He should be, you will see Him and be transformed into the same image" (Stevens 1986:374). Stevens sees an inextricable connection between the formative power of the Word and the identification of the Word with Jesus Christ. If Christlikeness is the goal, it is of utmost importance to recognize the formative power of Jesus as Word. The relational emphasis of Kierkegaard makes this particularly viable as a theological concept, for it magnifies the personal, internal approach to the Word of God. Studying the Bible as a document does not lead to exposure to the transformative Word. However, reading it relationally and in truth brings the believer into a connection with the personified goal of spiritual formation: the Lord Jesus Christ.

3.5.2.7 Repentance

Stevens states that an indispensable activity in the pursuit of genuine spiritual formation is repentance. Formative repentance goes beyond the seeking of the forgiveness of sin and pursues transformation. Stevens (1976a:196) writes, "If you are going to walk with God as one of His sons, then repent in order that your sins may be wiped away—not just forgiven. To walk with God you must be cleansed from all unrighteousness. Righteousness and sin cannot coexist." Stevens looks to 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 as a clear teaching on formative repentance. The leaven of sin must be removed in order to become a new creature in Christ (Stevens 1974d:14). The old nature itself is the leaven which must be removed. This happens through deep repentance characterized by sincerity and truth (v8; Stevens 1974d:18). Stevens (1989:100) describes this higher level of repentance in this way: "Repent with all your heart. Bow down and mourn for sin, but do not stop there. Demand to be holy, demand to be righteous, demand to break through into all that God has for you." A shallow repentance in which the believer merely asks for forgiveness is not formative. The believer must dig deeper and cry out for a complete change of nature. Repentance

undertaken with sufficient depth exposes the deep areas of the human nature to God. Such repentance must emerge from authenticity. This repentance is similar to the response of Isaiah when he saw the Lord (Is 6:1-7). He recognized his own failings and communicated them. God's immediate response was to cleanse him (Stevens 2007c:585). This scene presents the picture of repentance Stevens has in mind. It is one in which the human, coming into contact with God, recognizes the deep changes which must occur in his being. The formative response to such a recognition is deep repentance. God responds to this authentic, relational approach of repentance with an act of transformational cleansing.

Stevens views repentance relationally. He writes, "Repent in depth, until you see the awfulness of even the most insignificant things, if they kept you from breaking through to that communion with God" (1980:110). The goal of a relationship with God should drive the pursuit of repentance. Further, without an appropriate repentance, the believer will be unable to connect with God as the source of transformation. Stevens explains that those who are deep repenters are the ones who know God the best. Those who walk in sin are deceived and are unable to see God or self clearly. However, Stevens (1987:638-639) writes,

> the real knowledge of the Lord comes to those who continually open their hearts to the purifying work of the Lord. God does a deep work in them. They go through many tests and trials, not to prevail over circumstances, but to prevail over the darkness of their own hearts. They constantly focus upon the Lord, because they know that the breakthrough to see Him as He is will come only to those who are focused upon Him and have been transformed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (II Corinthians 3:18). With each dealing, the Lord is more real to them. They are changing; they are reaching in to the purifying work of the Lord. Ultimately will come the breakthrough when they shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is (I John 3:2).

The ongoing purification of the believer is a process of spiritual formation. Further, the maturing process is interdependent with the relational knowledge of God. Stevens sees this principle of the need for honesty in repentance explained in Matthew 6:22-23. If the eye is clear, the body will be full of light. The believer is therefore responsible to be honest with himself and with God, and respond to this honesty with deep repentance in order to

see effective purification in spiritual formation. Stevens states that the metaphor of the bride who readies herself for the groom shows that the believer is responsible to be matured toward a proper relationship with God (cf. Rev 19:7-8). Repentance is the activity which brings forth this pureness of maturity. The association of repentance and a restoration into a relationship with God is also seen in Psalm 51:7, 10. David responded to God's chastisement with repentance and a broken spirit (Stevens 1974c:94-95). David sinned greatly, yet he was restored to a relationship with God through his repentance (Ps 51:1-2, 6-9).

Stevens explains that repentance is necessary in removing the internal aspect of the believer's being which inhibit the process of spiritual formation (Stevens 1987:197). Repentance is the particular activity in which the believer allows God access to his "deep areas" (Stevens 1982:209-210). Stevens (1982:209) writes, "If a person is not given to real heart-searching and prayer, if he is not easily driven by God to his knees, if he is not a deep repenter, I know his walk with God is superficial." In examining the parable of the seeds in Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23, Stevens states that the degree to which the Word is effective in transforming our lives is dependent upon removing the things which hinder the planting and growth of that seed of the Word. The believer must pursue repentance in order to see the inhibitors of growth removed. Stevens (1976a:195) writes, "One day you will have a rude awakening when you realize how responsible you are for the corruption and the vileness left in your heart because you did not repent until it was completely gone. If you are going to change, change all the way. If you are going to be a new creature, be a completely new creature. Do not get just enough of God to allow you to limp into the Kingdom of God." This requires an authentic openness on the part of the believer.

Kierkegaard sees sin as willful ignorance and self-deception. Humans tend to avoid taking action to address their own nature, often through self-distraction. The usual distractions of life—including games, work, and religious activity—are often used in this endeavor. However, in doing so, the true self is diminished through the willful ignoring of the internal sin nature (cf. Evans 2006:289-291). Essentially, these tactics darken self-knowledge and prohibit growth. This state is a state of unconscious spiritlessness, under which runs a current of despair due to the unawareness of God. The recognition of sin, however, is a step forward, for it is at least a conscious despair (Evans 2006:291-292). Once this conscious despair is achieved, the human must go through a strong repentance which causes an upheaval in their consciousness and moves them toward faith. The longer the person remains unrepentant, the stronger the sin nature becomes (Walsh 2009:107-108).

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While sin is often thought of in terms of specific actions, Kierkegaard is more concerned that the believer recognizes the state of sin itself. Kierkegaard and Stevens seem to be in accord on this point, for Stevens emphasizes that spiritual formation involves the removal of the sin nature itself. Further, the two agree on the relational importance of repentance. However, it seems Kierkegaard's discussion begins much earlier in the process, starting first with the human's initial addressing of sin in relation to self. Only when the human admits to their state of sinfulness can any metaphysical movement occur. Stevens, however, recognizes the relational importance of repentance in every stage of Christian maturity. The believer must continually expose to God the negative aspects of the sin nature in order to see them removed and transformed. Repentance is a strong tool in the pursuit of relational spiritual formation, for it produces an authentic relational connection to the divine which invites God's transformative activity in the believer's life.

3.5.2.8 Waiting on the Lord

One of the most important devotional activities recommended by Stevens is waiting on the Lord (1981:67). He takes this terminology from Isaiah 40:31. The act of waiting on the Lord is definitionally concerned with receiving from the Lord. Stevens (1982:336) writes, "To wait on the Lord is the most intense prayer you will ever make. It is a silent unspoken prayer. It is a prayer of listening. It is a prayer of perception. It is a prayer of the unveiling of your spiritual sensitiveness to the Lord." One definition of the act of waiting on the Lord is "the prayer of listening". Waiting on the Lord may seem like a passive activity, but Stevens maintains that the believer must actively pursue it. Waiting on the Lord is an act of seeking God with focus and intensity (Stevens 1974e:10-11; 1976:58-59). Stevens (1983:345) states that in the process of waiting on the Lord, the believer is looking not just to hear God's voice, but also to receive an impartation from Christ. The act of waiting on the Lord, therefore, is an exercising of the principles of intensity, awareness, and transference. Stevens (1978c:58) states that all devotions will be ineffectual without practicing waiting on God.

Stevens explains that the believer should be focused on meeting the Lord when waiting on Him. Stevens (1982:336) writes, "A meeting with the Lord simply means that you wait before Him until a new awareness of the Lord reaches your life, and it changes everything within you." The principle of changing while beholding Him (2 Cor 3:17-18) is put into action in the devotion of waiting on God. Waiting on the Lord is a way to come directly into contact with God and be exposed to Him. Stevens characterizes the hundred and twenty

believers in Acts 1 as waiting on the Lord in the upper room. He connects this dedication to wait on Him with the experience of transformation which occurred on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (Stevens 1977b:43-44). The refining fire of God burned in those believers and propelled them into greater maturity. Those who do not wait on God are much less likely to be exposed to God's presence, and are therefore less likely to grow spiritually (Stevens 2007c:587).

Stevens also sees waiting on the Lord as being closely related to the reception of revelation. Waiting on the Lord opens the door to receive revelation which reveals Jesus in new ways to the believer. Stevens (1972a:175-176) writes, "You can take a long time striving to reform, but it's very difficult to mature and measure up to your potential. However, if you wait on the Lord and renew your strength, you will be changed. As you wait on the Lord, and there's a revelation to your heart, although you may not be aware of it if it doesn't reach your conscious mind, your spirit will be aware of it, and then you will begin to change." By waiting on God, the believer continually receives from the Lord and is thereby transformed. However, the transformation which occurs by revelation and impartation from God may not always be immediately understood by the believer. By waiting on Him, seeking Him, listening for His voice, the believer reaches into an exposure to God which has transformative ramifications (Stevens 1986:372-373).

Kierkegaard did not use this exact terminology of "waiting on the Lord". However, his principles of relationship, silence, and communion are all related to waiting on God. Silence, in particular, seems closely related. It is in silence that the believer is able to hear God's voice. Further, it is in continual exercise of silence that the human becomes a single individual. Kierkegaard (1975a:361) writes, "Who is the authentic individual? One whose life, in the fruit of long silence, gains character and whose actions acquire the power to excite and arouse." It seems, then, that for Kierkegaard, silence is an efficacious atmosphere within which the human is able to connect with God relationally. This characterization follows Stevens' recognition of the formative power of waiting on God, which rests primarily on the believer's active receiving of God and his Word. In both models—silence and waiting on God—the human quiets his own being in order to reach into God's. It seems fitting to end the identification of the activities of Stevens' theory on this point, for perhaps it is the most powerful example of the kinds of actions which function according to his overall view. God is the source of all change. To attempt to be spiritually formed by human effort is futile. What actions can the human take to pursue the growth process within Stevens' paradigm? Simply draw close to God and put full attention upon

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him. This is the sum of waiting on God.

3.5.3 Summary and Reflection

This section has identified and synthesized the activities of spiritual formation presented by Kierkegaard and Stevens. For Stevens, the activities of a walk with God, which are primarily relational, are the acts which lead to spiritual maturity. Through Stevens' relational lens, activities of spiritual formation must contribute to the believer's relationship with God. For this reason, formative activities may actually be attitudes, such as authenticity, intensity, and awareness. Authenticity allows for honesty and transparency in a relationship with God. Such authenticity allows God "access" to the human being for the accomplishment of his formative goals. Intensity is required of the believer to continually seek God and His will. Awareness of God is a requirement in relating to Him. The believer must cultivate a spiritual awareness of God in order to walk with him. Other activities may be primarily relational, such as God's dealings and transference. God's dealings are God's own activities which foster relational spiritual formation. The testings and dealings of God are an expression of His discipline which matures His children. In viewing spiritual formation through the paradigm of a walk with God, transference is of utmost relational importance in that it is the very act of transferring Christ's nature to the believer. The impartation from God and the appropriation of the believer are fundamental spiritual acts which immediately allow for transformation. Of course, devotional activities—such as the reading of the Word, repentance, and waiting on the Lord—must also be enacted relationally. The reading of the Word is a physical activity which facilitates impartation of Christ's own attributes. Repentance pushes out the sin nature and seeks God for Christ's nature. Waiting on the Lord is perhaps the most relational activity of all, for it positions the believer to forego all other concerns in favor of hearing the voice of the Lord and receiving from him.

That Kierkegaard's account of formative activities is also primarily attitudinal stances or internal metaphysical acts is both complementary and confirmatory to Stevens' approach. For example, Kierkegaard's treatment of passion, choice, and the death to self correspond with Stevens' treatment of intensity, authenticity, and the dealings of God. These activities are products of the fundamental relationality of both theories. However, the difference between the two theories is Stevens' greater emphasis of the role of God. Kierkegaard is very focused on the activities which exemplify the state of being a single individual. This naturally emphasizes the choices made by the human toward the task of becoming.

Kierkegaard certainly recognizes that God is the ultimate source of spiritual change, but he approaches the activities of the God relation as primarily acts of human will. Stevens, on the other hand, prioritizes God's role in the relationship. God holds all the cards in spiritual formation. The believer may be able to take action which garner's God's response, but the ultimate executor of transformation is God. This view informs Stevens' arrangement and treatment of the activities of spiritual formation.

For Stevens, all activity must express the believer's seeking of God. In a walk with God, He will do the rest. Stevens (n.d.:3) writes, "Deal with the primary problem. Avoid secondary problems. In a walk with God, everything is tested. If the primary problem of seeking God (which is a matter of dedication, revelation, and walking in His will) is met, other things take care of themselves. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the other things will be taken care of." If the activities of spiritual formation are merely an expression of self-discipline, they will be ineffective. However, if the activities of spiritual formation lead to increased intercourse with God, they will produce Christian maturity. This general attitude regarding the primacy of an enacted relationship with the divine—that is, a walk with God—informs Stevens' attitude on the activities. Acting is of utmost importance, but the form of such action arises from a focus on the God himself. Stevens (1987:568-569) writes, "Being transformed is so much better than the self-discipline of the religious. We can be subdued and changed because God changes us. When we walk with God, God happens to us."

3.6 Conclusion

What follows are the propositional statements given in this chapter on the axes of goal, paradigm, theological foundations, activities, and of Stevens' overall theory of spiritual formation:

Goal: *The goal of spiritual formation is Christlikeness on both an individual and corporate level toward the establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth.*

Paradigm: *The paradigm of a walk with God encapsulates spiritual formation in the context of an active and authentic relationship with God, centered on the Lordship of Jesus Christ, expressed in love, hunger, dedication, and submission, and enacted directionally, through God's testings, on both an individual and communal level.*

Theo-philosophical foundations: *The theological basis of spiritual formation reflects the complete salvific power of Christ manifested through a relationship with God, which removes the sin nature and imparts Christlikeness.*

Activities: *Activities which promote spiritual formation must be understood and undertaken primarily as the tools and attitudes with which to effectively pursue and maintain a relationship with God.*

Theory: *Individual progress in Christian maturity results from a consistent and active walk with God which emphasizes a transformative relationship with God in Christ, led by Him for His purposes.*

What remains is to examine whether Stevens' theory is actually holistic. In other words, do the four axes of goal, paradigmatic concept, theological foundations, and activity all fit together in a holistic manner? Perhaps the best way to do this is to look at three central principles of Stevens' theory: Christ, relationship, and God's will.

The goal of Stevens' theory is Christlikeness, which emerges from a paradigmatic commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, based on the foundation of God's salvific plan for humanity. The spiritual formation into Christlikeness is pursued via attitudinal and relational activities which bring the believer into contact with God in order to receive transference of Christ's nature. The holism of Stevens view is furthered by the framing of a walk with God in terms of the Lordship of Christ, for the believer's submission to Christ's authority as Lord and King not only produces transformation, but is also a practical means by which His Lordship and Kingdom are brought into an earthly manifestation. The Lordship of Christ is a theological foundation of the paradigm, and it therefore informs the eschatological *telos* of the theory—that is, the establishment of Kingdom, both internally and externally—as well as the activities based upon an obedient relationship with God, such as God's dealings, transference, and repentance.

The concept of relationship seems to be the quintessence of Stevens' theory. The relationship with God functions throughout, from goal to activities, from end to means. The theological foundations include the reconciliatory power of Christ's sacrifice, which brings humanity back into relationship with God. This enables the process of maturation, for a relationship with God ensures an ongoing connection with the divine source of transformation. The pervasiveness of the principle of relationship is perhaps best seen in Stevens' formulation of the activities of spiritual formation. Such attitudes as intensity and

awareness are not commonly construed as activities, but the relationship with God cannot be accomplished without them. Relationship, therefore, stands as a holistic glue in the theory as a whole, trying together goal, theology, and activity within the paradigm of a walk with God.

The will of God is the third exemplifying principle which demonstrates the holism of Stevens' theory. Accomplishing the will of God is one goal of spiritual formation, for the spiritually mature are able to do so efficaciously. Stevens maintains that the process of the growth of the believer can neither be sufficiently examined nor understood unless kept in the context of obedience to God. Following the will of God is also inherent in the paradigm of walking with God, for the directional progress of the walk is entirely dependent upon submission to His direction. Theologically, Stevens emphasizes God's plan of salvation as going beyond the preliminary forgiveness of reconciliation, and extends it to the complete transformation of the believer by the power of Christ's sacrifice. In this way, God's will for all of humanity—that is, complete reconciliation through salvific formation—sits as the immovable cornerstone of Christian formation. Finally, the activities of spiritual formation are geared toward utter reliance of the believer upon God. The believer can act in ways which invite God's involvement, but God's will and pace for spiritual formation must be respected. This is ensured by making the relationship of dedication and submission the ultimate focus of any devotional activity. God and His will are integral to every aspect of Stevens' spiritual formation theory.

Further, these three principles function together in the context of a walk with God. The process of growth for the believer cannot be properly understood if divorced from the application of that growth toward the establishment of the will of God. The state of Christlikeness itself cannot be divorced from being an agent of God's will (Stevens 1987:48-49). Stevens writes, "Never get your eyes upon the means that God is creating as though that were an end in itself. You are not an end in yourself; you are a means to an end. You were raised up to bring forth the will of God in the earth. This vision has to fill your heart and your mind and your thinking" (Stevens 1987:47-48). Christ gave Himself to complete obedience to God's will in a relationship with His Father. Those who follow in His footsteps will do the same. This is true on both an individual and communal level. Christlikeness must be manifest in the Church as a whole.

Stevens states that Ephesians 4:10-16 is perhaps the best summary passage on the focus of his ministry. The five-fold ministry enumerated by Paul is meant to create maturity in the

Body of Christ. After quoting Ephesians 4:13, Stevens (2007b:1343-1344) writes:

> Maturity is the purpose for which I minister to you. The purpose for which every minister ministers should be to bring about that maturity in the flock. There should be a deep concern in the heart of everyone who is called to any of these offices: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher, and we add to this elder or deacon. There should be a fear lest they minister to people—even if the people demand it—in such a way that they create a dependency in those people upon them.

In some ways, the walk with God can be reduced to a relationship with God, and still be an effective paradigm of spiritual formation. The relationship itself must be held as both end and means by the believer in order to avoid a self-motivated or self-reliant approach to Christian maturity. The central motivation of a walk with God must be a dedicated relationship of obedience, rather than personal fulfillment (cf. Stevens 1982a:793-795). Finally, the metaphor of a "walk" is a uniquely suitable paradigm of spiritual formation for those who value Christian theology which is primarily based upon Scripture. A walk with God—as well as such variants as "walking in the Spirit"—is ubiquitously resonant with the text of the Bible and is therefore particularly ripe to adequately represent a theory of Christian spiritual formation. The biblical, exegetical, and theological cogency of these tenets of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation will now be critically engaged and evaluated in the next chapters.

Chapter 4

Exegetical Engagement with

Stevens' Theory of Spiritual Formation

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified and synthesized Stevens' approach to spiritual formation from his various writings on the topic, and clarified his views using Kierkegaard's contrapuntal voice. The purpose of the previous chapter was to present Stevens' theory as a whole through a synthetic rendering of his writings on a walk with God. Aside from the process of synthesis itself and the inclusion of Kierkegaard, his theory was presented antiseptically, so as to first provide a clear and unsullied overview of his approach to spiritual formation.

This chapter will provide systematic biblical analysis and critique of his theory on two fundamental issues in his theory: the concept of a walk with God, and the issue of anthropological trichotomy. The guiding purpose of this section is to attempt to study the scriptural text in a similar way to Stevens—albeit perhaps more comprehensively and systematically—in order to supply missing exegetical foundations to his theory. In preparation for these two extended sections of systematic and exegetical work, a general assessment of Stevens' writings will be given, as well as a review and critique of Stevens' approach to hermeneutics. It should be noted that a number of other elements of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation will be theologically critiqued in the next chapter. However, the two topics discussed in this chapter—that of a walk with God and biblical anthropology—are of critical consequence to Stevens' theory and therefore deserve greater attention in

their biblical systematization and exegetical foundation in order to properly critique Stevens' treatment of them. The concept of a walk with God is the very paradigmatic concept which captures the essence of Stevens' theory. For this reason, it must be analyzed closely to determine Stevens' comportment with Scripture in his use of this terminology. Secondly, Stevens' anthropology is a critical and pervasive concept which affects all other aspects of his theory. The analysis and critique of his trichotomist position is therefore of pivotal consequence. While other topics in the scope of Stevens' approach to spiritual formation could very well be ripe for extensive biblical and exegetical study, space constraints require the limitation of such an approach to these two. The biblical evidence on these two subjects will be analyzed and critiqued on a deeper level in order to generate summary propositions. Such summary propositions will be key in determining each topic's proper role in Christian spiritual formation.

4.2 A General Assessment and Critique

Before delving into specific elements of Stevens' theory, we begin with an assessment of the weaknesses and problems with the canon of Stevens' writings. Stevens' ministry maintained a fairly consistent congregation since 1951, but he published very few works until the late 1960s. This means that the foundations of his theological perspective were built prior to many of his writings and are not given directly in his works. Therefore, Stevens' exegetical and theological building blocks are often left unstated. Nearly two decades of teachings to a long-term congregation leads to foreshortened exegesis and theological shortcuts. This alone gives rise to a number of the following weaknesses and problems.

The first weakness is Stevens' lack of definitions of some of his terms. Much of the basic foundational teachings which would include the definitions of biblical terms were given in Church services in the 1950s and 60s and were not written out. Stevens rarely gives explicit definitions in his writings, primarily because his audience did not need them. While some of this issue is perhaps rectified in the synthesis accomplished in the last chapter, there must still be a deeper look into his terminology to first see if it correctly corresponds with biblical usage, and also to ensure that the systematization based on his writings is accurate to his intention. Addressing this issue will also pinpoint where more-accurate (or more contemporary) terminology may be better choices for the concepts Stevens wished to convey.

The second problem is the sometimes "invisible" investigation into the Scriptures going on behind his writings. Stevens' obtained advanced degrees in Biblical Studies and was scholastic in his approach to the Bible. However, some of his deeper research into the Scriptures went unaddressed in his writings due to his desire to speak at an understandable and accessible level for his ecclesial audience. At times Stevens' exegetical work is done "behind the scenes", with only his conclusions presented. However, since extensive biblical exegesis was not included in his writings, it is important to supply it in the scope of a systematic theological analysis of his theory.

The third weakness is the inadequate delineation of his views in opposition to contradictory views. The theological position of any figure must be tested against competing theories. Stevens rarely brought up opposing viewpoints, primarily because he felt no need to defend his teachings. While it seems this generally follows the established norm in Christian preaching and teaching—that is, contradictory viewpoints are rarely included—certainly this lack places limitations on analysis in the context of systematic theology. Therefore, the analysis of Stevens' views in conjunction with an investigation into alternative theories is a necessary component to this critique of Stevens' writings on spiritual formation.

The fourth problem is Stevens' lack of comprehensive systematization, both in his treatment of Scripture and of his own handling of biblical topics. While his theology functions systematically when his works are taken as a whole, he did not endeavor to produce works which were comprehensive in scope. This is the main problem to be remedied by this dissertation. Stevens clearly sees a close interrelation between the various scriptural topics he tackles, and he comments about these interrelations often. Through successive writings on a topic over the course of many years, Stevens eventually addresses all the major scriptures associated with it, but he does not provide any sort of organized overview of how the Scriptures describe the topic as a whole. As with many of these criticisms, this lack is a natural byproduct of Stevens' purposes. He focused his ministry on maturing the members of his congregation and lead them into a walk with God, not to establish a theological system. While this makes his writings ripe for study on spiritual formation, it also requires effort to produce a comprehensive systematization. Fortunately, his works, when taken as a whole, clearly demonstrate a systematic theologian at work. The synthetic presentation of the previous chapter reveals an integrated system based almost exclusively on scripture. However, Stevens' own lack of overt systematization leads to gaps, deficiencies, and unanswered questions. These

problems are not insurmountable. Rather, they must be categorically identified, critiqued, and addressed. Doing so may fill in the gaps and construct a more fully realized mapping of Stevens' system. It may be important to note that his lack of systematic work is intentional, as he did not believe that a relationship with God could be systematized (1976i:5). He saw Christianity as best represented as an organism, rather than an organization (1975c:125; 1978a:71). An organization functions in a system, but an organism functions holistically.

The fifth problem emerges from the delimitations of the previous chapter, rather than with Stevens' writings themselves. The works which supplied the foundational material for the previous chapter were drawn principally from his writings surrounding the concept of a walk with God. Stevens certainly wrote much more about each component topic of his theory, but the summary in the previous chapter was centered on a review of Stevens' relational theory of spiritual formation as it is encapsulated in the concept of a walk with God. Throughout this chapter's analysis and critique, it may therefore be mete to review his writings which fall outside of this previous delimitation in order to give detail, corroboration, or balance to his approach to spiritual formation. In other words, certain theological deficiencies may be partially remedied by a deeper look into Stevens' greater *oeuvre*.

In this chapter and the following one, acts of analysis and critique will respond to these weaknesses. It seems best to do this along two main approaches. First, an exegetical critique will address the weakness of "invisible" scriptural study behind Stevens' teachings, as well as to partially remedy his lack of systematization. This is the aim of this chapter's exegetical study of the terminology of "a walk with God" in Scripture, as well as the investigation into the scriptural view of anthropology. Second, the following chapter will perform a theological analysis and critique of major components of Stevens's theory in order to address the weaknesses of his lack of definitions of theological terminology, his rare discussion of alternate viewpoints, and his lack of systematization.

However, to aid in our critique, we will first summarize Stevens' approach to hermeneutics. Doing so will allow for a fair view of Stevens' own views on biblical interpretation prior to engaging in analysis and criticism of his theological positions.

4.3 Stevens' Hermeneutics

Stevens' approach to hermeneutics is characterized by three primary concepts: the view of Bible as the Word of God, the concept of concealed revelation, and the interpretational necessity of a relationship with God.

Stevens characterizes the object of interpretation, the Bible, as the Word of God. Stevens (1978a:136) is careful to note the difference between the Word and the text of Scripture. While Scripture contains the Word, the Word is not solely relegated to the text—particularly considering Jesus' status as the Word made flesh (Jn 1:1-4, 14; Heb 1:1-2; 1 Jn 1:1-4; Rev 19:11-15; Stevens 1978a:102-104). Stevens further points to the temptation of Jesus in which Satan quoted Scripture in a way clearly outside of the will of God (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13). In that moment, the text of Scripture on the lips of Satan was certainly not equivalent to the Word of God (Stevens 1989:196-197). Stevens sees a further distinction in light of 2 Corinthians 3:6c, stating that the Scriptures can be read according to the letter, which kills, or by the Spirit, which gives life (1987:106). By emphasizing the Word of God as the object of hermeneutics, Stevens attempts to focus the process of interpretation toward the power of God's communication, rather than a strict textual investigation. An encounter with the Word of God must be the goal of the hermeneut, or the text will not yield God's truth. To be clear, Stevens also utilizes contextual and original language considerations in his approach to the text. However, in doing so, Stevens aims to uncover the Word.

The other primary characterization of the object of interpretation which informs Stevens' hermeneutical approach is his view that the meaning of the biblical text is at least partially concealed intentionally by God. Toward this point, Stevens offers Jesus' parables, which are concealed communication, as well as His words in Luke 10:21 (cf. Mt 13:10-11; Stevens 1976j:1; 1976g:9; 1978d:1-11; 1982b:882). Clear interpretation of the Scriptures is dependent upon God's revealing activity. Stevens (1974a:107) writes, "This is the beginning of all understanding, that the Bible was never to be a book understood by human wisdom. Consequently, you can understand why the Old Testament prophecies were hid away, concealed like precious gems below the surface. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hid in a field (Matthew 13:44), and it is the Holy Spirit who opens it up to you." The concealed nature of the Word in the Bible is particularly why the Holy Spirit is so necessary in the hermeneutical process (1977d:10). According to Stevens (1978g:82-83), 2 Peter 1:19-21 teaches that the prophecies of God did not originate with man and

therefore cannot be interpreted exclusively by man. The divine origin of the concealed Word of God requires divine aid in proper interpretation, particularly in a relationship with the Author of the text, the Holy Spirit (Stevens 1976d:6; 1981a:363). Stevens also sees the NT interpretations of OT passages out of context as representative of the concealed nature of the Word, as in Matthews' quoting of Isaiah 7:14 and Hosea 11:1 (cf. Mt 1:23, 2:15; Stevens 1981a:363-364). The unlearned disciples revealed the OT through revelation by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 4:13). Stevens characterizes the hermeneutics of the NT authors as being reflective of "spiritual illumination" rather than "mental analysis" (Stevens 1976k:18). Most importantly, Stevens sees this as an interpretational mode that is available to Christians today—with the caveat that the efficacy of such a pneumatic approach is highly dependent upon the nature of the hermeneut's relationship with the Holy Spirit (Stevens 1976d:4).

Viewing the object of interpretation as the concealed Word of God necessarily leads to the requirement of a divine relationship in the quest to determine the meaning of the scriptural text. The only source of interpretational truth concerning the Bible is God Himself, the originator of the Word and the controller of concealment and revealing. Stevens emphasizes the relational aspects of Hebrews 1:1-2 in that God has spoken through His Son. Further, Jesus attests that He is the truth (Jn 11:25, 14:6; Stevens 1976c:1-2), and Paul states that in Jesus "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3; Stevens 2007a:818-819). For Stevens, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who provides the understanding of the Scriptures, and therefore the relationship with Him is a paramount pre-requisite in hermeneutics. Stevens (1978g:83-84) regards Jesus' admonishment of the Pharisees in John 5:39-40 as an example of faultily relating to the Bible as the source of eternal life outside of a relationship with the Word—here embodied in Christ. The Holy Spirit facilitates this relationship in the process of interpretation (cf. Jn 16:13-15; Stevens 1977d:10; 2007b:816). Stevens further sees this relational approach to hermeneutics as a means of emulating Jesus, for Christ Himself states that His teachings of the Scripture came from the Father (Jn 7:15-16; Stevens 1976c:6). The hermeneut should follow in the Lord's footsteps and rely upon a relationship with God in the pursuit of correct interpretation.

However, Stevens does not only see the relationship with God as the key to unlocking the meaning of the Bible, but also views the entire enterprise of scriptural interpretation as a means of a spiritual relationship with God through His Word. In this way, his hermeneutics functions in the overall enterprise of walking with God. Stevens (1978e:9) states that the

Scriptures "are a means to an end, not an end in themselves…. They are to be read with the idea that they will open up a walk with God for you." The goal of a walk with God guides each believer's interpretational approach to the Bible. Further, Stevens viewed his own role as an expounder of the Word in this same way—that he was responsible to encourage his readers to find their own walk with God, and therefore their own relationship with the Word of God. For Stevens, a major aspect of the proper study of the Bible is to treat it as an exercise in learning to listen to the voice of the Lord (Stevens 2007c:172). The Scriptures must come alive by the hand of God in order to be properly understood. The Word is an expression of God Himself (1978a:79-89). Further, the Word contains the life of Christ (Jn 6:63). The nature of the Word of God is to accomplish God's will (Is 55:11; Lk 1:37; Stevens 1978a:196).

In this way, Stevens' hermeneutical approach connects interpretation with spiritual formation. The Word of God is meant to bring the believer into being a partaker of God's divine nature (2 Pet 1:4; Stevens 1978g:81-82). The cleansing of a person's ways is accomplished by God's Word, and must be hidden in the heart to avoid sin (Ps 119:9; Stevens 1978g:82). Stevens (1978g:83-84) writes, "By the Spirit of the living God, secrets and wonders and deep truths will spring forth like a daystar rising in your heart and heralding a new day. Understanding will come out of the Word of God to show you not only what you are to become as a partaker of the divine nature, but all that God has prepared for you in this day in which you are to walk before His face. Search the Word. Love it! Prepare for its unveilings. The best is yet to come. The best wine is saved until last." Hebrews 4:12 stands as the key scripture for him in this regard (Stevens 1982b:225). For Stevens the Word is "living" is in its experiential quality—that is, the power of God's Word is available to the believer in any context. The promise of Scripture is available to the believer today in its entirety. This includes both prophetic promises, as well as models of relating to God as presented in narrative (Stevens 1973a:231-232). This view resembles the general approach of early Protestantism, including that of Luther and Calvin, which views the Bible "as universal truth from God, applied to the persons indicated in the text and needing now to be applied to all to whom the text comes" (Packer 2005:11-12).

Aside from the underlying principles of *logos*, concealment, relationship, and spiritual formation, Stevens' hermeneutical process includes all standard evangelical exegetical principles such as the use of historical context, literary context, and original language study (Stevens 1976). The analogy of faith was also a primary hermeneutical consideration for Stevens, as he believed that the most suitable resource to aid in interpreting God's Word is

God's Word (1986:276). Stevens (1976m:102) writes, "Sometimes when we try to expound the Scriptures, the truths seem so outlandish that only when we go to the Word to interpret the Word are we assured that we have the correct meaning." This informs his common topical and synthetic interpretational approaches to Scripture in his writings. He primarily promoted "topical Bible study" to his congregations as being the most fruitful for the average Christian (Stevens 1976b:10). His writings sometimes exhibit this approach, which imparts a semi-systematic quality in his teachings.

Stevens' approach to hermeneutics seems to situate the interpretation of the Bible within the context of the believer's overall walk with God. Stevens was uninterested in interpretational modes which do not result in application, relationship, or transformation. For Stevens, a genuine knowledge of God and His Word is predicated on God's own purposes. In other words, arriving at an understanding of the biblical text without a view to its personal relevance to the hermeneut is antithetical to the nature of the inscripturated Word of God. Personal relevance and application are therefore required elements of proper hermeneutics, for interpretation divorced from the personal contextualization in a walk with God will ultimately be an expression of the dead letter of the Law (cf. 2 Cor 3:6).

While this approach seems self-consistent regarding Stevens' overall theological project, there are a few objections which could easily be raised to it. The first is whether or not his approach could correctly be called "hermeneutics" proper. Is Stevens' view of the believer's relationship with the Word of God an actual theory of interpretation, or is it better described as a method of devotional Bible study? The second objection might be that this approach is too subjective and could produce results which are not true to what is actually conveyed in the biblical text. Does Stevens' approach result in a sort of postmodern subjectivity in which objective truth is impossible to discover? The third objection is whether Stevens' conception of hermeneutics is applicable. Is his view of interpretation practicable for the average Christian believer? These three objections must be addressed in order to assess his hermeneutical approach.

The critique of Stevens' hermeneutics may first begin with whether his theory is strictly a theory of hermeneutics at all. The question here may be whether or not the Bible should be, or can be, interpreted independently from God's applicative purposes for the text. If a hermeneutical model limits itself to account only for the relationship between the text and the reader in the process of discovering meaning, then certainly Stevens' approach would not qualify. The issue at stake here is whether the hermeneut's proper interaction with the

text is primarily cognitive. Stevens assumes a holistic hermeneutical stance which may be correctly characterized as "existential"—for he presupposes that the whole person in a relationship with God must be accounted for in the act of sense-making. This arises not only from his view of the believer's walk with God, but also due to his theory of the object of interpretation. By focusing on the Word of God over and above the text itself, Stevens aims the interpretational process toward an encounter with the substance of God's communication. Certainly, Stevens esteems the text to a very high degree, but his concerns of Phariseeism and the "letter" which kills (2 Cor 3:6) leads him to prioritize the encounter with the Word of God as the result to genuine interpretation. This, in turn, addresses Stevens' desire to see the whole person of the believer involved in the understanding of Scripture. This view accords with Kierkegaard's view of hermeneutics, here summarized by Ramm (1970:75):

> According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. To read the Bible as God's word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the word of God.

It is possible that the core problem here is the issue of application. This characterization of the problem arises from Heidegger's response to Kierkegaard. Heidegger (1999:25) aimed to discover meaning through the "phenomenal sphere of facticity". This was in contrast to his view of Kierkegaard's meaning making: "What was basically in question for him was nothing but the kind of personal reflection he pursued. He was a theologian and stood within the realm of faith, in principle outside of philosophy. The situation today is a different one." Heidegger's contrast here hinge on the concepts of faith and facticity. Surely, Stevens chooses faith over facticity, and follows the existential view of hermeneutics, in which personal reflection is an important aspect of the interpretational process. Heidegger, however, views application as an activity which occurs after objective interpretation has occurred. It seems most Christian hermeneutical models follow Heidegger on this point.

The criticism that Stevens' approach seems more like a devotional study of the Bible would be worn by Stevens like a badge of honor. Most contemporary hermeneutical systems tend to ignore the existential and formational aspects of the believer's interaction with the Bible.

When exploring the necessary shape of hermeneutics within a holistic theological framework—as Stevens does—an overemphasis on cognition is self-evidently eccentric. For Stevens, the Holy Spirit functions in all aspects of the believer's life, not just in conjunction with the mind. The existential view of hermeneutics addresses the whole person in acts of interpretation—including applicative functions such as formation, obedience, and the love relationship with God. Stevens offers the hermeneut's relationship with Jesus as the Word of God as the primary principle of interpretation. This relationship is one of obedience to the Word which leads to genuine understanding (cf. Jn 7:17). This attitude makes personal application a leading concern in interpretational activity. For Stevens, one cannot study the text in order to arrive at a correct conclusion prior to the commitment to enact said conclusion in the relationship with God. This is the central reason why a relationship of submission to God is necessary in the interpretational endeavor. God reveals the Word according to His purposes. If biblical hermeneutics is defined by the goal of arriving at a strictly objective, universal interpretation of Scripture, then Steven's approach may very well fall outside of the realm of hermeneutics. On the other hand, if true interpretation is predicated on God's revelation according to His will, then Stevens' model should not be seen as a devotional Bible study method, but rather an attempt to describe how hermeneutics must function within the context of a holistic relationship with God. Regardless of how one views this objection, hermeneutical approaches vary widely in the theological world, and it may be that Stevens' relational hermeneutics simply adds another hue to an already multicolored field.

The second objection might be that Stevens' approach is inescapably subjective and would only produce personal interpretations which are not true to the text. Certainly, a relational approach of the Word of God cannot be reduced to a replicable science. There can be little to no objective certainty of any believer's receipt of revelation or illumination via the Holy Spirit. From a strictly academic standpoint, it would seem the results of Stevens' interpretational approach might be impossible to assess as either true or false. If so, they could not be described as anything other than subjective. Stevens might argue that his interpretational process cannot be said to be subjective because God's truth is the very paragon of objective truth. If the hermeneut is truly seeking God and involving the Holy Spirit in the process of interpretation, he or she will come to divinely inspired conclusions. Such divinely inspired conclusion must be objectively true. The critical question then, is whether such relational interpretation is even possible. If it is possible, then Stevens' hermeneutical model would not lead to subjectivism, assuming it is

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appropriately practiced. However, if the direct illumination of Scripture via relationship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit is not possible in this day and age, then certainly the only product of Stevens' approach would be subjective interpretational conclusions. In turn, Stevens might counter this objection by pointing out that purely rational approaches which see the text itself as the exclusive locus of meaning—that is, to the exclusion of divine illumination or revelation—have not led to widely accepted interpretations replicated by hermeneuts employing similar principles. In other words, the plethora of competing theological conclusions emerging from nearly identical usages of the historical-critical method among Protestant and Evangelical scholars should perhaps prompt us to question the achievability of uniform results based on the prioritization of scientific objectivity. One might ask whether the charge of subjectivity is moot, as the evidence of disparate interpretations—even among those with similar denominational backgrounds—points to the impotency of seemingly objective approaches. Can such widespread disparity allow us to continue applying the concept of strict objectivity to hermeneutics?

If Stevens' approach is correct in that man's attempt to independently discover the meaning of the concealed Word in the biblical text is futile at best, then a non-relational approach to hermeneutics which does not rely on divine illumination would actually be more likely to generate subjective results. In Stevens' view, subjectivity is overcome by the believer's own attitude of submission to God. The interpretation of the Bible cannot be said to be subjective if the hermeneutical model maintains that the believer is incapable of correct interpretation independent from God. However, Stevens would also emphasize that the only way to ensure that the conclusions of such interpretation are correct is to bring them to the believing community for confirmation. Stevens requires confirmation in the interpretational process (1974d:163-164). In fact, Stevens prioritizes the principle of confirmation over and above revelation. After referencing Galatians 2:1-2, Stevens (1973b:55) writes: "Revelation was always placed in a secondary position to confirmation, no matter what revelation a man had." The potential for subjective interpretations is at least mitigated by the correct use of the biblical principle of peer or community confirmation.

The final objection concerns the applicability of the approach. Certainly, Stevens' hermeneutical model is not practicable outside of the context of a holistic walk with God— which includes a genuine relationship with God, obedience to Christ, and access to a strong believing community. With this recognition, Stevens' hermeneutical approach is prone to failure if such pre-requisites are not met. Without commitments to obedience to the Lordship of Christ and confirmation in the community, the hermeneut who attempts to

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engage with this model could easily descend into a self-deception of personal interpretation. Aside from the disastrous potential for a mismanagement of the approach, it is also difficult to enact due to its high-level requirements. The model seems to require a pre-existing level of spiritual maturity to be present in the hermeneut for the approach to yield results. Of the three objections, it seems this one has the sharpest teeth. It may be prudent to view Stevens' hermeneutical approach not as a universal Christian mode of interpretation, but rather a unique approach which functions only in particular circumstances, but nonetheless leads to increased momentum in the pursuit of spiritual formation. It is instructive to see that Stevens' prioritization of spiritual formation toward maturity in a walk with God stands as a central concern of even his hermeneutical approach.

However, it cannot be denied that there is a conflict between Stevens' hermeneutical approach and an academic analysis and critique of his teachings. While Stevens' hermeneutical approach is both viable and commensurate with the inscripturated Word, it could be said that it resists conclusions which arise from a purely historical-critical approach. This is a conundrum peculiar to this particular dissertation in that it endeavors to analyze and critique Stevens' teachings from a Western academic perspective in which rationality must be prioritized. One answer to this conflict may lie in Stevens' recommended safeguard of revelational interpretation, which is confirmation. Confirmation functions along two levels for Stevens. First, confirmation to revelational interpretation is found directly in the text of Scripture. His holistic view of the Bible avers that the hermeneut will find support for revelation or illumination regarding one passage in other passages. This is a hermeneutical position reminiscent of the underlying concepts of systematic theology. Second, confirmation is found in agreement with fellow believers. Revelation must be confirmed by two or three witnesses in order to be deemed accurate. This chapter and the next serve as expressions of these two sides of confirmation. Firstly, this chapter will study the text of Scripture in detail to confirm, adjust, or correct Stevens' terminology of "a walk with God", as well as his view of anthropology. Secondly, the process of confirmation will be pursued in the following chapter through the use of perspectives from Christian academic believers. If Stevens' views are correct they will find verification among the voices in the current literature. Both of these approaches are expressions of a systematic theology approach to confirmation.

4.4 Exegetical Analysis of the Concept of "a Walk With God"

Stevens' paradigmatic use of the phrase "a walk with God" stands as the definitional center of his theory of spiritual formation. However, the scriptural uses of the term are not investigated in a systematic way in his writings. Stevens at least mentions most passages which use the term, but does not perform detailed exegesis in order to propose a comprehensive summary proposition of the concept. He initiates the beginnings of a biblical theological investigation into the use of the term in Genesis, and also suggests that our understanding of the term should be heavily influenced by Ephesians (Stevens 1974a:63; 1976a:150), but he does not put forward a systematic understanding of the term. In the process of assessing and critiquing Stevens' approach to spiritual formation, it is especially important to arrive at a conclusive view of this terminology as used in the biblical text as it sits as the locus of Stevens' paradigm. This section will first provide a systematized scriptural investigation of the concept of walking with God, and then analyze Stevens' views according to the resultant findings.

4.4.1 Identification and Review of Relevant Passages

In this section, the metaphorical uses of "walk" will be reviewed as it relates to a relationship with God or for spiritual or religious behavior through the Scriptures. The verb may be used with various prepositions (with, before, after) and with various direct objects (God, Holy Spirit, David, fathers). Usages relevant to Stevens' concept of a walk with God appear in forty-four books of the Bible[3]. The review of the relevant biblical passages concerning the concept of walking with, before, and after God, produces this summary proposition:

> *"Walking with God" indicates a covenantal relationship with God, reflected in a lifestyle of active obedience which follows His direction, and which both results from and contributes to an ontological transformation in Christ toward righteousness.*

4.4.1.1 "Walking" in the OT

The OT word most often translated as "walk" is הלך (*halakh*), which is also often translated as various verbs of movement, such as "go", "come", "went", or "depart". Its primary

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[3] Such construction do not appear in Numbers, Ruth, Ezra, Esther, Job, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Haggai, Matthew, 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude.

meaning is to indicate movement from one place to another. However, it is also metaphorically used in reference to one's manner of life (Helfmeyer 1978:390-392). There are a few kinds of constructions which are relevant to the use of הלך in the context of spiritual formation—and particularly how it is used by John Robert Stevens.

The first kind of construction, although not the most common, uses the preposition אֶת (with). The context of these usages suggests that the phrase "walk with God" is primarily used metaphorically, representing an ongoing relationship with God reflected in righteous behavior. This construction is first found in reference to Enoch (Gen 5:22, 24). In Genesis 5, Enoch is one of a few figures described with any detail, along with Lamech and Noah. The phrase "walked with God" is used in place of "and he lived" established in the pattern of the chapter so far. This perhaps indicates that the author uses הלך as a way of stating how Enoch lived—that is, in "a communion or intimacy with God" (Matthews 1996:313). Further, as Cole (1991:288-289) points out, Enoch uniquely escapes the inevitable end every other descendent of Adam faced in this chapter: "and he died" (Gen 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20). The statement that "God took him" (Gen 5:22) subverts the pattern established with the figures before him and draws the reader's attention to Enoch as a unique man (Cole 1991:291). His description as one who walked with God therefore maintains a sense of high spiritual maturity (cf. Heb 11:5)—especially considering the only comparative figure in being "taken" is Elijah, one of the most effectively miraculous prophets in the OT (cf. 2 Kgs 2:11). The use of הלך in the phrase "walk with God" also occurs in reference to Noah (Gen 6:9). This use continues to impart a sense of a righteous relationship with God to this phrase. This terminology appears as a summary of the previous information in v9—that as one who walked with God, Noah exhibited righteousness and blamelessness in his life. God's choosing of Noah as the only qualified human to perform His great work of maintaining the survival of the human race gives a sense of uniqueness to this descriptor of one who walked with God. Outside of Genesis, Micah 6:8 states that walking with God is a requirement for those who serve Him, along with doing justice and loving kindness. This has been seen in the Jewish tradition as a summary of the whole Law (Dawes 1988:331), particularly by rabbis in the first few centuries (Boadt 1986:336). In Malachi 2:6, God states that His covenant with the Levitical priesthood included the requirement of walking with Him "in peace and uprightness". This usage communicates the vision of a lifestyle of harmony with God (Clark and Hatton 2002a:405; cf. Taylor 1998:8-9). This is contrasted with the priests of Malachi's day, who were not upholding their end of the covenant. Those who are directly described as walking with God in the OT are therefore Enoch, Noah, and

the Levitical priesthood. These are people who were close to God and exhibited a high level of godly character—or at least should have, in the case of some of the priesthood. Further, this construction is used in Micah in a summary of what God desires from His people, therefore making "walking with God" an inclusive injunction.

Another הלך phrase construction uses "before" (לפני), first seen in reference to Abraham (Gen 17:1, 24:40). This preposition maintains a sense of action performed in the presence of someone (Simian-Yofre 2001:608)—in this case, Abraham, walking in the presence of God. The construction here is presented in the imperative, with God commanding Abraham to walk before Him "and be blameless". In Genesis 24:40, Abraham is quoted as saying that he fulfilled this command by walking before the Lord—"faithfully" in the NIV. Jacob also uses this construction in his blessing of Joseph as a means of relationally specifying the God of his ancestors Abraham and Isaac as the God who will bless Ephraim and Manasseh (48:15). The prophecy concerning Samuel being raised as a faithful priest also describes him as someone who would "walk before My anointed always" (1 Sam 2:35).

The highest frequency of this construction occurs in relation to David and his descendants (cf, 1 Kgs 2:4, 3:6, 14, 6:12, 8:25, 9:4, 11:38; 2 Kgs 22:2; 2 Chr 6:16, 7:17, 11:17). Solomon's dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8 contains a number of verses which connect walking before God with a close, covenantal relationship with Him in various constructions—using "before" (v23), the verb alone (v36), and using "in" (v58, 61). Such contexts of this usage are defined by a covenantal relationship of obedience between the descendants of David and God. The promise was that if David's descendants walked before God just as David did, then his line would maintain the throne of Israel. Similar to Abraham—as well as Enoch and Noah—David is represented in the Scriptures as one who had a unique and close relationship with God. This relational "walking before God" is directly connected to obedience and righteousness. In this chapter, this relationship with God is encouraged to all the people (Cameron 1993:66). It is a covenantal relationship of obedience based on God's own work with the hearts of the people (v58; Galil 2001:409-410). The use of הלך is closely correlated with a covenantal relationship in which God transforms the heart in order to empower a lifestyle of obedience (House 1995:148).

A general connection between "walk" and covenant is also seen in 2 Chronicles 6:14—wherein God is said to "keep covenant" with those who walk before Him wholeheartedly (Thompson 1994:228–229). Similarly, in 2 Chronicles 7:17-18 God states that He will

honor the covenant of the throne of David if Solomon walks with Him. Further connection between covenant and walking is seen in Hezekiah's entreaty to God after falling ill, stating that he "walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight" (2 Kgs 20:3; Is 38:3). It seems Hezekiah was attempting to offer his faithfulness in his walk with God as covenantal motivation for divine aid. David ends Psalm 56:13 with a poetic usage of הלך: "For You have delivered my soul from death, Indeed my feet from stumbling, So that I may walk before God In the light of the living" (cf. Ps 116:9). Here, God's salvation is given to David in order for him to walk with God. Altogether, this construction seems to intimate a lifestyle of righteous action performed in God's presence, rooted in a covenantal relationship with Him. Helfmeyer (1978:383) summarizes the use of this phrase in this way: "*hithhallēkh* by itself means 'live, dwell'; in conjunction with *liphnê yhvh* it means 'life in the full sense of the word—life that understands itself as God's gift and remains constantly hidden in God.'"

The most common construction using הלך is to walk "in" (ב) God's commandments, statutes, instruction, or law. This appears straightforwardly in Exodus (16:4, 18:20), Leviticus (26:3), Judges (2:17), Nehemiah (5:9, 10:29), Psalms (26:3, 81:13, 86:11, 119:1), Isaiah (42:24), and Jeremiah (6:16, 7:23). The Deuteronomic usage is often coupled with "the way", as in "You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you" (Dt 5:33; cf. 8:6, 10:12, 11:22, 13:5, 19:9, 26:17, 30:16). This terminology emphasizes a lifestyle of obedience for those in a covenantal relationship with God (cf. Merrill 1994:160). "Walking in the way" therefore maintains relational undertones, particularly in God/people covenant. Other formulations with "walk in" include: "walk in His paths" (Is 2:3), "walk in the light of the Lord" (Is 25), and the famous passage in Isaiah 30: "This is the way, walk in it" (v21). In this last instance, it comes in the context of God relating to His people as a teacher, who will keep them on the right path of his will. Relatedly, Isaiah 35:8 promises a "Highway of Holiness" in the wilderness toward Zion, upon which only the holy will walk (vv9-10). In both of these passages, righteous living according to God's Word is associated with walking a path with the help of God. Similar usages with "way" appear in Joshua 22:5; Judges 2:22; 1 Kings 2:3, 8:36, 58, 11:33; 2 Chronicles 6:27, 31; Psalm 119:3; Ezekiel 18:9, 17, 20:19, 33:15, 36:27, 37:24; Hosea 14:9; Micah 4:2; and Zechariah 3:7. Proverbs 14:2 uses "walk in" in reference to a person who lives out their own uprightness as recognition of their fear of the Lord. These usages communicate a lifestyle of obedience to God's Word. However, it seems "walking in" God's commandments is not merely about singular responses to God's commandments, but rather an ontologically

consistent commitment to live according to His Word.

This concept also maintains a relational nature. Psalm 89:15 states that those who worship the Lord "walk in the light of Your countenance"—that is, walk in the presence of God, and in His favor (Bratcher and Reyburn 1991:777). Micah 4:2 states that God will teach the people how to walk with Him. God does not expect people to immediately know how to enact obedience, therefore He will teach them His ways that they may "walk in His paths." This relational nature is also seen in the negative, for in Ezekiel 20:18-22, God withdraws His hand from Israel when they ceased walking with Him, intimating that walking in His statutes involves His presence and blessing as an aid. However, a lifestyle of disobedience causes a break in the relationship, and elicits God's judgments.

This construction with the preposition "in" is also used in the negative. Some examples include statements that God's people did not "walk in" His law (Ps 78:10, 89:30; Daniel 9:10), that the children of Israel should not walk in the statutes of other gods (Lev 18:3), or that children are not walking in the ways of their fathers (cf. 1 Sam 8:3, 5). Similarly, the people are said to have "walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel" (2 Kgs 17:8). There are also a number of metaphorical uses of "walk" in 1 Kings chapters 15 and 16, which do not refer to walking in God's commandments, but rather to walking according to the sins of the father, or walking in the way of Jeroboam. Such usages are also found in 2 Kings (cf. 8:18, 27, 10:31, 13:6, 11, 21:21, 21:22) and 2 Chronicles (20:32, 21:6, 22:3, 28:2, 34:2). Other similar negative uses include Jeremiah (9:13, 26:4, 32:23), and Ezekiel (5:6, 7, 11:12, 20:13, 16, 21). The negative use of this construction specifies a consistent lifestyle of disobedience to God and His Word, that is, the negative version of the same meaning attached to the formulation of "walking in" God's Word.

There are also two unique uses of "walk in" (הלך ב-) with reference to God's name. Micah 4:5 states that the Hebraic people will "walk in the Name of the Lord our God forever and ever"—in contrast to other nations, which walk in the name of their own gods. Similarly, in Zechariah 10:12, the Lord states that He will strengthen His people and they will walk in His Name. Riggs (1987:52) states that to walk in the name of someone would mean to "live in conformity to the will and character of". Certainly, it carries a relational focus in which the people of God act in ways that please Him, living a lifestyle of honor and obedience to Him (Clark and Hatton 2002b:276). These two unique mentions of walking in God's Name communicates a prophetic promise that God will enable His people to live a

lifestyle which reflects God Himself as bearer of that name (cf. Reiterer et al 2006:160). The "forever and ever" of Micah 4:5 also intimates that this will become a permanent state of affairs.

Aside from "with", "before", or "in", הלך is also used with "after" (אחר). Josiah renewed the covenant between the people and God that they would walk "after" the Lord (2 Kgs 23:3; 2 Chronicles 34:31). The NIV renders this construction with the verb "follow". In Hosea 11:10, God states that He will not judge His people—instead, they will walk after Him. There is also a negative formulation of "walking after other gods", in Jeremiah (7:6, 9, 9:14). The prepositional use of "after" in these verses seems to emphasize the leading of God (or pagan gods) in acts of obedience (or disobedience). In Jeremiah 2:5, the Lord explains that the children of Israel "went far from" Him, and became "empty" due to walking after emptiness. In abandoning their relationship with Him to pursue idols, they became reflections of the very worthlessness of the false gods (Newman and Stine 2003:50–51). In Hosea 11:3, the Lord states that he loved His people in their youth, and that He taught Ephraim to walk. The fatherly undercurrent of this statement lends a notion of God's cherishment of a close teaching relationship with his people (cf Keil and Delitzsch 1996:90). However, God remarks that His people do not see what He's done for them. In both of these passages, "walking after God" is associated with growth and learning, while not "walking after God" results in emptiness and immaturity. Further, such growth and learning is the result of an intimate closeness with a fathering God.

God Himself is also said to הלך. In Genesis 3:8, God walks in the garden. In Leviticus 26:12, God states that He will walk among the Israelites as He fulfills the God/people relationship they are to have. This special relationship is again affirmed through the use of הלך in Deuteronomy 28:9, Jeremiah 7:23, and Ezekiel 11:20—with the stipulation that the Israelites must walk in God's ways and statutes. In Deuteronomy 23:14, God is said to walk in the camp of the Israelites to deliver them, and therefore the camp must be kept holy, otherwise God will remove Himself from them. In 1 Chronicles 17:6, God tells David that throughout His time of walking with Israel, He has never asked for a house to dwell in. These passages regarding God Himself walking impart the image of closeness between the people and God, as God's presence moves among them. Interestingly, the description of God walking in the garden in Genesis 3:8 is the first use the verb הלך in reference to a person (in 2:14 the Tigris River is said to הלך, which the NASB translates as "flows").

Some scholars associate this usage in Genesis 3:8 as indicative of the fellowship God had

with Adam and Eve in the garden before the Fall (Matthews 1996:239; Utley 2001:60). The earliest instance of this reading is by Augustine, who characterizes God's walking in the garden as something that had been common to Adam and Eve prior to their fall (Louth and Conti 2001:83). John Robert Stevens (1998:108-109) agrees with this characterization of the Edenic life. Stevens (1980:104) writes, "In the Garden of Eden God came down and walked and talked with Adam and Eve. But when sin came, it separated them from that walk." While the evidence for this is flimsy at best when viewed in its immediate context—that is, there is no direct statement regarding Adam and/or Eve walking with God—a retroductive reading of this instance of הלך points to a relational subtext. Considering descriptions of Enoch and Noah as having distinctive relationships with God surrounding the concept of "walking", it seems possible that the Yahwist chose this terminology to indicate that these men returned in some way to God's original intention for His relationship with mankind as represented in Eden. Further, God commands Abraham—also said to be righteous (Gen 18:19)—to walk before Him. These relevant uses of הלך in Genesis are further unified in that they all appear in the Hithpael form, which imparts a sense of reciprocity between subject and object. Those who walk with God clearly exhibit a greater closeness with God, as well as a high level of spiritual maturity. In the cases of Noah and Abraham, these factors function in a life of obedience toward the furthering of God's will. The theological importance of walking with God is established early on in Genesis. Even if it cannot rightfully be said that God walked with Adam and Eve, all subsequent uses of הלך likely echoes an edenic relationship with Him. As the concept of walking with, before, and after God progresses throughout the OT, the phrase only strengthens in power to encapsulate an obedient lifestyle with God, as well as vivify the relational journey toward the coming Kingdom in the hopes of once again walking with the heavenly Father in the cool of a sinless garden.

The concept of "walking" in the OT maintains ethical, behavioral, relational, and covenantal overtones. It is used often in the context of an individual's spiritual life with God, particularly in his or her obedience to God's Word. The uses in Genesis in reference to Enoch, Noah, and Abraham set the stage for the connection between maturity, righteousness and a close relationship with God. The term therefore sustains a biblically based paradigm of spiritual formation.

4.4.1.2 "Walking" in Second Temple Jewish Literature and LXX

The use of הלך in reference to a manner of life is continued in the Second Temple Period.

Tobit states that he "walked in ways of truth and in righteous deeds" throughout his life (1:3; Wright et all 2018:368). Tobit also states that the people did not follow God's commandments, and therefore "did not walk properly" before God (3:5), and encourages the people to avoid walking in the ways of iniquity (4:5). All these examples in Tobit are echoes of other OT passages. Jubilees 6:35 warns against forgetting "the covenantal festivals" and walking in "the festivals of the nations" (Wright et al 2018a:532). Here "walking in" intimates the pursuit of ungodly actions which reflect the abandonment of the covenant with God. Dead Sea fragment 4Q416 Frag. 2 iii:9-10 states that by knowing "the mystery of existence", one would be able to "walk in righteousness" (Wright et al 2018b:53). While this notion seems somewhat Gnostic in nature, the use of "walk" still comports with the OT connotation of a lifestyle. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Community Rule, Damascus Document, and Hadayot all use הלך in ways reflective of the OT sense of behavior (Banks 1987:306-307).

The Qumran Community Rule book in particular often uses הלך in various OT senses. The sense of "walk" as indicating behavior arising from ontology is inherent in the saying that "All people walk in both wisdom and foolishness" (1QS IV, 23; cf. 1QS II, 13-14; Wise et al 2005:120). The sense of living according to God's Word is also present, for those who walk "in the spirit of the sons of truth" will receive such blessings as healing, long life, and a crown of glory (1QS IV, 6-8; Florentino and Tigchelaar 1997:n.p.). Relatedly, "the sons of justice" are said to "walk on paths of light" (1QS III, 20). The term is also used relationally in reference to the community living in harmony, that is, to walk perfectly with one another (1QS IX, 18-19). These uses show that the Qumran community recognized the ontological, obediential, and righteous uses of הלך. Further, the OT association of הלך with covenant is strengthened in the Community Rule book's description of covenant within the community. Partaking in the promised new covenant together through such actions as the confession of sins and the recitation of the priestly blessings were said to differentiate between those who walk with God and those who do not (Metso 2008:499-500).

It is noteworthy that the Greek word most often used in the LXX translations of הלך is πορεύομαι (*poreuomai*), rather than περιπατέω (*peripateō*), particularly since περιπατέω is the most common word for "walk" in the NT. The primary sense of πορεύομαι is to move "with a point of departure or destination specified" (Arndt et al 2000:853). Certainly the LXX translators saw הלך as implicitly containing the sense of journey. The sense of traveling toward a destination is certainly commensurate with the view that a lifestyle of obedience to God is pursued with a purpose—that is, that God has a goal in mind for those who walk

with Him. This concept is further seen in the dative use of πορεύομαι in the LXX, which emphasizes God's control in His people's walking in the context of covenant. Hauck and Schultz (1964—:571) state that the dative πορεύομαι "is not controlled by man and his subjective mode of action but by God and His Law and commandments. This is expressed in the fact that God has charge of the life of covenant members." The people must rely on God in walking in His Law, which is a relational expression of the covenant.

There is a final significant translation of הלך. In reference to Enoch (Gen 5:22), as well as Abraham and Isaac (Gen 48:15). In the LXX-G, הלך is translated as 'pleased' (εὐάρεστος; Brayford 2007:259, 442). Enoch is said to have "pleased" God, and Jacob states that his forefathers "pleased" God. This strengthens the notion that the concept of walking with God maintained a relational aspect of satisfying God in some manner in the minds of the Jews in the intertestamental period. The unique positioning of these Genesis figures through the use of הלך is further reflected in this translation as indicating a close, intimate relationship which pleased the Lord.

4.4.1.3 "Walking" in the NT

The Greek word most often translated as "walk" in the NT is περιπατέω. Similar to הלך in the OT, περιπατέω in the NT maintains both a sense of spatial movement, as well as one's conduct in life (cf. Bergmeier 1990:75-76; Arndt et al 2000:803; Zodhiates 2000:n.p.). However, περιπατέω is not often used outside the LXX and the NT to mean conduct in life (Seesemann 1964:941). Even though the LXX favored πορεύομαι, the record of usage in the NT clearly demonstrates the intentional retainment of the connotations associated with הלך in the OT (cf. Cranfield 2004:385). While the fundamental meaning of הלך is directional movement, the fundamental meaning of the root of περιπατέω (πατέω) is "the treading of the feet", that is, specifically ambulatory movement (cf. Seesemann 1964:941; Zodhiates 2000:n.p.). While πορεύομαι indicates a journey to or from somewhere, περιπατέω indicates the place wherein the movement occurs (cf. Arndt et al 2000:803). In contributing to an answer as to why Paul uses περιπατέω in the metaphorical sense when it is not used that way in classical Greek texts, Banks (1987:309) writes, "Paul always has in mind the process rather than the destination and aims of Christian behaviour in passages where the word walk occurs." The word πορεύομαι emphasizes the destination. Paul, however, who uses the metaphorical "walk" most often by far amongst the NT authors, likely chose περιπατέω because it focuses on the manner of walking out the Christian life as a "dynamic process" (Banks 1987:313).

While this study is primarily concerned with the metaphorical concepts associated with "walking", there are a number of instances in the gospel of John which display a semi-metaphorical usage. After Jesus discusses the communion, "many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore" (Jn 6:66). While this literally means that the disciples no longer journeyed with Him, it also means that they broke off their relationship with the incarnate God (Köstenberger 2004:220-221). In John 11:9, Jesus leans into its metaphorical use, stating that those who walk "in the day" do not stumble because they see "the light of this world." This, taken literally, merely means that the sun's production of daylight allows safe and stable walking. However, this literal understanding transitions into a metaphorical use in the next verse: "But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him". Jesus now makes reference to Himself as the light of the world (Jn 8:12), and how His nature must be manifest within His disciples (Newman and Nida 1993:358-359). A similar metonymous use is found in John 21:18, wherein Jesus explains to Peter that as he gets older he will no longer be able to walk wherever he wishes. Certainly, a portion of this meaning is in regards to the directions of his physical movements, but also applies metaphorically to his lifestyle choices.

4.4.1.3.1 περιπατέω as Religioethical

A few passages in the NT reiterate the concept of "walking" in the sense of religioethical obedience. Mark 7:5 echoes an OT formulation of walking in the paths of ancestors. The Pharisees wonder why Jesus' disciples do not observe the washing of hands, that is, not walking "according to the tradition of the elders". This is similar to the judgments against the children of Israel for not walking in the way of their forefathers—albeit misguided on the part of the Pharisees in this context. In Hebrews 13:9, περιπατέω is translated as "so occupied" in the NASB, "eat" in the NIV, and "observe" in the NRSV in order to smooth over its somewhat awkward usage. The verb is used in direct reference to the eating of food, but also seems to continue the thought of being "carried away" by "strange teachings". However, the discussion of food here is likely not referring to the eating itself, but rather in the observance of dietary laws (Ellingworth and Nida 1994:327). In this view, the use of περιπατέω makes much more sense, particularly in light of the metaphorical use of "walking" as in the observance of the Law. These three verses strengthen the continuity between the use of הלך and περιπατέω.

Another category of usage is in the sense of religioethical behavior. In Romans 13:13,

περιπατήσωμεν (lit. "let us walk around") is translated in the NASB and NIV as "behave", and in the NRSV as "live". Here, Paul encourages his readers to live according to the light by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (v14). Proper behavior and living ("walking") is accomplished by appropriating Christlikeness (Mounce 1995:248-249; cf. Morris 1988:472). In 2 Corinthians 12:18, περιπατέω is translated as the verb "conduct" in reference to the behavior of Titus and Paul: "Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?" The NASB supplies "walk in" as a way to smooth out the Greek, in which the last two clauses share the same verb (περιεπατήσαμεν) and might more literally be rendered "did we not walk around in the same Spirit and in the same footprints?" (cf. Harris 2005:892) In Colossians 4:5, περιπατέω is also translated in the NASB as the verb "conduct"—as in "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders". In I Thessalonians 4:12, περιπατέω is translated as "behave" in the NASB, just as it is in Romans 13:13. The proper behavior reflects a "quiet life" of minding one's own business and manual labor (v11). In all of these uses, we see that various translations attempt to capture the sense of ethical choices of action conveyed by περιπατέω. Robinson (2017:45) states, "the most common way that Paul talks about believers' religious and moral behavior in his epistles" is with the concept of "walking".

Another sense of περιπατέω involves the concept of religioethical lifestyle (Bruce 1982:243). In 1 Corinthians 7:17, Paul states that all should live their lives (walk) "as the Lord has assigned to each one" concerning marriage. 2 Corinthians 5:7 states: "for we walk by faith, not by sight". The lifestyle of action in Christianity is guided by spiritual faith, rather than natural perception (Harris 2005:396–397). The final use of περιπατέω in Ephesians appears in the author's admonishment to "be careful" in how we walk. In response to receiving the light of God, believers should respond accordingly, and live a lifestyle which makes the most of time, seeks the will of God, avoids drunkenness in favor of being filled with the Spirit, expresses worship and thankfulness to God, and is "subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (5:16-21; cf. Eph 4:1, 1 Th 2:12; Hendriksen and Kistemaker 2001:237). Similarly, 4:17 states that the Ephesians should not walk "in the futility of their mind" as the Gentiles do. In 2:10, the author states that God has created "good works" for Christians to walk in, perhaps lending a sense of personal destiny in the lifestyle of the Christian walk. In Philippians 3, after explaining his attitude of pursuing perfection in being conformed to the death of Christ, and pressing into the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (vv8-16), Paul suggests that the congregation "walk according to the pattern you have in us". This usage is steeped in the pursuit of spiritual formation—

particularly regarding Paul's own determination to reach toward growth, and his admonishment of others to do the same (Silva 2005:160–165). In Colossians 1:10, the author encourages the church members to please the Lord with the manner in which they walk, "bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God". In this instance, the walking must result in growth in the knowledge of God as well as in actions (good work). Altogether, the religioethical Christian lifestyle and attendant activity must reflect the nature of God. This seems to apply both to *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* —which together comprise a lifestyle (Anders 1999:281; cf. Hendriksen and Kistemaker 2005:57–58). Continuing directly in the vein of "lifestyle", in 2 Thessalonians 3 περιπατέω is twice translated as "leads a life" in the NASB. In v6, the author admonishes the reader to avoid an "unruly life" which disregards Christian teaching. In v11, the usage is again negative: "For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life". In Galatians 5:16 the phrase "walk by the Spirit" intimates a mode of living, that is, a "lifestyle". As Arichea and Nida (1976:133) suggest: "The imperative form of the Greek text may be translated as 'live in accordance with the way in which the Spirit tells you to'". In this manner, the religioethical lifestyle arises from a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

A few uses apply the religioethical aspects of περιπατέω in the context of community relationships. Romans 14:15 states that those who do not take their brother's reaction into account in eating food sacrificed to idols are not "walking according to love". By this, Paul seems to mean not exhibiting internal love through external action. In 2 John, περιπατέω appears twice. First, it is used in a way similar to an OT construction when John states that the children of the recipient of the epistle are "walking in truth" (v4). He then states that believers are called to love one another (v5), and that walking "according to His commandments" is love. This characterization of an obedient lifestyle further casts "walking" in a relational light, for walking in truth will be expressed in walking in love for others (Akin 2001:226). περιπατέω also appears twice in 3 John 3-4, both in the OT formulation of "walking in the truth". These usages are found in the context of the prospering of the church members' souls (v2), "acting faithfully" (v5), and the expression of love to strangers (vv5-6). "Walking in truth" therefore carries the sense of living a lifestyle which is reflective of Christian principles of fellowship, particularly based upon the teachings of the apostles about Christ (cf. Jobes 2014:294).

4.4.1.3.2 περιπατέω as Ontological

There are a number of instances in which this Greek verb goes beyond the concept of lifestyle and seems to intimate an ontological reality—that is that "walking" as reflective of a state of being which gives rise to action. To the Romans, Paul uses the verb in a spiritually formative manner, stating that Christians walk "in newness of life" (6:4). This is a clearly stated expectation of transformation leading to a new expression of spiritual life, resulting from the power of being baptized into Jesus' death (cf. Schreiner 1998:307–311). In 2 Corinthians 4:2, Paul states that he did not walk "in craftiness or adulterating the word of God" but rather in truth. Here, Paul maintains that his ministry displayed both orthodoxy and orthopraxy, emerging from an internal, authentic adherence to Christian truth. Ephesians 5:2 admonishes the readers to "walk in love" and be an imitator of God and Christ (vv1-2). Walking in Christ's love is characterized ontologically, in the imitation of the divine (O'Brien 1999:352–355). The command here is not "to love" in the imperative, which would focus on the action of loving. Rather, the imperative is to "walk in love"—that is, live and act in Christ's love. In Colossians 3:7, the author reminds the church members that they once walked in an earthly manner, with "anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth" (v8). Again, this imparts to περιπατέω a sense of action which emerges from an ontological state, for the author states that the Colossians "were living in" negative, earthly aspects of humanity, such as "immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed" (v5; Jamieson et al 1997:380). However, a new lifestyle is called for in Christ. The elements of this list are a mixture of actions and emotions and states of being, suggesting that walking in an earthly manner is a result of their existential state of earthliness. However, in Christ, this internal state has changed and the resulting actions and emotions should follow. In the angel's address to the church in Sardis, "walking in white" indicates those who overcome and live in a worthy manner (Rev 3:4). It seems the "soiled garments" (v4) and "white garments" (v5) are outward representations of the inner state of sinfulness or holiness (cf. Osborne 2002:179).

The ontological senses of περιπατέω are carried into its use in conjunction with "flesh" and "Spirit". In 1 Corinthians 3:3, Paul chastises the Corinthians for walking as "mere men," rather than genuine Christian believers. Their behavior of jealousy and strife places them in the category of "fleshly" rather than "spiritual" (v1; Thiselton 2000:292–294; cf. Garland 2003:109–110). This ontological view is also present in 2 Corinthians 10:2, in which Paul states his reticence to be bold toward those who characterize him as walking "according to the flesh". The context suggests here that he means "unspiritually". He continues the thought in v3, in which περιπατέω is used as a way to mean "exist": "For though we walk

in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh". This passage suggests that the existential state of human corporeality is not meant to limit the believer's spiritual engagement (Garland 1999:432–435). Similarly, the discussion in Romans 8 rejects a legalistic view of the Law, explaining that believers fulfill the Law internally, not walking "according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (8:4). The fulfillment of the Word is internal to the believer (ontological) and exercised in a lifestyle led by the Holy Spirit (Fitzmyer 2008:488–489).

The ontological senses of περιπατέω is further carried into its use in conjunction with "light": "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light" (Eph 5:8). Believers should demonstrate a state of being "of Light" by walking as children of the Lord's Light. The receipt of the Light of Christ fundamentally changes the believer (O'Brien 1999:366–367). In 1 John 1:6-7, John contrasts walking in darkness with walking in the Light of Jesus. It seems John believes that walking in Christ's Light is a prerequisite for true Christian fellowship (v7). Similarly, in 2:11, John states that one who hates his brother walks in darkness. Community relationships are therefore highly affected by the manner in which individuals walk (Akin 2001:62–72).

The ontological sense also dovetails with the religioethical sense. 1 Thessalonians 4:1 includes the request that the Thessalonians live according to the instruction given by Paul in order to please God. This seems to be the contrasting positive "answer" to the negative uses in chapter 3. This lifestyle includes the principles of obedience to God's commandments (v2), sanctification (vv3-4, 7), and correct community relationships (v6). The emphasis on obedience points to the religioethical aspects of walking (Wanamaker 1990:148–149), continues to strengthen the link between walking and spiritual formation. The emphasis on sanctification points to the ontological aspects of walking. In Revelation 21:24, the prophetic vision shows the nations of earth walking by the light of the Lamb, in the form of a lamp lit by God Himself. This appears toward the end of the vision of the New Jerusalem, which stands as a description of God's Kingdom (Beasley-Murray 1994:1454). In this eschatological scenario, people from around the world (nations) live a lifestyle of walking in the light of Christ—that is, show outward holy activity which arises from an internal ontological state of Christlikeness. In reference to Romans 8:4, Robinson (2016:67) states that while believers are in charge of the walking, "their moral *movement* is bounded because they *walk* 'according to' or in conformity with the Spirit." In this way, it should be recognized that the religioethical sense of walking must be linked with the ontological sense in that righteous behavior must arise from a righteous state of being—

here, in particular, through conformity to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The ontological use of περιπατέω dovetails with its relational use. In Colossians 2:6, the author states that those who receive Christ must also "walk in Him". Here, the ontological and relational aspect of walking is emphasized, for the Christian lifestyle which emerges from "receiving Christ" must reflect the person and actions of Christ Himself (cf. Bratcher and Nida 1993:50). John connects walking with abiding in 1 John 2:6, stating that those who say they abide (μένω) in Jesus should "walk in the same manner as He walked". Here the connection between an intimate relationship with Christ (abiding) and a high spiritual ontological lifestyle (walking as He walked) functions in the context of περιπατέω (Kruse 2000:81–82). In 2 Corinthians 6:16, Paul quotes from the OT, reaffirming the God/people relationship, and repurposing the concept of God walking among His people as a foundation for the ontological state of each believer as a temple of the living God. Paul here associates God's walking among His people with an internal manifestation of His presence in the believer. In John 8:12, Jesus states that those who follow Him "will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life". Relatedly, Jesus states in John 12:35: "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes". Both of these usages intimate a spiritual lifestyle of following Christ in relationship with His light. However, it is also possible to walk in a kind of relationship to an evil non-human entity, as exemplified in Ephesians 2:2 (O'Brien 1999:158). This verse contrasts the lifestyle of the Ephesians before and after their salvation. They formerly walked in the way of the world and the way of "the prince of the power of the air". This is certainly a relationship of control and manipulation rather than the free-will love relationship with Christ. However, the influence of a spiritual entity such as Satan on the lifestyle of a human is certainly in view here in the concept of walking.

Another Greek term which is at times translates as "walk" is στοιχέω, which more precisely means "to be in line with" (Arndt et al 200:946) or "to be in harmony with" (cf. Delling 1964:667-669). This term mirrors the concept of "walking after God" in the OT. In Galatians 5:25, Paul writes: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (v25). A more literal translation may be "let us follow the Spirit". However, it may be that "walk" is a helpful translation in that it echoes the use of περιπατέω in v16: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh". In this same epistle, Paul uses στοιχέω in his discussion of the Law and circumcision, speaking a blessing upon "those who will walk by [follow] this rule" that being a new creature in Christ replaces any law of

circumcision and uncircumcision (Gal 6:16). In Acts 21:24, the Jewish Christian leadership requests of Paul to prove to other Jewish believers in Christ that he "walks orderly" (στοιχέω), that is, follows the Law. In Romans 4:12, Paul uses the term in his discussion of the faith of Abraham, stating that he was credited as righteous while still uncircumcised, and that therefore the Gentiles "follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised". This usage is similar to the OT use of הלך in reference to walking in the ways of ancestors. In Philippians 3:16-18, Paul uses στοιχέω in parallel with περιπατέω. In v16, he states that Christians should continue "living [στοιχέω] by that same standard to which we have attained"—that is, to not allow their spiritual state to decline. He then immediately encourages the Philippians to walk (περιπατέω) according to Paul's example (v17). While the use of περιπατέω in the LXX clearly claims it as the Greek synonym for הלך in its metaphorical sense, the meaning of στοιχέω adds minor but important notes of following and ontological harmony in the NT understanding of walking in relationship to God and His Word.

It seems that the NT use of the metaphorical "walk" perhaps presupposes the concept of covenant, as it maintains the senses of relationship and ethical behavior. As the BDAG states, one major use of περιπατέω, particularly when used with ἐν, is "The sphere in which one lives or ought to live, so as to be characterized by that sphere" (Arndt et al 2000:803). This provides a similar ideational form to the covenantal aspect of the OT walk —that is, the covenantal agreement with God provides the boundaries of a holy orthopraxic sphere. It is probably, therefore, that the covenantal emphasis in the OT is assumed in the NT περιπατέω.

Similar to the OT use of "walk", the NT concept is a ripe paradigmatic concept for spiritual formation. It's religioethical and ontological connotations together embody a concern for Christian spiritual maturity. It expresses a full view of obedience to God with a relational reliance on Christ, particularly in a recognition of the transformation necessary toward genuine righteous behavior.

4.4.1.4 The Semantic Domain

Thus far, this study has been lexically driven. However, the concept of walking is part of a semantic domain which would also include terms such as "lead", "way", and "path". The most important Hebrew term to discuss in this context is דרך—along with its numerous forms—which contains the ideas of lifestyle and conduct, similar to הלך: "With regard to

the background use, all exegetes affirm that the Heb. *derekh* embraces both the course of life (as the ethically neutral unity of the life-story in which one participates passively rather than actively) and also "conduct" (as responsible and ethically accountable actions in specific periods of life)" (Koch 1978:271-272). The metaphorical use of דרך appears as early as Genesis 18:19, in which God states that He chose Abraham and his descendants to "keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice". Jethro uses this same term in conjunction with הלך when he recommends to Moses: "then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do" (Ex 18:20; cf. Dt 5:33, 6:7). Perhaps this connection is summarized in Deuteronomy 8:6: "Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him." To walk with God means to follow the ways of God. A lexical derivative of דרך is ארח, most often translated as "path" or "way". In Psalm 16:11, the prophesied Messiah speaks to God: "You will make known to me the path of life". Qoholeth admonishes his audience to "walk in the way [דרך] of good men and keep to the paths [ארח] of the righteous" (Prov 2:20). The prophecy in Isaiah 2:3 is that many people will come to the house of God "That He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths", because the Law and the Word will be spoken there (cf. Mic 2:4).

In the NT, the metaphorical sense of "way" is also found to correspond to "walking". Jesus states that "John came to you in the way [ὁδός] of righteousness" (Mt 21:32). Some disciples of the Pharisees state that Jesus teaches "the way of God in truth" (Mt 22:16). Both the negative and positive sense of "walking after" is similarly found in the use of "way" in 2 Peter, in which some are said to follow the way of Balaam (v15), rather than the way of righteousness (v21). The "way" is therefore a judge of orthopraxy, and represents the manner in which someone walks.

The use of "lead" (נחה) emphasizes God's role in walking with Him. The psalmist requests: "Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a level path" (Ps 27:11; cf. Ps 5:8, 31:3, 139:10, 24). In Psalm 43:3, the speaker requests to be led by God's light and truth. Similarly, in 143:10, the psalmist asks to be taught God's will and to be led by God's "good Spirit". These uses in the Psalms certainly reflect similar points surrounding "walking with God"—particularly, consistently enacting God's Word by His help.

4.4.2 Critique of Stevens' Definition of a Walk with God

The greatest issue which arises in the assessment of Stevens' writings concerning this

term is his lack of systematization. The concern was that a systematic look at the scriptural record may yield a definition of the term which differs from Stevens' own. In general, it seems that John Stevens' use of the term "walk with God" reflects the biblical record, as seen in a comparison of the summary propositions developed for the biblical record and for Stevens' writings:

> **Biblical Summary Proposition**: *"Walking with God" indicates a covenantal relationship with God, reflected in a lifestyle of active obedience which follows His direction, and which both results from and contributes to an ontological transformation in Christ toward righteousness.*

> **Summary Proposition of Stevens' Paradigm**: *The paradigm of a walk with God encapsulates spiritual formation in the context of an active and authentic relationship with God, centered on the Lordship of Jesus Christ, expressed in love, hunger, dedication, and submission, and enacted directionally, through God's testings, on both an individual and communal level.*

In this critique, we will review how the Stevens' usage is in accord with the biblical text, where it moves beyond the strict usage in Scriptures, and where it is lacking elements from the biblical text.

The concept of a walk with God in the OT emphasizes a close, submissive relationship with God in which the believer follows God's leading. This resonates with three of Stevens' paradigmatic elements of a walk with God: dedication, submission, and progressive direction. Abraham is perhaps the greatest exemplar of these relational elements. The biblical concept also emphasizes the walk with God as a lifestyle of obedience to God's Word which leads to righteous behavior. This, too, is reflected in Stevens' spiritually formative use of the term, in that the walk with God is a daily lifestyle motivated by the believer's desire to see God's will accomplished. By continually determining to walk in God's Word, the believer grows in righteousness which results from the internalization of the Word.

Overall, Stevens' use of the term seems more reflective of the NT use. Stevens emphasizes the relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the concept of a walk with God. Such a relationship is expressed in behavior and choices of action which correspond with God's will in His Word. This leads to a lifestyle of righteousness, which both results

from and is an expression of the believer's relationship with God in Christ. Further, these outward expressions of a walk with God reflect the ontological transformation available in Christ. A walk with God therefore involves a lifestyle of action which arises from an ontological state.

However, there seem to be elements in Stevens' concept of a walk with God which are not directly associated with the terminology in the Bible. Such concepts would be the Lordship of Christ, hunger, testings, and authenticity. The explanation behind the inclusion of these concepts is that Stevens did not only look at the uses of the term "walk" in Scripture in arriving at his overarching view of a relationship with God, but also drew upon examples of those who had a relationship with God. In this way, Stevens' use of the term is much broader than the strict scriptural usage, for he incorporates the patterns of relationship as modeled by scriptural figures. Stevens' use of the phrase "walk with God", therefore, reflects the models of the men and women who had strong relationships with God, regardless of whether or not the concept of "walking" is always applied in direct reference to them in Scripture. However, it would still be important to review these four topics in closer detail to ensure that they reflect scriptural teaching.

The central definitional element of a walk with God, for Stevens, is relationship. This is clearly maintained in the biblical use of the concept. For Stevens, however, Jesus' Lordship seems to be the chief characterization of the nature of this relationship. All examples of the men and women of God in the NT submitted to Christ and made Him Lord in their lives. This was a definitional element of their personal walk. Colossians 1:10 seems to comment on this: "so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God". The Christian lifestyle is one which should be "worthy" of Jesus as Lord. This includes pleasing Him, which is certainly a relational concept, as well as "bearing fruit", which is a formational concept. Similarly, Colossians 2:6 states that we should "walk in" Christ Jesus the Lord. The Lordship of Christ seems to function in the context of a walk with God as an associated principle which gives further detail to the kind of relationship with Jesus that is reflective of a true Christian walk.

Stevens handles the idea of hunger as a motivating force in a walk with God. While the connection between a walk with God and the Lordship of Christ is supported by the scriptural record, the connection with hunger is less direct. For Stevens, hunger is essentially a spiritual desire for God. It is an expression of the human will, consistently

directed toward a high valuation of a relationship with God. In some ways, this concept may not require a direct scriptural connection with the concept of walking with God, for it is a logical descriptor of a foundational requirement for any committed relationship. Stevens leverages the concept of hunger toward a spiritually formative understanding of a walk with God. Spiritual hunger expresses a desire for more than the status quo, and is therefore required in pursuing any growth or transformation in God. The believer's hunger is focused on God, but it results in relational activities of devotion and faith which prompt spiritual formation. There may be a direct link, however, between hunger and walking in the story of the disciples who left Jesus after He talked about eating of his flesh and drinking of His blood (Jn 6:53-66), or of the rich young ruler (Mt 19:16-30; Mk 10:17-31; Lk 18:18-30). The lack of sufficient spiritual hunger prohibited these examples from literally walking with Jesus. Jesus invited the rich young ruler to follow him, but this invitation was rejected. The inclusion of spiritual hunger in Stevens' overall concept of a walk with God certainly fits the scriptural view, even if it may not be directly discussed in the context of a walk with God in the biblical text.

Another aspect of Stevens' view of a walk with God which does not seem explicitly stated in Scripture is that of God's dealings. Similar to the concept of hunger, God's dealings have both a relational and formational purpose. Relationally, the dealings are an expression of God's discipline toward believers who walk with Him. However, these dealings have a formative purpose. Stevens views the trials and tribulations seen in the lives of all the men and women whose relationship with God is recounted in Scripture as involving at least a moderate degree of God's dealings. Certainly, walking with God is a challenge to the average human. As the author and finisher of faith (Heb 12:2), God is responsible to spiritually form the believer. For Stevens, this process functions in a walk with God. While the association of God's dealings with the terminology of "a walk with God" is not explicitly made in Scripture, it seems perfectly acceptable to include it as a central aspect of a walk with God from both the perspective of scriptural examples and of a logical review of God's discipline in the context of a relationship with Him. However, it may be important to note that the concept of God's dealings may not fit as well into the definition of a walk with God outside of the context of spiritual formation. The inclusion of such concepts as hunger and God's dealings are indicative of the essential holistic nature of Stevens' theological project. Although they may overstep the strict bounds of the scriptural concept of walking, they at least do not violate it.

The authenticity of the believer at first seems to be another concept not explicitly

connected with a walk with God in Scripture. However, it seems the association may be directly made with the wording of "walking in truth", found in both the OT and NT (1 Kgs 2:3-4, 3:6; 2 Kgs 20:3; 2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 3-4). While walking "in the truth" seems to intimate acting according to God's Word (cf. Ps 26:3, 86:11; 3 Jn 4), walking "in truth" is also identified with expressions of sincerity and authenticity, as is "walking in the light" (Jn 8:12, 12:35-36; 1 Jn 1:7). Certainly one could argue that authentic honesty is required in order to have a genuine relationship with God. This seems nearly tautological. Stevens' point in his treatment of authenticity is that a spiritual walk with God is easy to fake through such attitudes as legalism or pharisaism. In some ways, authenticity is not necessarily an important definitional point to associate with a walk with God except in the negative. That is, for something to be true or real, it must be authentic. However, the negative contrasts to authenticity certainly render impossible a walk with God. By recognizing that a believer who is inauthentic in his or her walk with God doesn't really have a walk with God, Stevens attempts to address the issues which prohibit a walk with God. In this way perhaps the concept of authenticity is applicable toward any scriptural term as a universal positive requirement.

In his handling of these elements which are not directly connected with the scriptural use of the terminology "walk with God" or similar, it seems Stevens "fleshes out" the scriptural use of the term by providing further detail on the nature of a walk with God in application. He does so by providing teaching on other biblical concepts which are at least closely related to the central facets of a walk with God. This is done through the review of the biblical examples of those who had a relationship with God and Christ, through the examination of interrelated principles revealed in the biblical text, and through a logical examination of the implications of the scriptural definition of a walk with God.

The conspicuously missing element in the OT view of a walk with God which is not reflected in Stevens' usage is the concept of covenant. To be fair, Stevens does discuss together the two concepts of covenant and walking with God (cf. 1976a:227; 1982a:98; 1998:12-13). However, none of his discussions are extensive nor descriptive. Stevens does not include covenant as a central element in his paradigm of a walk with God. Judging from the biblical record, this is the one major oversight in his work on the topic. Certainly there are related elements to the concept of covenant in Stevens view—particularly relationship, obedience, and dedication. However, the idea of covenant is such a pervasive concept in the Bible that it would be critical to include it. It is somewhat surprising to see that Stevens did not seize upon the opportunity to incorporate covenant

as a definitional description of the kind of relationship in view in a walk with God. To be fair, however, Stevens' teachings on relationship emphasis obedience and commitment, and therefore his view of a walk with God most certainly resonates with covenantal themes. Perhaps the primary problem here is a difference in terminological use. This problem is easily ameliorated. However, it is an important issue to note, as the concept of covenant brings together the interrelated concepts of relationship, obedience, reciprocality, and commitment into one scriptural terminology. For this reason, the inclusion of covenant in Stevens' theory would be a powerful explanatory term regarding the nature of a formative relationship with God.

The concept of a walk with God in both testaments is commensurate with the needs of proper biblical paradigmatic concept in a spiritual formation. Further, it is accessibly understood, as Sheriffs (1990:50) writes, "The journey metaphor, the motif of a walk with God along a route chosen by him through unknown terrain and hazards to an ultimate destination, has embedded itself in Christian tradition and consciousness as a core metaphor of life." Stevens' use of this terminology is largely consistent with Scripture, focusing as it does on a righteous relationship of obedience to God. Further, his use of the concept of walking with God as a paradigm of spiritual formation is commensurate with the original languages. Helfmeyer (1978:392) writes of הלך: "The dynamic aspect of *hālakh* appears clearly in the metaphorical meaning 'grow, increase, progress'", and that, further, it is a "representation of human life as a journey." Relatedly, the NT usage, seems focused on the results of transformation in Christ, as it is more often used to indicate a lifestyle of behavior and action which corresponds to God's Word (cf. Seesemann 1964:944-945). Further, for John the Beloved, περιπατεῖν has an ontological quality to it in that "It refers not merely to practical conduct but to the whole stance of the believer or of faith itself" (Seesemann 1964:945). Stevens' paradigmatic use of a "walk with God" emphasizes relationship and obedience toward ontological transformation which results in spiritual maturity. All of these elements are confirmed in the systematic investigation into the scriptural use of this concept. Certainly, Stevens does not exceed the bounds of the scriptural use of the term. While this systematic work overall strengthens Stevens' position, it also reveals a gap in his approach, which is the omission of the covenantal quality of the relationship with God as expressed in the scriptural use. Identifying this omission, and rectifying it, are effective steps toward the formulation of a holistic, relational theory of Christian spiritual formation in the next chapter.

4.5 Biblical Anthropology

Stevens' theory of spiritual formation relies heavily on the believer's engagement in spiritual activity. This emphasis on spiritual action is based upon a trichotomist anthropology. Stevens often declares that the proper differentiation between soul and spirit is a requirement not only for spiritual formation, but also of a general relationship with God. Stevens largely treats the trichotomist view as a presupposition in his writings on a walk with God, and therefore does not provide a rigorous scriptural account for it. If his trichotomist standpoint cannot be more properly elucidated exegetically, there are serious ramifications for the coherence of the entire theory. This investigation is even more critical because the dichotomist anthropological view seems to be in greater favor among recent scholars (Murray 1977; Clark 1984; Berkhof 1986; Hoekema 1988; Ryrie 1999; Grudem 2002; Hodge 2015). Coming to a clearer recognition of the scriptural view of anthropology should result in establishing a stronger theological underpinning with which to assess and critique Stevens' views. In order to accurately assess the terms "soul" and "spirit" in the biblical context, the Hebrew and Greek terms will be reviewed and summary propositions crafted for their separate use.

4.5.1 Systematic Survey of "Spirit" in the Bible

4.5.1.1 Spirit in the OT

The Hebrew term most often translated as "spirit" is רוח (found 206 times in 376 instances in the NASB). This word is also translated as "wind" (105 times) and "breath" (32 times). Other Hebrew terms infrequently translated as "spirit" include רפאים, which carries the sense of "spirits of the dead" (Job 26:5; Ps 88:10; Is 14:9, 26:14, 26:19). This may refer to the giants of old, based on the predominant LXX translation as γίγαντες (Liwak 2004:604-605). Another Hebrew term translated as "spirit" is נשמה which more literally means "breath of life" (Gen 2:7; Job 26:4; Prov 20:27). Yet another is מעה which is more often translated as "stomach", "body", "bowels", and "heart" (Lam 1:20, 2:11). In the NASB, there is also one "spirit" translation of לב (more often translated as "heart"; Jdg 16:25), of אוב (more often translated as "medium"; Is 29:4), and of a phrase that would literally be rendered "men who are of congealed dregs" translated as "men who are stagnant in spirit" (Zeph 1:12). However, the word which will yield the most fruit in systematic research is רוח.

The Human רוח

One primary use of רוח is in reference to the spirit of the human. The human spirit can exhibit negative mental, emotional, or ontological states—such as being troubled (Gen 41:8; Dan 2:1), jealous (Nu 5:14, 30), oppressed (1 Sam 1:15), sullen (1 Kgs 21:5), anguished (Job 7:11), deceitful (Ps 32:2), faint (Ps 77:3; Is 61:3), haughty (Prov 16:18; Ec 7:8), demoralized (Is 19:3), grieved (Is 54:6), anxious (Dan 2:3), proud (Dan 5:20), distressed (Dan 7:15), overwhelmed (Ps 142:3, 143:4), crushed (Prov 15:4), and bitter (Eze 3:14). The human spirit can exhibit positive qualities, and be revived (Gen 45:27), humble (Prov 16:19, 29:23; Is 66:2), cool (Prov 17:27), patient (Ec 7:8), and contrite (Is 66:2). Some qualities of spirit seem to be both negative or positive, depending on context, such as being broken or crushed (Job 17:1; Ps 34:18, 51:17; Prov 15:13, 17:22, 18:14; Is 65:14). The use of רוח in the formulation of "spirit of…" seems to intimate either a human state of being or the activity of a spirit entity which influences the human state. In Numbers 5, there are three instances of "a spirit of jealousy" which "comes over" a person (vv14, 30). It seems from context that this is a passing emotional state which nevertheless is consuming in the moment. There is also the reverse of this formulation, in which there can be a human quality "…of spirit", such as haughtiness (Ec 7:8). The human spirit can also be used in reference to the overall ontological quality of the person, for Daniel is said to have distinguished himself in the royal court due to his "extraordinary spirit" (Dan 6:3). Relatedly, God declares that Caleb has a "different spirit" than the other spies, expressed in his faith in God (Nu 14:24). Man's רוח can therefore be expressive of an internal state in both positive and negative ways.

The human spirit also seems to have the ability to produce a true self-image. It enables an understanding of the person's inner being as "the lamp of the Lord" (Prov 20:27). The spirit allows for an ontological self-knowledge. Perhaps this is why, in Malachi 2:15-16, God admonishes His people to "take heed to your spirit" in the context of His hatred of sin. The concept of an ontology of the individual expressed in various emotions or internal activity is at least partially in view with the anthropological use of רוּחַ.

Relatedly, the term is used in reference to human courage, will, or intensity. One example is the Canaanites' lack of spirit after hearing of the miracles of God surrounding the sons of Israel (Josh 5:1; cf. 1 Kgs 10:5; Is 19:3). Another is Jacob, whose spirit revives after hearing that Joseph was alive (Gen 45:27; cf. 1 Sam 30:12). David declares that He needs immediate help from God because his spirit was failing (Ps 143:7). Relatedly, the spirit

clearly affects the body, as in the lack of desire for food associated with a sullen spirit (cf. 1 Kgs 21:5). And the body affects the spirit, as in the Egyptian whose spirit revived after eating food (1 Sam 30:12).

The scriptural treatment of רוח reveals a complex range of possible interactions between the individual and his or her spirit. The spirit can rule over the rest of the human being, or vice-versa, as the spirit can prompt the human to action (Ex 35:21) or constrain the person (Job 32:18). On the other hand, the human can "rule" his spirit (Prov 16:32), and even turn his or her spirit "against God" (Job 15:13). The spirit can take action on behalf of the human, or perhaps as a representation of the entire human. The spirit is said to drink the poison of God's arrows (Job 6:4), and faint (Eze 21:7). Further, the actions of the individual are said to affect the spirit, for a perverted tongue "crushes the spirit" (Prov 15:4). The converse of this is that the one who is unable to control his or her spirit. Such a person is defenseless, as a city without walls (Prov 25:28). The human spirit's actions can therefore be controlled or controlling. These uses at least suggest that the spirit of man can control individual activity. In some ways, such uses of רוח could be seen as representing a self-relation. One might see this as evidence for the recognition of at least two aspects of self, for the there must be another willful human element which the spirit controls or is controlled by.

The spirit of man is created by God. God "forms" the spirit of man (Zech 12:1). However, man's spirit can be independent of God and lead to foolishness and futility (Eze 13:3). In Ezekiel 3, the Lord lambasts the prophets who "prophesy from their own inspiration" (v2) and states "Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing" (v3). The human spirit, therefore, is a futile instrument when it follows its own way in separation from God. However, the human spirit is not static, but can be transformed or renewed. The promise of a new covenant involves God providing his people with a new spirit (Eze 11:19). A similar statement is made in Ezekiel 18:31: "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!" Therefore, the spirit is transformable or renewable in some way.

Further, the qualities of one person's spirit can be given to another, as in Elisha's request of "a double portion" of Elijah's spirit (2 Kgs 2:9). In the case of Elisha, House (1995:258) states that in his request, perhaps "Elisha desires both Elijah's spiritual strength and temporal responsibilities, or he may simply ask for the spiritual power to do the job he has known he would someday assume". While Jamieson et al (1997:231) see this request as

Elisha's desire to become the leader of the school of prophets due to the connection with the discussion of a first son's inheritance in Deuteronomy 21:17, certainly some level of impartation from Elijah to Elisha was accomplished, for the sons of the prophets in 2 Kings 2:15 comment that "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha". Further, Bimson (1994:364) sees proof that this request was granted in some way by Elisha's dividing of the Jordan as had happened for Elijah. The human רוּחַ is therefore influenceable and interactive.

The spirit within the human is also associated with general understanding (Job 20:3). Job 32:8 states that it is the spirit in man, as well as "the breath of the Almighty" which gives understanding. In Proverbs 17:27, the man with a "cool" spirit "is a man of understanding". Relatedly, man's spirit can "ponder" in the context of meditating (Ps 77:6). While this usage of spirit is not surprising, its infrequency is.

The use of רוח in reference to humans reveals the following aspects of the human spirit: The spirit reflects the internal ontological state of the individual. The spirit acts out of that ontological state. The spirit affects and is affected by the overall human being. The spirit aids in the recognition of ontological self-knowledge. The spirit can be separate from God. The spirit can relate to God in both positive and negative ways. The spirit can be affected by God in its quality or in its actions. The spirit can convey spiritual gifts or qualities from one human to another. The spirit is involved in knowledge and understanding.

God's רוּחַ

There are a number of direct references to God's Spirit in the use of רוח. There are 13 occurrences of "Spirit of God" in the NASB (nearly always as רוח אלהים). The Spirit of God moves over the waters of a primordial earth (Gen 1:2), fills humans to provide wisdom and understanding (Ex 31:3, 35:31), momentarily comes upon a human in order to affect prophecy or emotion (Nu 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10, 11:6, 19:20, 23), comes upon his prophets to lead them in action or speech (2 Chr 15:1, 24:20), creates humans (Job 33:4), and provides visions (Eze 11:24).

The "Spirit of the Lord" (רוח יהוה) comes upon people to aid them, particularly as they act out their obedience to God (Jdg 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 14:6, 14:19, 15:14; 1 Sam 10:6, 16:13; 2 Chr 20:14; Eze 11:5). These examples are rather significant in that the sacred Name is used in reference to God's spirit coming upon humanity—including the figures of Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Jahaziel, King Saul, and Ezekiel. The Spirit of the Lord can

also depart, as it did from King Saul (1 Sam 16:14). The Spirit of the Lord "stirs" the child Samson (Jdg 13:25). The Spirit of the Lord speaks through human vessels, as with David (2 Sam 23:2). The Spirit of the Lord leads and/or moves his prophets geographically (1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:16; Eze 37:1). The Spirit of the Lord can pass between people (1 Kgs 22:24; 2 Chr 18:23). The Spirit of the Lord rests upon the Messiah, bringing wisdom and the power of liberation (Is 11:2, 61:1). The Spirit of the Lord gives rest (Is 63:14). The Spirit of the Lord is associated with the filling of power (Mic 3:8).

The phrase "Holy Spirit" (רוח קדש) is used thrice in the OT. It seems the Holy Spirit can be given by God to a person (e.g. David) or a people (e.g. the Israelites) on a semi-permanent basis (Ps 51:13; Is 63:11). The Holy Spirit can also be grieved by rebellion (Is 63:10).

God's Spirit is also associated with His will for man and with man's rebellion against that will. The children of Israel provoked God's judgments by being rebellious against His Spirit (Ps 106:33). The rebellious make alliances which are not of His Spirit, and thereby "add sin to sin" (Is 30:1). God's Spirit can be grieved by man's sin and rebellion (Is 63:10).

The encompassing summary of this review is that God's Spirit is God Himself, yet also seems to be representative of God's activity among humanity. Aside from Genesis 1:2, and Isaiah 34:16, there are no references to God's רוח which do not involve His relationship with man. However, while God may choose to interact with humans by His Spirit, it is established through a rhetorical question in Isaiah 40:13 that the Spirit of the Lord is neither directed nor counseled by humans, and is therefore independent of humanity.

Relational Uses of רוח

God's רוח interacts directly with humans. In Haggai 2:5, God states that His people should not fear because "My Spirit is abiding in your midst" as He promised when they were delivered from Egypt.

God can affect the spirit of man in various ways. He "hardens" the spirit (Dt 2:30). He "stirs up", or "arouses" man's spirit a number of times: of kings to bring the Israelites into exile (1 Chr 5:26); of the Philistines and Arabs against Jehoram (2 Chr 21:16); of king Cyrus to allow the captives to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (2 Chr 36:22); of his exilic people to bring them back to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:5); of the kings of Medes to destroy Babylon (Jer 51:11); of Zerubbabel, Joshua (son of Jehozadek); and of

the remnant of Israel to rebuild the temple (Hag 1:14). God also "cuts off the spirit of princes" (Ps 76:12). Job states that God's care preserved his spirit (Job 10:12).

God's Spirit leads and directs people. This is a prevalent concept in Ezekiel. The Spirit lifts Ezekiel up (Eze 3:12, 14, 8:3, 11:1, 24, 43:5), takes him away (3:14), and brings him places (11:1, 37:1, 43:5), and brings him into a vision (11:24). In Psalm 143:10, David asks that God's "good Spirit" lead him "on level ground".

God's Spirit is associated with teaching and prophecy. In Nehemiah 9:20, a handful of Levites together describe the Israelites time in the wilderness, stating that God gave His "good Spirit" to them to "instruct" the people. They continue in v30, addressing God, stating that "Your Spirit" admonished the people through the prophets. This last idea is repeated in Zechariah 7:12: God speaks through His prophets by His Spirit. Nebuchadnezzar attributes Daniel's gift of interpreting dreams to a "spirit of the holy gods" within him (Dan 4:8-9, 18), and states that the "spirit of the gods" gives him "illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom" (Dan 5:14).

God also fills man with His Spirit in various ways. God fills Bezalel with His Spirit to impart "wisdom", "understanding", "knowledge" and "craftsmanship" (Ex 35:30–31). God multiplies His Spirit from upon Moses to the seventy elders of Israel (Nu 11:16-17, 25-26). Moses states that he wishes God's Spirit would be placed upon all of God's people (Nu 11:29). God states that "the Spirit" is in Joshua (Nu 27:18). God's Spirit comes mightily upon David (1 Sam 16:13). The Spirit comes upon Amasai as he commits sons of Benjamin and Judah to David's kingship (1 Ch 12:18). Isaiah prophecies that the Lord will become as a crown or diadem which seems to represent "a spirit of justice" worn upon the heads of his people (Is 28:5-6). This use of רוּחַ is indeterminate in whether it refers to God's Spirit, or to His forming of man's spirit to be "a spirit of justice". Isaiah also prophesies about a future date in which "the Spirit" is poured out upon God's people—an event which is associated with the transformation of the land from wilderness to fertile field (Is 32:15). He further prophecies on behalf of God in Isaiah 44:3 that He will pour out His Spirit upon the people's offspring, just as the pouring of water upon "the thirsty land". God affirms His covenant with His people through the Spirit He places upon them, which seems to allow them and their offspring to speak His words (Is 59:21). The Spirit "enters" Ezekiel and immediately sets him upon his feet in response to God's command (Ezekiel 2:1-2, 3:24). Ezekiel prophesies that in the future God will place His Spirit within His people and that they will then "come to life" (Eze 37:14). This is associated with the time in which God

restores His people to the land. It seems this usage is also in view when God states to Zerubbabel his work will be accomplished "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (Zech 4:6). There is also a spiritual life imparted by God's Spirit, as in Ezekiel 37:14, in which the placing of God's Spirit within the people brings them to life. In context this does not seem to refer to people who are dead and resurrected. Rather, this intimates a higher level of divine life imparted by the indwelling of God's Spirit. The interactive, relational nature of God's Spirit as shown in most of these passages also carries with it a sense of transformation.

Similar to "filling", the Spirit of God can manifest divine qualities within the human. Pharaoh recognizes the origin of Joseph's wisdom when he states that within Joseph is "a divine spirit" (Gen 41:38). God states that He has given "the spirit of wisdom" to certain artisans who will produce Aaron's priestly garments (Ex 28:3). Joshua is said to be "filled with the spirit of wisdom" because Moses laid hands on him (Dt 34:9). Wisdom personified states that it will "pour out my spirit on you" (Prov 1:23). God is said to have washed the filth and purged the bloodshed from His people through "the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning" (Is 4:4). Daniel is said to have "an extraordinary spirit" associated with his knowledge, insight, and ability to interpret dreams (Dan 5:12). In Zechariah 12:10, the prophecy states that God will pour out "the Spirit of grace" upon the people of Jerusalem so that they would recognize their hand in the death of the Messiah and mourn for Him. Such examples show the exhibition of divine qualities in the human in the use of רוּחַ.

The Hebrew term רוּחַ is used in similar ways in passages often interpreted as Messianic prophecies. In Psalm 31:5, David writes what Jesus would later say on the cross: "Into Your hand I commit my spirit" (Ps 31:5). In Isaiah 11:2, the Spirit of the Lord is said to rest on the Messiah, which includes "The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD". It seems that these parallel uses of רוח simply provide descriptive attributes to the Spirit of the Lord, which are then manifest in the Messiah by virtue of having the Spirit of the Lord resting upon Him. In Isaiah 42:1 God states that He has put His Spirit upon the Messiah. In a prophecy of Isaiah 48:16, the Messiah states that God has sent him, as well as "His Spirit". In Isaiah 61:1, the Messiah states that "the Spirit of the Lord God" is upon Him, which anoints him to bring good news to the afflicted and proclaim liberty to the captives.

References to the spirit of man in the context of supplications to God also impart a relational quality to it. In Psalm 51, David exhibits a tenacious, yet broken-hearted plea that

God not remove His presence in the form of His Holy Spirit from David (v11). He then immediately asks that God provide to David "a willing spirit" (v12). David's sacrifice to God is his "broken spirit", which he associates with "a broken and a contrite heart" (v17). David's relationship with God was at stake here. His supplication includes a recognition of the closeness (perhaps internal) of the Holy Spirit, as well as a description of the quality of spirit he knows he must have, but is lacking (a willing spirit). Finally, David asserts that his spirit is broken before God, which will allow God to continue to accept him. David elsewhere states that he could not go anywhere to escape from God's Spirit (Ps 139:7).

The state of the human spirit seems to play a role in determining God's response to the individual. God states that he dwells both on high and with the lowly of spirit, in order to revive the contrite that they not grow faint without His aid (Is 57:15–16; cf. Is 66:2). The human spirit can seek God (Is 26:9), as well as be unfaithful to God (Ps 78:8).

The promise of the new covenant involves the placing of God's Spirit within the people, which causes them to "walk in My statutes" and "observe My ordinances" (Eze 36:27). God states that He will not hide from His people when He pours out His Spirit on Israel (Eze 39:29). Joel's prophecy in 2:28-29 states that God will pour His spirit on all mankind, even upon the male and female servants. God will pour out "the Spirit of grace and of supplication" upon His people that they will mourn and weep over the death of the Messiah (Zech 12:10).

There is an interesting passage in 1 Samuel 16:13-16 in which רוח is used in a number of different ways. Firstly, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon David mightily when Samuel anoints him (v13). The Spirit of the Lord is then said to depart from Saul, while simultaneously the Lord sends an evil spirit to terrorize Saul (v14-16). The immediate juxtaposition of the Spirit coming upon David while leaving Saul intimates that the Spirit of the Lord coming upon someone is not meant to be seen as a momentary experience, but rather a semi-permanent bestowing of the divine presence in or surrounding the human being (Wood 1976; for a *contra* view, see Neve 1972). This seems to be the sense we get as the Spirit comes upon David "from that day forward". Certainly, it would not make sense that the Spirit of the Lord would depart from Saul if it had not been with Saul since it came upon him in 1 Samuel 10:10—an event associated with transformation (v6). However, this view must be tempered with the fact that the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Saul mightily again in 1 Samuel 11:6—this time surrounding a passing event of righteous anger. It's possible, therefore, to see the action of the Spirit of the Lord coming upon someone in both

semi-permanent and fleeting ways. Further, the only one who was able to properly resist this evil spirit sent to Saul was David himself, who received the Spirit of the Lord in place of Saul (cf. Bergen 1996:180).

Death and רוח

The use of רוח is associated with human death. In Genesis 6:3, the Lord states that His Spirit "shall not strive with man forever". Even with use of the possessive personal pronoun, it is unclear whether רוח here is in reference to God's Spirit, or to the life God gives to humans by His Spirit (cf. Mathews 1996:332-333; Reyburn and Fry 1998:143-144). Job's friend Elihu states that if God so desired, He could kill all "flesh" by gathering back "His spirit and His breath" (Job 34:14–15). Isaiah states that God gives both breath and spirit to people (Is 42:5). Hezekiah states that in God's Word is the life of his spirit (Is 38:16; cf. Smith 2007:649). God is said to be the "God of the spirits of all flesh" (Nu 16:22, 27:16). However, in these contexts, "flesh" (בשׂר) seems to refer exclusively to humans as no sense of animal life or of creation in general is in view in these passages.

When man's spirit is taken away, it results in death: "You hide Your face, they are dismayed; You take away their spirit, they expire And return to their dust" (Ps 104:29). The spirit of man is said to "return to God who gave it" (Ec 12:7). Job states that his spirit is broken and "The grave is ready for me" (Job 17:1). When the spirit of the human departs, that person "returns to the earth" and "in that very day his thoughts perish" (Ps 146:4). This seems to intimate that the spirit and thoughts are not completely commensurate aspects of the human, for if so, the thoughts would not perish, but would rather "depart" with the spirit.

The two uses of רוח in reference to non-human created life are found in Genesis 7. In the NASB, רוח is translated as "breath" in v15, as in "the breath of life", and then as "spirit" in v22, as in "all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died". Lamberty-Zielinski (1999:67) identifies v15 as from the priestly source, and v22 from the Yahwist. He argues that רוּחַ in v22 is a later textual insertion by the priestly source, as it would be more likely for the wording to reflect Gen 2:7. Even if רוח was not a later addition, these two passages seem to emphasize the concept of the "breath of life" (נְשָׁמָה), first seen in the creation of man. One could argue that regardless of context, these uses clearly use רוּחַ in reference to animals, and therefore the human spirit should not be seen as a distinctive anthropological marker. However, the concept of "breath of life" in terms of animacy is

more likely here, for Isaiah 31:3 directly states that horses—and perhaps by extension all animals—are not רוח.

4.5.1.2 Spirit in the NT

4.5.1.2.1 God's πνεῦμα

The Greek word most often translated as "spirit" is πνεῦμα. It can also be translated as "breath" (3 times in the NASB) or "wind" (2). The greatest frequency of πνεῦμα in the NT is in reference to the Holy Spirit, occurring 90 times as "Holy Spirit" and roughly 150 times with various uses of "the Spirit"—including "the Spirit of God" (Mt 3:16; 1 Cor 3:16), "the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:17), "the Spirit of the Lord" (Acts 5:9), or the "same Spirit" (1 Co 12:4, 7-9, 11). A few notable uses of πνεῦμα in this way include the following. Jesus received the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Mt 3:16; Lk 3:22). The Spirit leads (Mt 4:1; Lk 2:27, 4:1; Acts 8:29, 11:12). The Holy Spirit gives advanced knowledge and understanding (Mt 22:43; Mk 12:36; Lk 2:26; Jn 14:26; 1 Cor 2:12; Eph 3:5). The Holy Spirit gives proper words in every situation to Christ's disciples by speaking through them (Mk 13:11; Lk 12:12). The Holy Spirit is associated with God's power (Lk 1:35; Acts 1:8; Rom 15:13, 19; Eph 3:16; 1 Th 1:5). The Holy Spirit can abide within the human (Jn 14:17; 1 Jn 4:13). The Holy Spirit is associated with prophecy, visions, and dreams (Acts 2:17-18; 4:31, 7:55, 19:6; 2 Pet 1:21; Rev 17:3, 21:10). People can be "full" of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3, 5, 7:55, 13:52; Eph 5:18). The Holy Spirit can be "given" by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17-19, 9:17). The Holy Spirit brings Godly attributes and emotions, such as righteousness, peace, joy, purity, patience, kindness (Rom 14:17, 15:13; 2 Cor 6:6; 1 Th 1:6). The Holy Spirit can sanctify (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Th 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2). The human body is the "temple" of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19). The Lordship of Christ is only spoken and recognized by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). The Holy Spirit provides gifts such as wisdom and healing (1 Cor 12:1-10). The Holy Spirit supplies oneness to Christians (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:3). The Holy Spirit writes God's Word on the hearts of believers (2 Cor 3:3). The Holy Spirit is essential in the perfection of the believer (Gal 3:3). The Holy Spirit provides access to the Father (Eph 2:18). Human sin can "quench" the Holy Spirit (1 Th 5:19).

In general, uses of πνεῦμα in conjunction with "of God" or "of the Lord" also refer to the Holy Spirit, rather than the Heavenly Father. One exception may be 2 Corinthians 3:17, which states that "the Lord is the Spirit", and that this Spirit is transforming us (v18). The

"Spirit of God" formulation appears eleven times in the NASB in the NT. The Spirit of God descends upon Jesus (Mt 3:16), aids in the casting out of demons (Mt 12:28), elevates man out of a fleshly existence into a spiritual one (Rom 8:9), leads believers as a mark of their divine sonship (Rom 8:14), knows the thoughts of God (1 Cor 2:11), teaches spiritual principles (1 Cor 2:14), dwells in believers (1 Cor 3:16), assures correct language surrounding Jesus (1 Cor 12:3), is grievable by human action (Eph 4:30), aids in worship (Phil 3:3), and confesses Jesus Christ (1 Jn 4:2).

The use of πνεῦμα in the NT is directly connected with growth and formation, particularly by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is associated with newness (Rom 7:6). The process of perfection which occurs by the Holy Spirit is contrasted with the foolishness of pursuing perfection in the efforts of the flesh (Gal 3:3). In Galatians 4:29, Ishmael is characterized as "he who was born according to the flesh", while Isaac "was born according to the Spirit". The flesh produces a false fulfillment. Galatians 6:8 states this contrast directly: "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." The analogy of being living epistles in 2 Corinthians 3 is also associated with the Spirit, who writes Paul's word upon the hearts of the congregation (v3) and gives life to the servants of the new covenant (v6). Galatians 5 also touches on the formational aspects of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the formulation of "walking by the Spirit". In this passage, life by the Holy Spirit is contrasted with life in the flesh (vv16-17). The terminology of the imperative "walk by the Spirit" (vv16, 25) seems nearly synonymous with the phrases "led by the Spirit" (v18), and "live by the Spirit" (v25). This walking by the Holy Spirit allows for the crucifixion of the flesh (v24) and for victory over the sinful aspects of the flesh (vv16-21), as well the exhibiting of the fruit of the Spirit (vv22-23). These are certainly strong conveyors of how spiritual formation occurs by the Holy Spirit. The contrast here is supported by Jesus' teaching that the Spirit "gives life", while "the flesh" (σάρξ) "profits nothing" (Jn 6:63).

References to Christ's Spirit, however, seem to fall into a different category due to His incarnation. Uses of πνεῦμα regarding Christ include the following. Jesus is aware "in His spirit" of people's thoughts (Mk 2:8). He sighs deeply in His spirit, seemingly in sad frustration (Mk 8:12). He is deeply moved in His spirit when He sees Mary weeping after Lazarus' death (Jn 11:33). He is "troubled in spirit" when He states that He will be betrayed (Jn 13:21). Jesus yields up (or gives up) His spirit (Mt 27:50; Jn 19:30), and commits it to the Father (Lk 23:46). After His resurrection, the "Spirit of Jesus" prohibits Paul from going to Bithynia (Acts 16:7). Galatians 4:6 states that "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son

into our hearts" in the adoption as sons. Paul states that the proclamation of Christ by others will result in his deliverance through "the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:18-19).

4.5.1.2.2 Man's πνεῦμα

Similar to the OT concept of spirit, πνεῦμα is related to humans' emotional capacity, their choice of action, their connectivity with God, and with human death. The spirit can feel emotions, such as rejoicing (Lk 1:47), or being provoked (Acts 17:16). The spirit is also associated with human action. Paul states that he and Titus conducted themselves "in the same spirit" (2 Cor 12:18). The human spirit can receive from God. Paul prays for the Galatians, the Philippians, and Philemon that the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; Phm 25; cf. 2 Tim 4:22). The state of the human spirit determines their future in God's plan, for those who are "poor in spirit" are blessed and are promised the Kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:3). Further, the spirit's departure is causally linked with the human's death. When Jesus raises a child from the dead, Luke writes that "her spirit returned" (Lk 8:55). Stephen, upon his martyrdom, tells Jesus to receive his spirit (Acts 7:59). James teaches that the body is dead without the spirit (Jas 2:26).

The spirit of the human at times expresses states of being. The spirit can be willing (Mt 26:41; Mk 14:38), refreshed (1 Cor 16:18; 2 Cor 7:13), or lack rest (2 Cor 2:13). One can be "fervent in spirit" (Acts 18:25; Rom 12:11). John the Baptist is also said to become "strong in spirit" as he grew up (Lk 1:80). Paul states to the Romans that he serves God "in my spirit" (Rom 1:9). Paul states that the unmarried virgin—not having to focus on her husband—may be wholly focused on the Lord in order to "be holy both in body and spirit" (1 Cor 7:34). Paul states that he and the Corinthians have "the same spirit of faith" as David (2 Cor 4:13). These are states of being, all reflected in qualities of spirit.

The human spirit can commune with God. One who speaks in "a tongue" speaks mysteries in his spirit to God (1 Cor 14:2). The fathering relationship of discipline with God is expressed in Hebrews as one that humans have with "the Father of spirits" (Heb 12:9). Certainly, He is the Father of every aspect of the human being, but the relational discipline in mind here is specifically applied to God as Father over the spirits of humans. Such discipline leads to formation into righteousness (v11). The righteousness of spirit is emphasized later in the chapter in v23, where certain human spirits reflect God's

righteousness, having been "made perfect". Relatedly, in Revelation 22:6, the Lord is referred to as "the God of the spirits of the prophets".

4.5.1.2.3 Non-Human and Non-Divine Uses of πνεῦμα

The term "spirit" is also used in reference to spiritual entities. Such spirits may be described as demons (Mt 8:16; Lk 8:2; Rev 16:14, 18:2), "unclean spirits" (Mt 10:1, 12:43; Mk 1:23, 26-27, 5:2, 8, 13, 7:25, 9:25; Lk 4:33, 6:18, 8:29, 11:24; Acts 5:16, 8:7; Rev 16:13), wicked (Mt 12:45), or evil (Lk 7:21, 8:2, 11:26; Acts 19:15-16). Physical ailments and strange behavior are said to be caused by such spirits (Mk 9:17, 20; Lk 9:39, 42, 13:11). Such spirits are not from God if they do not "confess Jesus", for they are of "the spirit of the antichrist" (1 Jn 4:3). A spirit can also provide ungodly powers to humans, such as the slave-girl who has a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16). Some spirits seem particularly powerful, such as "the prince of the power of the air", which is "the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). Most likely this is a reference to Satan (Brown et al 2013:n.p.; cf. Hendriksen and Kistemaker 2001:113). If so, then Satan may also be considered to be an entity of πνεῦμα.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus has authority and power over these spirits and casts them out of people (cf. Lk 4:36). Unclean spirits recognize Jesus as the Son of God (Mk 3:11, 5:7), and bargain with Him (Mk 5:8-13). Jesus gives the twelve disciples authority over unclean spirits (Mk 6:7), and this impartation of authority was effective (v13; cf. Lk 10:20). Paul also moved in this authority to cast out spirits (Acts 16:18, 19:12). However, such power must be predicated on a particular relationship to Jesus, as the sons of Sceva discovered (Acts 19:13-16).

Some spirits are not necessarily evil, either because they are given by God, or because the usage of πνεῦμα is neutral. Jesus is mistaken for a spirit when He appears to His disciples after the resurrection (Lk 24:37), but Jesus proves He is Himself by having them touch Him (v39). One gift of the Holy Spirit is "the distinguishing of spirits" (1 Cor 12:10). Relatedly, Paul warns that the Corinthians should not "receive a different spirit" than what he had ministered to them (2 Co 11:4). In this context, the distinguishing of spirits seems to aid in discerning orthodoxy regarding the gospel, and a person's (or entity's) "purity to Christ" (v3). Similarly, the author of 2 Thessalonians states that the church should not be "shaken" if a spirit comes to them as purporting to be from the apostolic leaders (2 Th 2:2).

The author of Hebrews states that angels are "ministering spirits" (Heb 1:14). Relatedly, John recommends that the church "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 Jn 4:1). He makes this recommendation in light of the "false prophets". While it is possible that "the spirits" in question are made in reference to human spirits of the prophets themselves, it is also possible that false prophets may be prompted to speak by an ungodly spirit similar to the way a true prophet would speak according to the Holy Spirit. Either way, the testing of πνεῦμα is required in the use of prophecy in the Church. John proceeds to give a relevant way to conduct such a test: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God". John places the one Spirit of God in connection to an implied plurality of spirits in v2 ("every spirit"), intimating that there can be spirits, human or otherwise, which are from God. Those which do not confess Jesus are of the antichrist (v3). The mention of antichrist as "coming" and "now in the world" seems to intimate that a non-human spirit is in view here which is able to influence the spirits of men (cf. 1 Jn 2:18, 22; 2 Jn 1:7).

4.5.1.2.4 Spirit as Ontological Mode or Realm

Some usages of πνεῦμα suggest that the scriptural concept of "spirit" can be used to describe an ontological mode and/or realm of active existence.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus uses either "born of the spirit" or "born of water and the Spirit" three times in chapter 3:2-8. While the Holy Spirit is certainly in view here, based on v5, it seems that the concept of ontological mode of existence is also in view, considering the parallel formulations of v6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The concept of "flesh" and "spirit" as they appear in the second position of each tautology are certainly used in senses of ontological quality. That is, a natural, physical birth produces an existence which is defined by a natural, physical mode of existence. On the other hand, a spiritual birth by the Holy Spirit leads to a spiritual mode of existence. In v6, no article is given to πνεῦμα, so it would more literally be "born of spirit".

The Heavenly Father is described as "spirit"—without an article—and those who wish to worship Him must do so "in spirit" (Jn 4:23-24). Here, πνεῦμα can be seen as the necessary medium in which a connection with God is found—that is, a realm of active existence. That πνεῦμα can be characterized as having or representing a sort of

substance is seen in John 6:63, in which Jesus states that his words "are spirit". Some scholars see this particularly as a statement that Jesus' own Spirit and life are contained in His words (Hendriksen and Kistemaker 2001:247). Others see πνεῦμα here in reference to the Holy Spirit—that Jesus' words contain the Holy Spirit (Newman and Nida 1993:214). However, this remark comes immediately after his broaching of the topic of communion (vv48-58), which causes many disciples to stumble and leave Him (61, 66). In this passage, Jesus was not speaking literally of eating His body and blood, but rather speaking of partaking of Him in spiritual terms. For this reason, stating that His words—specifically concerning communion—"are spirit" might contextually be understood to mean something like "function according to spirit" or "exist in a spiritual state". Therefore, the activities He is describing—of the Lord's supper—must be understood as activities undertaken primarily in the spiritual realm or in a spiritual mode of being. Even if this reading is incorrect, and Jesus means that His words convey His Spirit and/or the Holy Spirit, the passage still adds to the understanding of πνεῦμα as a medium, for audible words are able to maintain a spiritual quality and convey the intangible essence of Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit.

There are a few instances in which Paul states that he is "with" the churches under his oversight "in spirit" (1 Cor 5:3-4; Col 2:5). What does he mean by this? In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul is "absent in body but present in spirit" (v3) as he judges the immoral man of v1. He does so "in the name" and "with the power" of the Lord Jesus "in spirit" (v4). While some interpretations see this phrase "in spirit" as indicating that Paul is with them in his mind and/or thoughts (Ellingworth and Hatton 1995:113), this seems too weak of a characterization considering the judgment of Paul to deliver the man to Satan (v5). Are Paul's thoughts of commensurate function to hand a man over to a spiritual entity such as Satan in the power of another spiritual entity, that is, Jesus? This seems unlikely. One might argue that Paul is speaking figuratively, dramatically stating his denunciation of the sinner. But this characterization does not comport with Paul's strident and bold expression of miraculous spiritual authority and power seen in Acts (13:9-10, 14:3, 9-10, 16:16-18, 19:11-12). Rather, "in spirit" in this case seems to intimate that Paul is acting in the spiritual realm—with his spirit interacting with Jesus, most likely through the aid of the Holy Spirit. If he is able to hand over the man to Satan in this manner, then the activities of πνεῦμα have non-local effects and function independent of the spatial limitations of the body. Perhaps the repetitive emphasis of "in spirit" in v3 and v4—first with the Corinthians, then with Jesus—bolsters this relational reading of the functionality of the human spirit (Paul's) with

human spirit (the Corinthians), and human spirit (Paul's) with divine spirit (Jesus).

There are several uses of πνεῦμα in 1 Corinthians 14. In v2, the word is used without an article, so the NASB and the NIV supplies "his" and renders it "in *his* spirit he speaks mysteries", while the NRSV supplies "the" and renders it "they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit". Perhaps something else is in view. The speaking in "a tongue" here is much different than what we see in Acts 2, for this action "does not speak to men but to God" and is mysterious in nature. Doing something "in spirit" seems to denote an activity of spiritual significance, or of taking action with one's spirit in order to impact a spiritual circumstance. In v32, Paul states that "the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets", in that prophecy must be confirmed. This intimates that the human spirit can be in a submissive stance both with God and with fellow believers. It is not the prophecy which is subject to the other prophets, but rather the πνεῦμα of the prophet. It seems the quality of prophecy may be judged most properly by the quality of the spirit of the prophet who is speaking. This judgment is therefore a judgment of spiritual ontology. This conceptualization seems closely related to the gift of the distinguishing of spirits in (1 Cor 12:10), as well as the warnings against spirits which run counter to the teachings of the gospel (2 Co 11:4; 2 Th 2:2).

The concept of πνεῦμα as an ontological mode is again encountered in 1 Peter. Peter teaches that Jesus was "put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (3:18). It would be odd if this was stating that Jesus was resurrected in the Holy Spirit, for it would not follow as a direct comparative term with "flesh". Further, since the spirit is never said to perish, this statement doesn't make sense if interpreted that Jesus' spirit was made alive. It seems the usage of πνεῦμα here is in the sense of the spiritual realm, in that his resurrection was not a miraculous revivification of His body, but rather the impartation of a completely new quality of spirit which brought Jesus' whole being, including His body, into a new form of living. This is commensurate with the supernatural qualities seen in Jesus' resurrected body (Lk 24:30-32; Jn 20:15-16, 19). The concept of πνεῦμα as an ontological mode is strengthened by the mention of Jesus going to proclaim (probably His Lordship) to the spirits "in prison" after coming to life in the spirit. After his ontological transformation in spirit, Jesus is able to traverse the spirit realm to address imprisoned spirits (cf. Hauck and Schulz 1964:567-569, 577-578). Regardless of the exact identification of these spirits, vv18-19 show that πνεῦμα is used in the sense of a realm of existence in which direct activity (going, proclaiming) takes place. It is the ontological usage which seems most relevant here, for this passage discusses Jesus in His resurrected state (cf. Schreiner

2003:184).

Similarly, 1 Peter 4:6 states that while humans are "judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God". The NASB, the NIV, and the NRSV do not identify this as divine Spirit, suggesting that the translators do not see the Holy Spirit as the intended understanding of πνεῦμα here. What does it mean, then, to "live in the spirit"? It seems this would mean to live spiritually, according to the principles given by Peter in the proceeding verses, exhibiting sound judgment (v7), sober spirit (v7), fervency in love (v8), willing hospitality (v9), the usage of gifts in service to others (v10), and speaking the words of God (v11). Living "in the spirit" therefore denotes an ontological reality out of which Christian moral imperatives are enacted by the believer.

There are instances in which it seems the Holy Spirit imparts ontological aspects of godliness to the believer. In such instances it is often the case that the Holy Spirit seems to be in view, yet an indefinite article is used with πνεῦμα. In aggregate, such instances portray πνεῦμα as a relational/ontological connection by which particular qualities of the Holy Spirit are shared or manifested within the believer's own being, possibly by virtue of His indwelling. The Galatians are encouraged to restore sinners "in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal 6:1). Paul prays that the Ephesians receive from God "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph 1:17). In this case, the translations show disparity of opinion as to whether this refers to the divine or human spirit. Timothy is taught that God has not given him "a spirit of timidity", but rather a spirit "of power and love and discipline" (2 Tim 1:7). John discusses the "the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 Jn 4:6). Peter states that the adornment of women should be "a gentle and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:4). Paul states that he can choose to relate to the Corinthians with "a spirit of gentleness" (1 Cor 4:21). It is possible to see these qualities of spirit as imparted by God through His Holy Spirit, particularly considering the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-24, and the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10. While the "spirit of" formulation may rightly be viewed as a reflection of the quality of the human's spirit, such qualities at minimum parallel the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Regardless of the characterization of this process, the human spirit must receive some sort of impartation of these divine qualities as they are not found in the human being independent of the Spirit's activity. In all these cases, however, πνεῦμα is used to indicate ontological aspects of the human being.

Another important passage which adds detail to the concept of "spirit" as an ontological mode is 1 Corinthians 6:17: "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with

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Him". Certainly, πνεῦμα operates in a way which is unifying without being destructive. Man's spirit can become "one" with God's Spirit, yet it must be assumed that man's spirit is not subsumed in a way which causes it to lose complete distinction. Perhaps the model of the Trinity aids in understanding this function of πνεῦμα, for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one, yet still distinct. It could be that the NIV renders this concept more clearly: "he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit". This translation makes it seem as though "spirit" is the ontological medium by which or within which the human and the Lord become one. Such oneness of spirit is also said to occur among believers, as Paul expresses his hope that the Philippians "are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil 1:27). Further, because there is "one Spirit", the Ephesians are meant to "preserve the unity of the Spirit" together (Eph 4:3-4). The unity among believers is predicated upon their individual oneness of the Holy Spirit. The joining of man's spirit to the Holy Spirit must therefore occur in order to establish oneness of spirit among believers. Such unification between the believer and God, as well as believer with believer, occurs in an operation identified with spirit. This seems to present the medium of spirit as enabling close relationships and ontological change.

4.5.1.2.5 Further Investigation

There are a few passages which deserve a deeper investigation in order to contribute to the synthetic understanding of πνεῦμα in the NT.

Romans 8 is a key chapter which demonstrates the Pauline use of πνεῦμα. It is significant to this dissertation that Paul uses the phrase "walk…according to the Spirit" in v4, which seems to entail "living…by the Spirit" (v13) and being led by the Spirit (v14). Until v10, πνεῦμα is used exclusively in reference to the Holy Spirit. The concept of the human spirit is introduced in this way: "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness." It seems that the Holy Spirit must therefore function in bringing the human spirit alive in some way—perhaps arousing it from its dormancy in a previous state of sin, or perhaps in bringing it into a new state characterized by the life of Christ. This connection between Holy Spirit and human spirit is directly addressed in v16: "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God". The process of adoption occurs by the Holy Spirit, but its manifestation is attested to by the human spirit. It is very likely that the testimony of the human spirit in this regard is by the human's ontological status as a fully adopted child of God (reflected in the state of the

spirit), rather than in mere confirmatory agreement with the Holy Spirit. In other words, the spirit of the human exhibits a transformation reflective of the adoptive work of the Holy Spirit to ontologically testify of sonship (cf. the glorification in v17).

In Ephesians 4:23 we find a statement which seems to associate spirit with mind: "and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (cf. Rom 12:2). The term for "mind" here is νοῦς, which represents both mind and internal disposition. It is this second sense which seems to lead out in this passage, as v23 is found amidst a discussion of laying aside the "old self" (v22) and putting on the "new self" (v24). It is the νοῦς of the internal attitudes, rather than cognitive thoughts which are to be renewed. Hendrikson and Kistemaker (2001:215) argue that the terminology here suggests that the transformation in view is the result of God's Spirit renewing the mental attitude of the believer through an interaction with man's spirit. This seems to be a proper reading, as Behm and Würthwein (1964:958) assert that νοῦς is equated neither with πνεῦμα nor ψυχή, and should not be seen as "the divinely related element in man". The process of the renewing of the internal attitudes of self in Christ is therefore properly understood as occurring by the apparatus of the human spirit.

4.5.1.3 Conclusions on Spirit

The concept of "spirit" in the Bible as a whole refers to an existent, yet invisible mode of being. The human being has a spirit, which reflects emotion, ontological states, and motives of activity. Spirit is also a descriptor of God's foundational mode of being—that is, God is Spirit (Jn 4:24). In both the OT and NT, spirit is often used in reference to angelic or demonic beings. Relationship also stands as a central component of the scriptural view of spirit, for God as Spirit affects humanity in the OT, the Holy Spirit dwells within believers in the NT, and the human spirit connects with God's spirit throughout. Perhaps the relational nature of spirit is summarized in 1 Corinthians 6:17: "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him." Further, spirit is strongly correlated with life and death. The Spirit gives life and Jesus' words are life and spirit (Jn 6:63). However, upon human death, the spirit departs and returns to God. In the NT, more than the OT, the term can be used to describe a particular way of functioning, that is, "in spirit". This seems to reflect the NT concepts of being born in the Spirit or being made alive in spirit. The human spirit has some sort of cognitive capability, but the references to the human spirit are more commonly emotional, willful, ontological, relational, interactive, and transformational.

4.5.2 Systematic Survey of "Soul"

4.5.2.1 Soul in the OT

The Hebrew term נפש is translated as "soul" in the NASB 251 times out of 733 total instances. It is also translated as "life" 142 times, and "person" 88 times, as well as quite a few miscellaneous translations—such as the pronouns "I", "me", "myself", "ourselves", "you", "yourself", "yourselves", "he", "himself", "herself", or "themselves" (91), "desire" (13), "creature" (10), "man" (8), "heart" (7), "appetite" (7), "being" (5), "anyone" (3), "people" (2), as well as 106 other instances whose translations in the NASB occur less than three times. The term נפש can also be used as a figure of speech, one example is stating "as my/your soul lives" as an attesting to the truth of a statement (1 Sam 1:26, 20:3, 25:26; 2 Sam 14:19; cf. 2 Sam 11:11). Another figure of speech is "whom my soul loves" in Song of Solomon, referencing the love relationship (Song 1:7, 3:1-4). While it primarily means "soul", "life", or "person", its precise meaning in each usage seems highly contextual. Other terms translated as "soul" in the NASB are כבוד twice (usually "glory"; Ps 30:12, 108:1), and מעה twice (usually "stomach" or "bowels"; Jer 4:19).

4.5.2.1.1 The Human נפש

The soul is heavily associated with human emotion and experience. The soul can express a number of various negative emotional states. The soul can hate (2 Sam 5:8), feel disgust (Job 6:7), and feel scorn (Eze 25:6, 15). Jeremiah's anguish is expressed in his soul and his heart (Jer 4:19). When the soul remembers affliction, it is "bowed down" (Lam 3:20). A proud man has a soul that "is not right within him" (Hab 2:4). The pouring out of soul is an idiom which indicates despair (1 Sam 1:15; Job 30:16; Ps 42:4). The soul can also feel positive emotional states, such as resting (Ps 116:7), being composed and quiet (Ps 131:2), refreshed (Prov 25:13, 25), and delighted (Eze 24:21). The soul is also connected with knowledge and wisdom (Prov 2:10, 24:14), and it can forget or remember (Ps 103:2).

The soul can be the object of human emotion and experience. Accusers speak evil against someone's soul (Ps 109:20), and pass judgment upon it (v31). Those with wisdom love their own soul (Prov 19:8). The son who is corrected will delight the soul (Prov 29:17). The נפש is meant to be humbled on the Sabbath (Lev 16:29, 31), as well as on the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:27, 32). Fasting also humbles the soul (Ps 35:13).

The soul is sometimes comparatively described as though corporeal, such as experiencing suffocation (Job 7:15), crying out (Job 24:12), or being compared to a weaned child (Ps 131:2). The soul is said to have strength (Jdg 5:21). Streams and raging waters can sweep over the soul (Ps 124:4-5). The soul can escape a trap like a bird (Ps 124:7). Proverbs 13:4 tells us: "The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat." A person's words can positively or negatively affect the soul (Prov 18:7, 21:23). In these examples it seems that נפש reflects internal emotion or experience.

The most prevalent emotion of the soul is despair/distress. The soul can be "poured out" internally in "days of affliction" (Job 30:16). The soul can be grieved (Job 30:25; Is 19:10), be bitter (Job 3:20, 7:11, 10:1, 21:25; Is 38:15; Eze 27:31), be dismayed (Ps 6:3), be torn by an enemy (Ps 7:2), be overtaken by an enemy (Ps 7:5), have troubles (Ps 31:7, 88:3), waste away in grief (Ps 31:9), placed in a pit (Ps 35:7), be bereaved (Ps 35:12), be in despair (Ps 42:5-6, 11, 43:5), be disturbed (Ps 42:11, 43:5), be surrounded by lions (Ps 57:4), be bowed down (Ps 57:6), weep (Ps 69:10, 119:28), refuse to be comforted (Ps 77:2), faint (Ps 107:5), melt away (Ps 107:26), cleave to dust (Ps 119:25), be filled with the scoffing of others (Ps 123:4), be persecuted (Ps 143:3), tremble within (Is 15:4), sob in secret (Jer 13:17), and be in pain (Lam 3:51). Joseph's soul, as he was in the pit, was distressed (Gen 42:21). Disobedience to God will cause Him to afflict His people and "cause the soul to pine away" (Lev 26:16), or to give them a "despair of soul" (Dt 28:65). The Lord tells Eli that his descendants will be cut off from the priesthood, which will make his soul grieve (1 Sam 2:33). The Shunamite woman's soul is said to be "troubled" (2 Kgs 4:27). Hannah "poured out" her soul before God in her prayer for a child (1 Sam 1:15; cf. Ps 42:4). David complains that "No one cares for my soul" (Ps 142:4). Jeremiah laments that his "soul has been rejected from peace" (Lam 3:17).

The human soul is connected with sin. The wicked have souls which desire evil (Prov 21:10). The soul can delight in abominations (Is 66:3). Micah connects the soul directly to sin (Mic 6:7). Sacrifices are given to atone for the soul (Lev 17:11). As a sort of euphemism for a lust strong enough to lead to rape, Hamor states that the soul of Shechem longed for Dinah (Gen 34:1-2, 8). Ecclesiastes discusses the person whose soul lacks nothing, yet is not empowered by God to enjoy riches and wealth (6:2), thereby intimating that the desires of the soul do not always line up with what is good in God's sight. In the same chapter, the man who has many children and lived a long life would be better miscarried than seeing his soul "not satisfied with good things" (6:3). Qoheleth later states that what exists (what one sees) is "better than what the soul desires" which can be an experience of "striving

after wind" (Ecc 6:9). Micah discusses how there are no godly people in the land, and how an influential man bribes a prince or a judge for "the desire of his soul" (Mic 7:2-3). The soul can be lifted up to falsehood (Ps 24:4). After sinning, the soul must be healed (Ps 41:4).

The soul is also connected to human desire. The Ziphites entreat Saul to come to Horesh in order capture David "according to all the desire of your soul to do so" (1 Sam 23:20). Abner requests to gather Israel to David "that you may be king over all that your soul desires" (2 Sam 3:21). As stated in Proverbs, the soul responds positively to the attainment of desire: "Desire realized is sweet to the soul" (Prov 13:19; cf. 16:24). Job states that whatever God's soul desires "that He does" (Job 23:13). Of a man who wastes away it is said that his soul loathes his favorite food (Job 33:20). The soul can be said to be metaphorically thirsty and hungry, and God can satisfy such desire (Ps 107:9; cf. 63:5).

Soul is also used frequently in the context of human death. The soul "departs" (Gen 35:18). Genesis 35:18 adds a parenthetical comment to the description of Rachel's soul "departing" to emphasize what was meant by this phrase: "for she died". Elihu confirms God's sovereignty by stating that He keeps man's soul away from the pit "And his life from passing over into Sheol" (Job 33:18). Elihu also states that God may chasten a man with physical ailments (v19), which causes him to waste away because his soul loathes his favorite food (v20), and "Then his soul draws near to the pit" (v22). Elihu continues that the same man may be directed toward what is right by an angel (v23) and that when he returns to health, he should sing the praises of God, stating: "He has redeemed my soul from going to the pit, And my life shall see the light" (vv28, 30). The Messiah states prophetically that God will not "abandon my soul to Sheol" (Ps 16:10). Poetically, the soul can sink "down into the dust" while the body "cleaves to the earth" (Ps 44:25). When the soul has troubles, the person's life draws near to Sheol (Ps 88:3). Proverbs states that God's knowledge and wisdom "will be life to your soul" (Pr 3:22). The discipline of a child will "rescue his soul from Sheol" (Pr 23:14). Isaiah prophesies that the Lord will judge the King of Assyria, and destroy his forests and gardens "both soul and body" similar to "a sick man wastes away" (Is 10:18). At the end of his ordeal with God, Jonah begs "with all his soul to die" (Jon 4:8). The connection between death and soul is also used hyperbolically. Delilah continually asks Samson about the source of his strength to such a degree that "his soul was annoyed to death" (Jdg 16:16).

God is ultimately in control of the fate of the human soul regarding death. Man cannot save

his own soul from "the power of Sheol" (Ps 89:48). God rescues the soul from death (Ps 116:8). God allows the soul to live (Ps 119:175). God can "preserve" the soul (Ps 86:2, 97:10). The psalmist states that without the help of the Lord, "My soul would soon have dwelt in the abode of silence" (Ps 94:17), which refers to Sheol (Bracher and Reyburn 1991:824). David prays that God delivers his soul "from the sword" (Ps 22:20). David pleads that God not take away his soul, nor take his life by bloodshed (Ps 26:9). David hyperbolically states that God brought his soul up from Sheol and kept him alive and out of the pit (Ps 30:3). The psalmist states that those who fear the Lord look to him to deliver their souls from death in times of famine (Ps 33:19). David states that in the time of the Kingdom, the dead will be raised for "All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep his soul alive" (Ps 22:29). Asaph states that God did not spare the Egyptians' souls from death (Ps 78:50). God's people, in rebellion, are afflicted by God, and therefore "Their soul abhorred all kinds of food, And they drew near to the gates of death" (Ps 107:18).

The soul is discussed in the context of human relationships. The soul can bless other humans (Gen 27:4). The soul can enter council with others (Gen 49:6). A close relationship is referred to as "your friend who is as your own soul" (Dt 13:6). This concept seems similar to the knitting together of David's soul with Jonathan's (1 Sam 18:1). One who is wise will win souls (Prov 11:30). The soul can dwell with people who hate peace (Ps 120:6). The soul can have adversaries (Ps 71:13). Zechariah's soul was impatient with three shepherds, and their souls were weary of Zechariah (Zech 11:8). The human can "take counsel in my soul", which seems to be a sorrowful thing to do in times of trouble (Ps 13:2).

4.5.2.1.2 Use of נפש in Relation to God and Man

The term נפש is used often in connection with God. Most importantly, God declares His ownership of all souls (Eze 18:4).

Often, people are commanded to love God, serve God, or turn to God with all their soul (Dt 6:5, 10:12, 11:13, 13:3, 30:6, 30:10). God's people must walk before God with all their soul (1 Kgs 2:4), and can return to God with all their soul (1 Kgs 8:48; 2 Chr 6:38). Some return to God with all their soul (2 Kgs 23:25). God's people are said to have entered into a covenant with God with all their soul (2 Chr 15:12).

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The soul is also discussed often in conjunction with obedience. His commandments must be obeyed and served with all your heart and with all your soul (Dt 26:16, 30:2; Josh 22:5; 2 Kgs 23:3; 2 Ch 34:31). God's words can be intentionally impressed upon the soul (Dt 11:18). God's law restores the soul (Ps 19:7). The psalmist states: "My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times" (Ps 119:20). The soul can observe and keep God's testimonies (Ps 119:129, 167). Those who keep God's commandments keeps their soul (Prov 19:16). Walking in the "good way" will provide rest for the soul (Jer 6:16). However, The soul can "abhor" God's commandments (Lev 26:15, 43).

The soul is associated with worship. The soul rejoices in the Lord (Ps 35:9), shouts joyfully in praises to God (Ps 71:23), is made glad by God (Ps 86:4), is delighted by God's consolations (Ps 94:19), blesses the Lord (Ps 103:1-2, 22, 104:1, 35), praises the Lord (Ps 146:1), and exults in God (Is 61:10).

The soul is involved in the level of intimacy of the individual's relationship with God. Those who search for God with all their soul will find Him (Dt 4:29). People can set their soul to seek God (1 Chr 22:19). Relatedly, a person can "lift up" their soul to God (Ps 25:1, 86:4, 143:8). The soul can "wait for the Lord" (Ps 33:20, Ps 62:1, 5, 130:5-6). The soul can "boast" in the Lord (Ps 34:2). The soul can desire God's Name and memory (Is 26:8). The soul of the man who fears the Lord will "abide in prosperity" (Ps 25:12-13). The soul can desire God: pant for God (Ps 42:1), thirst for God (Ps 42:2, 63:1), cling to God (Ps 63:8), and long for God (Ps 143:6). God's distance from man is characterized as a rejection of the person's soul (Ps 88:14).

The state of the soul affects the individual's relationship with God. God's people are instructed to "give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently" in order to remember God's words and deeds (Dt 4:9). The soul can know that God's words have not failed (Josh 23:14). The soul can express hope in God (Lam 3:24). The soul can know deeply the wonder of God's creation of the human: "I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well" (Ps 139:14).

The soul is the recipient of God's salvation. God redeems the soul (Ps 34:22, 49:8, 15, 55:18, 69:18), rescues the soul (Ps 35:17), delivers the soul from death and/or Sheol (Ps 56:13, 86:13), delivers the soul of deceit (Ps 120:2), brings the soul out from prison (Ps 142:7), brings the soul out from trouble (Ps 143:11-12), keeps the soul (Prov 24:12), keeps the soul "from the pit of nothingness" (Is 38:17), delivers the soul from evildoers (Jer

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20:13), restores the soul (Lam 1:16), and pleads the soul's cause (Lam 3:58). The soul languishes for salvation (Ps 119:81). In the Psalms there are numerous requests or discussions surrounding God's rescuing or delivering of a man's soul (Ps 3:2, 6:4, 17:13), God being a refuge for a person's soul (Ps 11:1, 57:1), God restoring a persons' soul (Ps 23:3), God's guarding of the soul (Ps 25:20), God's sustaining of the soul (Ps 54:4), the soul's longing to be near God (Ps 84:2; Is 26:9), God keeping the soul (Ps 121:7). God emboldens by strengthening the soul (Ps 138:3). God can "fill the soul" with abundance (Jer 31:14). However, God can affect people's souls toward the negative, and make them embittered (Job 27:2).

4.5.2.1.3 God's נפש

The term נפש is used seven times in reference to God, although never in conjunction with His sacred Name (Seebass 1998:516). God's נפש accepts God's people (Lev 26:11), abhors the people for their idolatry (Lev 26:30), hates those who love violence (Ps 11:5), and delights in the Messiah (Is 42:1). God promises He will raise up a priest who acts according to God's soul (1 Sam 2:35). God's people are called by God "the beloved of My soul" (Jer 12:7). The "all heart and soul" formulation even appears in reference to God, who will place His people in the promised land "with all My heart and with all My soul" (Jer 32:41). Soul is also used in a Messianic prophecy. The Messiah's soul will be anguished in order to satisfy God and justify many (Is 53:11).

4.5.2.2 Soul in the NT

The Greek term ψυχή is translated as "soul" 47 times in the NASB. It can also be translated "life" or "lives" (43), "person" (4), and "mind" (2), as well as seven other various translations. It is used as summary description of the creation of man. Adam is described as being created as "a living soul" (1 Cor 15:45). It can involve the emotion of the human being. Simeon prophesies that Mary's soul will be pierced by a sword, causing anguish to her—most likely in reference to Jesus' death (Lk 2:35). It can also be used in idioms. Paul attests to the truth of his statements to the Corinthians when he calls God "as witness to my soul" (2 Cor 1:23).

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4.5.2.2.1 The Use of ψυχή as "Soul"

The soul is used to describe the nature of relationships between humans. Of the very early church Luke writes: "And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul", and they shared all property together (Acts 4:32). Paul and Barnabas are described as "strengthening the souls of the disciples" through encouragement (Acts 14:22). Paul states he will "spend and be expended" for the sake of the souls of the Corinthians (2 Cor 12:15). In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul states that he and his fellow apostles imparted the gospel and their own ψυχάς—which seems to mean that the delivery of the gospel was done relationally, and in a personal manner. Leaders in the church are said to "keep watch" over the souls of believers (Heb 13:17). The soul is also used in a self-relational manner. In Jesus' telling of the parable of the rich man, the man speaks to his own soul, reasoning that he has many earthly goods, so he should now eat, drink, and be merry (Lk 12:19).

The soul is also used in describing the relationship between man and God. Most notable among such uses of ψυχή in reference to man's relationship with God are the passages concerning the greatest commandment, that we love the Lord our God with all our soul—as well as other aspects of the human being, such as heart, mind, and strength (Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27). Taking on Jesus' yoke will provide rest for the soul (Mt 11:29). The soul can exalt the Lord (Lk 1:46). The author of Hebrews states that hope in the Lord is "an anchor of the soul" because it is "sure and steadfast" (Heb 6:19). Jesus is called by Peter "the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Pet 2:25). Peter states that those who suffer by the will of God "entrust their souls" to Him (1 Pet 4:19). The actions taken by the soul toward God in these passages are: loving, resting, and exalting. The action taken by God toward the soul are anchoring by hope, and acting as Shepherd and Guardian. The action taken by the person toward the soul is to entrust it to God. The soul can be an object of relational action on the part of God or man. However, in this context, the soul itself expresses relational emotion (love), reflects a relational state of being (rest), or takes an action of worship (exalt).

The soul is also associated with sin. James recommends that his readers put aside "filthiness" and "wickedness" in order to receive the Word which can save their souls (Jas 1:21). Peter states that the outcome of faith is the salvation of the soul (1 Pet 1:9). The soul of Lot is described as righteous, yet tormented in Sodom (2 Pet 2:8). Peter states that "fleshly lusts" "wage war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11). Peter suggests that adulterous eyes do not cease from sin, and entice "unstable souls" (2 Pet 2:14). The soul can be

"unsettled" by disturbing and ungodly words (Acts 15:24). The soul of the person who does evil will suffer "tribulation and distress" (Rom 2:9). In Matthew 16:26 and Mk 8:36-37, Jesus asks rhetorical questions regarding the result of gaining the world to the forfeit of the soul, seeming to state that the desires of the soul for the things of the world are only gained by giving away ownership of the soul. However, the soul can be purified by obedience to the truth (1 Pet 1:22). James also states that turning a sinner away from error can save that sinner's soul from death "and will cover a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:20). In these passages, we see that the soul is naturally unsaved, that it must be purified from filthiness, that it can be tormented by the sin of others, that it will experience tribulation if sin is not addressed, and that it can be forfeited or gained dependent upon the relationship with the world and with Jesus.

The term ψυχή is closely related to death. God requires the soul of the rich man in Luke 12:20, and rhetorically asks who will own all his goods upon his death. As Paul embraces Eutychus to bring him back from the dead, Paul states that "his life (ψυχή) is in him" (Acts 20:10). In 3 John 2, the author draws a parallel between the prospering of the soul and the overall prospering of life and bodily health. However, the life of the soul is also contrasted with the death of the body in Hebrews 10:39, in which the author states that believers do not "shrink back to destruction" because they "have faith to the preserving of the soul" (Heb 10:39). Perhaps in the same vein, John sees "the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God" (Rev 6:9), as well as "the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus" (Rev 20:4). These souls were certainly of those who did not shrink away from destruction in their fervent love of Jesus. While Acts 3:23 states that a soul can be destroyed, it is most likely referring to the taking of life as punishment for not listening to God's prophets. Similarly, the concept of the destruction of the soul in Matthew 10:28 seems to refer to the (possibly eternal) torment of the individual in Gehenna. Certainly the pairing of body and soul in Gehenna here is a striking image as the body is not commonly thought to function in the afterlife. However, this could easily be seen as a synecdochic usage of body and soul as a means by which the entirety of a person is in view. The soul is therefore required for a human to maintain life, and it seems to be able to continue to exist after death.

There are a few uses of ψυχή in reference to Christ. While in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus states His soul is "deeply grieved, to the point of death" (Mt 26:38; Mk 14:34). In talking with His disciples just prior to going to the cross, Jesus states that His soul is "troubled" (Jn 12:27). Finally, Peter quotes the Messianic prophecy of Psalm 16:10, which

states that God will not abandon Jesus' soul to Hades. For Jesus, the soul is a seat of negative emotion and the possibility of negative circumstance (that is, abandoned in Hades).

There are also two application of ψυχή to God the Father. Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1 in reference to Jesus: "My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased" (Mt 12:18). The author of Hebrews quotes the LXX version of Habakkuk 2:4, in which God states that if a person "shrinks back" from Him, His soul will not be pleased with that person. In both instances, God's ψυχή expresses emotional approval or disapproval.

Such uses of ψυχή therefore lend the term the sense of an internal state of being often expressed through emotion, which can be affected by humans and by God.

4.5.2.2.2 The Use of ψυχή as Life/Lives

Among the instances in which ψυχή is rendered as "life" or "lives", there are a few curiosities. The use of ψυχή as "life" usually is in reference to living personhood—e.g. Jesus giving His life (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Jn 10:11, 15, 17), "to save a life" (Mk 3:4), laying down the life (Jn 13:37-38, 15:13; 1 Jn 3:16), loss of life (Acts 27:10, 22), seeking a life to kill (Rom 11:3), risking life (Acts 15:26; Rom 16:4; Phil 2:30), "love their life" (Rev 12:11), and the life of creatures (Rev 8:9).

However, there are a few places where perhaps ψυχή straddles the English definitions of "soul" and "life". In Matthew 6:25, Jesus states that one should "not be worried about your life [ψυχή], as to what you will eat or what you will drink" and that ψυχή is more than food (cf. Lk 12:22-23). It is perhaps conspicuous that the Greek term ζωή is not found here, since it is used most often in the sense of life as a power, rather than a personhood. The association of the anxiety of ψυχή with the desire for food and drink intimates that the soul can represent natural-level desire, particularly toward the requirements of life. This passage also illustrates that the soul is interdependent with the functions of the body.

Similarly, in Luke 14:26, Jesus states that those who wish to be His disciples must hate their own ψυχή. The translation of "life" here is certainly appropriate, as it intimates the love of Jesus over the desire to stay alive. However, "soul" may also be appropriate, considering the salvation by Jesus for the covering of sins (that is, "hating" the sin of the soul). Elsewhere, Paul seems to have taken on this attitude, as he tells the Ephesians that

he does not consider his ψυχή dear to him, but rather is determined to complete his ministry, regardless of what he may suffer (Acts 20:24). Acts 2:41 seems to also use ψυχή both in reference to "soul" and "life" when it states that three thousand souls were baptized and "added" to the hundred and twenty of the upper room.

There are a few instances of the use of ψυχή in Jesus' statement: "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24; cf. Mt 16:25; Lk 17:33; Jn 12:25). This statement immediately follows Jesus' explanation that His disciples must take up their crosses and follow Him (Mt 10:38), and deny themselves (Mt 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23). The translation of "life" for ψυχή in this statement seems accurate, and aids in establishing what the soul encompasses, that is, the identity of a living person based on the manner of their life. The contrast between natural (fleshly) life and a higher life in Christ is certainly in view here, confirmed in the proceeding verses of Matthew 16:26, Mark 8:36-37. It is a strange concept however, that the soul/life must be lost in order to gain it in Christ. This intimates that maintaining control of one's soul is not an adequate way to follow Christ. The concept of the ψυχή representing the focus of inner desire as expressed in manner of life, certainly goes beyond one's "life" in the sense of life and death. The concept of "soul", therefore, is at least partially relevant here. The soul is the aspect of the human which must be denied by the person, for ψυχή is used in all three Synoptics immediately following Jesus' definitional injunction that His disciples must deny themselves. Further, while Jesus literally died on the cross, His requirement of the disciples to take up their cross does not seem to be an invitation to a natural death. Jesus does not require his disciples to literally die on a cross (cf. Rom 6:10; Heb 10:10; 1 Pet 3:18). The anthropological terminology for the human aspect which is to be denied and suffer upon the cross is the ψυχή. Jesus is therefore referencing the suffering of the soul experienced in the process of metaphysical death as the sinful aspects of the soul are removed through identification with His physical death on the cross. A similar sense is found in John, wherein the statement of losing and gaining life comes after Jesus' statement that a seed of wheat must die in order to bear fruit (Jn 12:24). If ψυχή here is examined in light of Jesus' previous metaphor, then the soul must die in order to "bear fruit" in Christ. Is this meant to be understood as an actual termination of existence? This seems doubtful. Certainly, we could say that at a minimum it must suffer some sort of erasure in the process of transformation into a different form—just as a seed ceases to be a seed at some point in the development of the plant.

4.5.2.2.3 Other Translations of ψυχή

Similar to the OT נֶ֫פֶשׁ, the term ψυχή can also be translated as "person" (4 times in the NASB). There are a few translations of ψυχή which bear reviewing.

In the very Early Church, each person's ψυχή "kept feeling a sense of awe" (Acts 2:43). Some Jews ask Jesus how long He will keep them "in ψυχή", which the NASB renders as "in suspense" (Jn 10:24). The author of Hebrews implores his readers to not grow discouraged in their ψυχή (Heb 12:3). Such uses emphasize the emotional faculties of the soul. Similarly, disbelieving Jews "stir up" the ψυχή of the Gentiles and make them bitter toward Christian believers (Acts 14:2). The NASB renders this as "mind". However, the context lends the term more of an emotional sense (bitterness) than a cognitive sense.

Ephesians 6:6 states that believers should do the will of God "from the ψυχή". The NASB renders this as "heart". Similarly, Paul encourages the Colossians to do their work "from the ψυχή, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Col 3:23). The NASB renders this as "heartily". Certainly such usages give a sense of active willingness and genuineness to actions performed "from the soul".

These uses of ψυχή lend the term the sense of strong internal emotion such as awe, discouragement, or bitterness, as well as the human's internal state of will.

4.5.2.3 Conclusions on Survey on Biblical references to the Soul

The scriptural concept of "soul" differs somewhat between the OT and NT. In the OT, נפש is used quite often in a pronominal sense. In the NT, ψυχή is often used to convey a meaning of "a human life". Both terms encompass human emotion, particularly in love. However, נפש is heavily connoted with negative emotion such as despair or distress. Further, נפש is closely connected with human desire. It seems this is reflected in the NT emphasis on connecting the soul with sin. Soul is closely associated with death in both testaments. Soul is also used in describing close human relationships throughout the Bible. The concept is used in reference to the human's relationship with God in the OT, particularly in love, obedience, and salvation. The terms are used a few times in reference to God in both testaments, and in a distinctly anthropomorphic manner. In summarizing the scriptural sense of נפש, Seebass (1998:504) writes: "The word *nepeš* does not refer to spirit, intellect, thought; these do not have anthropological status in the OT. It means joy of

life (expressed through need) as a force against death and the longing for death. With its translation *psyché,* the LXX recognized *nepeš* as a key term of OT anthropology." Nolland (2005:436) summarizes the scriptural sense of ψυχή as "the essential person" rather than "an ontologically separable component of a person". This view comports with the NT sense of "a human life" and also reflects the OT pronomial use.

4.5.3 Examining Key Passages

4.5.3.1 First Thessalonians 5:23

The primary Scripture at the center of the trichotomist view is 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The question at the heart of this verse's position in the debate surrounds the correct reading of the anthropological list—particularly, whether "spirit" and "soul" can be read in the Greek as being synonymous.

Hendriksen and Kistemaker (2001:n.p.)*,* following Masson (1945), suggest that the structure of the original language in the later part of the verse contains two clauses, rather than one. In this view, ὁλόκληρος and πνεῦμα together form one clause, that is: "without flaw (may) your spirit (be)". The second clause is governed by the verb τηρέω: "your soul and body be kept". Hendriksen and Kistemaker argue that this rendering supports a dichotomist position, holding that πνεῦμα here is presented as the whole person, with the body and soul as a reflection of that whole in two parts. This translation certainly respects the odd word order of the original Greek. It is true that the adjectival ὁλόκληρος is meant only to apply to πνεῦμα. However, the main problem with this view is the lack of given verb for the first clause. A clause is merely a phrase without a verb. Supplying one in order to form a clause should be performed with caution. To be fair, the closest relevant verb appears at the end of the thought, and therefore it may be appropriate to supply a stative verb to these earlier words. However, one should not necessarily rely on a translation with a supplied verb as strong evidence for any particular doctrinal concept. Building on this possible rendering without a phantom verb, one might more literally represent the unfolding grammar of the original in this way: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you to a perfect end [ὁλοτελής]—your whole spirit, and soul and body, blamelessly (until the time of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ) kept." In this rendering, it is possible to see the use of ὁλόκληρος as indicative of an intention to emphasize wholeness of spirit over and above wholeness of soul and body in the process of sanctification. Regardless, if

all three aspects of the human function according to the same verb here, then the potentiality of a dichotomous reading is much weaker.

Further, if one emphasizes the use of ὁλόκληρον as predicative, then it most likely refers to all three nouns (cf. Foerster and Herrmann 1964:767), and therefore the verse might be more literally translated in this way: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you to a perfect end, and the entirety of you—spirit and soul and body—be blamelessly (until the time of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ) kept." This view is further supported by the denotation of the adjective ὁλόκληρον, which emphasizes completeness of quantity rather than quality (Foerster and Herrmann 1964:766). This establishes its place in this verse, for the sentence already contains ὁλοτελής as a qualitative adjective imparting "completeness" or "perfection". Paul may be intentionally utilizing contrasting wordplay between ὁλοτελής (holotelēs) and ὁλόκληρον (holoklēron) to emphasize the application of the perfect, qualitative wholeness of God's sanctification to the quantified wholeness of the subject of that sanctification (ie. spirit, soul, body).

When viewing the context of the epistle as a whole, one finds a number of other three-element lists in 1 Thessalonians. Examining these other lists may help in determining whether it is likely that Paul would use two interchangeable words (spirit/soul) along with one non-interchangeable (body). A few lists contain terms which are related, but not interchangeable: faith, love, and hope (1:3); power, Holy Spirit, conviction (1:5); error, impurity, deceit (2:3); hope, joy, (crown of) exultation (2:19); lead a quiet life, attend to your own business, work with your hands (4:11). There is a similar four-element list in 5:14: admonish, encourage, help, be patient. The other main category of three-element lists in 1 Thessalonians seems to comprise trios of interchangeable words which are nearly synonymous: devoutly, uprightly, blamelessly (2:10); exhorting, encouraging, imploring (2:11). None of these seven lists is made up of two interchangeable words with one non-interchangeable. Certainly, it is not a usual stylistic or rhetorical practice to provide lists in which both disparate and synonymous terms are given side by side (cf. Hendrikson and Kistemaker 2001:n.p.). This cannot, on its own, prove that the anthropological list of spirit, soul, and body in 5:23 should not be read differently than the pattern established throughout the epistle, but it certainly makes such a reading less tenable.

While various readings of 1 Thessalonians 5:23 are possible, the grammar and word choice of the original seems to present spirit, soul, and body as individual entries in a cohesive list. The context of the epistle as a whole suggests that the individual entries in

this list would not contain only two interchangeable terms along with one non-interchangeable. This passage does not aid in determining what specific differences Paul may have in mind regarding "spirit" and "soul", but it seems very unlikely that he intended his readers to see them as synonymous. However, most scholars agree that wholeness of the human person is primarily in view here, rather than a definitive anthropological description (Martin 1995:189; Jamieson et al 1997:392; Larson 2000:76; Green 2002:267–268; Nicholl 2008:109).

4.5.3.2 First Corinthians 2:11-3:3

First Corinthians 2:11 also provides insight into the ontological and relational uses of πνεῦμα. In translation of this verse, "thoughts" is an interpretational addition not present in the original Greek—found in the NASB and NIV in the phrases "thoughts of a man" and "thoughts of God". The NRSV has a more literal rendering: "For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God." More literally, v11 could be translated as: "For who among men knows a man except the man's spirit within him? Even so, no one knows God except the Spirit of God". If taken in its original form, this verse seems to be discussing ontological or relational knowledge rather than conceptual knowledge. It is particularly noteworthy to see that v11 neutrally presents a functionality of man's spirit which is of particular help in the context of spiritual formation: the human spirit must be utilized in order to truly "know" oneself. Further, the Holy Spirit must be engaged for the human to truly know God.

Later in this same chapter, Paul states that his words to the Corinthians were "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power", and that he was teaching "by the Spirit" (1 Cor 2:4, 13). The end of v13 is difficult to translate because the adjective "spiritual" in the Greek (πνευματικός) is stated twice, each without a recipient noun to modify. It is complicated further by the lack of preposition linking the accusative and dative instances. It would literally be translated "uniting/combining/expressing/interpreting spiritual with/to spiritual". This clause is variously rendered: "combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (NASB); "expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (NIV); "interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual" (NRSV); "using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths" (NLT); or "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (KJV). However, it seems there is another option which may be more fitting to the context.

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Verse 11 compares the spirit of man with the Spirit of God in a neutral fashion, explaining that just as the only apparatus which truly knows the man is the human spirit, so too is the Holy Spirit the only entity which truly knows God. The parallel of two spirits is continued in v12, in which the spirit of the world is contrasted with the Spirit of God, for only the Spirit of God provides knowledge of what God has provided to His people. It might be fitting to see v13 as continuing the comparison of impotent spirit with potent Spirit, in which "combining" spiritual with spiritual would be in reference to the uniting of man's spirit with the Holy Spirit. This would describe the process by which Paul is able to teach by the Spirit. In this view, one "spiritual" may reference an externality to the human being, that is, the Holy Spirit. The other "spiritual" would reference the human spirit, which receives from the Holy Spirit. As reflected in the NRSV, it is certainly appropriate in the Greek to see "spiritual" in verse 13 as modifying people of some sort (cf. Ellingworth and Hatton 1995:60-61). This interpretation gathers more strength when considering that in order for Paul to successfully teach the truth of God, he must speak to those who are listening with the aid of the Spirit. In other words, the futility of man's spirit and/or the spirit of the world in the process of understanding the things of God must be overcome not only in the teacher, but also in the student. This concept is further enforced with the introduction of the concept of the "natural man" in v14, who is presented as the ontological opposite of the spiritual. The natural man is stuck in the futility of his own being, for without his spirit working in concert with the Holy Spirit, he cannot spiritually appraise the truth. But the spiritual man in v15 has combined spiritual with Spiritual, and can therefore appraise all things.

While the predominant interpretation represented in most translations is certainly plausible, it seems less commensurate with the context in light of the ontological reading of v11. Supplying "words" as a modified noun for one of the instances of "spiritual" in v13 would make sense, as it would echo the "words taught in human wisdom" in the same verse, but attempting to supply "thoughts" (NASB) may not be true to the text. The use of "things" or "truth" may also be appropriate nouns to supply, but the question may be: why supply nouns at all? Would not a better solution be to attempt to view the independent adjectives as Paul's way of demonstrating a spiritual reality? Adjectives communicate qualities. Perhaps Paul intends for his readers to recognize that the function of spiritual realities differ from natural realities, and that it is possible to take on a spiritual quality of the Holy Spirit through one's own spirit. This is an ontological and relational recognition of $\pi\nu\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ which fits with the ontological and relational principles first broached in v11. The uniting of a spiritual man with the (Holy) Spiritual force of God leads both to greater self-knowledge

and the knowledge of God, and to a receipt of His truth which allows for spiritual transformation.

The verb used in the clause in question is συγκρίνω, which means "to unite", "to compound", "to compare", "to measure", "to evaluate", or "to interpret" (Büchsel 1964:953-954). Even with these other English renderings, the interpretational concept presented here might still work. Compounding, comparing, measuring, or evaluating spiritual man with Holy Spiritual substance is certainly a concept effective toward the recognition of God's truth and Person. The one translation which may not work well with the proposed interpretation is "to interpret", which would certainly cast the missing nouns as concepts or thoughts rather than being or substance. However, the precise usage of this verb here is somewhat difficult to determine considering its scant use in the NT, elsewhere occurring only in 2 Corinthians 10:12, where the NASB, NIV, and NRSV translates it as "compare". Applying this usage to 1 Corinthians 2:13 would give us: "compare spiritual to spiritual", which in context would be difficult to make sense of, for Paul's comparisons in this passage are generally natural/spiritual or effective/ineffective, so unless Paul is comparing the spiritual quality of the world (from v12) with Spiritual words, this particular verb usage has little contextual support.

The contrast between spirit and soul are seen in vv14-15 in the adjectival uses of the two terms in Greek (πνευματικῶς and ψυχικός), translated in the NASB as "spiritual" and "natural". Paul states that those who are characterized by being ψυχικός (perhaps more literally "soulish") cannot "accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him" (v14). It would be easy to overstate the case here by framing soul as a negative opposition to spirit, a view which is not supported by a systematic reading of Scripture on these two concepts. However, it would be understating the case to suppose that translating ψυχικός as "natural" allows us to avoid the clear contrast being made between two human attitudes which are identified with spirit and soul. The "soulish" are further characterized as being "men of flesh [σαρξ]" who are "infants in Christ" (3:1), and "fleshly" "mere men" who express jealousy and strife (3:3). It might be best here to focus on the positive terminology maintained throughout this passage, that is, "spiritual". It must be correlatively true that those who are spiritual do not walk as immature men according to the flesh, but rather as mature believers, able to eat the "solid food" (3:2) of the Word. It is certainly possible to make too much of one instance of "soul" in an adjectival form in this passage. However, it is commensurate with the context to see "spiritual" here as adding to the understanding of the function of the human who prioritizes the operation of his or her spirit according to the

Holy Spirit. The chapter does not seem to, in itself, support either a trichotomist or dichotomist position. However, there is certainly a distinction being made in this chapter between that which is spiritual and that which is soulish. This distinction is one which must be properly addressed by any anthropological view undergirding a theory of spiritual formation.

4.5.3.3 First Corinthians 15:42-49

Another key passage in the NT which addresses both spirit and soul simultaneously is found in 1 Corinthians 15. The literary structure of vv42-49 is a series of contrasts: perishable/imperishable (42), dishonor/glory, weakness/power (43), natural/spiritual (44, 46), first/last, living/life-giving, soul/spirit (45), earthy/heavenly (48-49). In context, these contrasts are meant to illustrate the nature of resurrection in Christ, going from the lesser to the greater in every instance. Since vv42-44 deal only with the body, the contrasts are not in invisible anthropological elements (such as soul or spirit), but rather in the nature of the perishable and imperishable. It is possible, therefore, that soul and spirit in verse 45 are meant to be synonymous, for the intended emphasis of contrast might be on first/last and living/life-giving. Further, ψυχή could just as easily be translated as "being" (NIV, NRSV) or "person" (NLT). This reading seems less likely than an alternative, however. To arrive at the most plausible interpretation, it may be best to apply the structure of the comparisons we find in vv42-44 wherein a noun (body) or pronoun (it) provides the consistency around which all contrasts are shown. This pattern continues in vv47-49 with "man" (47), "those" (48), and "image" (49), aiding the contrast of earth(y)/heaven(ly). Throughout this passage, then, the established pattern is that all word variation reflects conceptual contrasts, for they are anchored in consistent nominal and pronominal repetition. If one were to argue that spirit and soul are interchangeable, one would have to account for the break in the form of parallel contrasts used in the surrounding verses, for in v45 the noun upon which the contrasts are built is "Adam". Soul and spirit would therefore be points of contrast, rather than points of comparison.

Further, both ψυχή and πνεῦμα are used in their adjectival forms in both v44 and v46, leading into and out of v45 by emphasizing the contrast between the natural (ψυχικός) and the spiritual (πνευματικός). It is difficult not to see these verses as detailing a difference between Paul's concepts of soul and spirit. Thiselton (2000:1283) describes these contrasts in vv45-46 by stating that "ψυχή, like Heb. נפש (*nephesh*), denotes earthly life which can be lost in death" and that ψυχικός "frequently has negative nuances in

Paul". Thiselton (2000:1284) enumerates the significance of Christ as Spirit as leading the believer to look "beyond earthly horizons of imagination and beyond the destructive effects of weakness and sin." These negative horizons are represented adjectivally by ψυχή. The ensuing verses shed further light on the contrasts between soul and spirit, for the soul is associated with the "earthy" (v47), a connection strengthened by the repeated reference to the creation of Adam, first given in v45 with ψυχή. The spirit is associated with heaven, rather than earth. This is no surprise, as God is identified overwhelmingly with πνεῦμα, and resides in heaven. The passage ends with a statement which provides a teleological insight into spiritual formation. Paul states that while believers have "borne the image of the earthy", they will eventually bear the image of the heavenly. The post-resurrection transformation culminates in becoming reflections of Christ's resurrected physical state of a spiritual body.

4.5.3.4 Hebrews 4:12

Hebrews 4:12 is another key passage in the investigation into the biblical usage of ψυχή and πνεῦμα. The peculiarities of the concept of division between joints and marrow are often discussed in that they are not physically connected in the human body. Regardless, they are both separate and different from each other. The Greek places "soul and spirit" in apposition to "joints and marrow", particularly in the use of τε καὶ between each of these pairs—while only placing καὶ between "thoughts and intentions" later in the same verse. In such apposition, it would be difficult to argue that the author of the epistle does not intend for his reader to see similar differences between soul and spirit as one might find between joints and marrow—that is, they are separate and different. Is it possible to achieve insight into the author's view of the functionality of each in the appositive elements? In other words, might the soul be likened to a joint in some manner? Or likewise, the spirit to marrow? We are unable to turn to other uses of joint (ἀρμός) and marrow (μυελός) in the NT as this is the sole verse in which those words appear. However, these terms are straightforward definitionally, in that they refer to specific, physical parts of bodies. Certainly we could draw parallels between spirit and the internal hiddenness of marrow. Smillie (2004:343) writes, "For the ancients 'marrow,' deeply hidden inside the bones, served metaphorically for that which was most intimate in the body of a person." However, might we say that the soul is connective in some sense, as the joint is? The context here is inconclusive on this point.

However, does the appositional view of these terms suffer under closer scrutiny of the verb

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involved? This verb, διϊκνέομαι, means "to pierce (or cut) all the way through". The application of the verb is somewhat difficult. It may refer to the cutting into the connection between soul and spirit (NRSV) or to the cutting into soul and (separately) spirit. It seems the NASB and NIV leave this ambiguous. However, Smillie (2004:348) argues that the "sword" in question (μάχαιρα) is in reference to an instrument of surgery, and that this passage is ultimately about the powerful transformative qualities of the Word of God toward the spiritual health of the believer. If this is the case—and it seems likely—then the cutting here may be applicable in any way required by the Word of God to be living and active in the believer's life toward the judging of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. This reading does nothing to help in settling how we might define soul and spirit here. However, the pairs of "joints and marrow" and "thoughts and intentions", and even "living and active", are all disparate in meaning regardless of close relation. It would be odd, therefore, to read the pair of "soul and spirit" as being exactly synonymous in this verse.

4.5.4 Comparisons and Conclusions

4.5.4.1 Summary Propositions

Now that "soul" and "spirit" have been reviewed systematically, we will present summary propositions for both in order to begin our discussion of comparison.

> **Spirit**: *The spirit is an invisible ontological aspect of the human—reflecting an inner state of being expressed in emotion, will, and knowledge—which is the operative point of transformative connectivity in the believer's relationship with God.*

> **Soul**: *The scriptural concept of "soul" conveys human aspects of identity—including life, will, emotion, desire, and sin—and functions as an existential self in relation to humans and God.*

4.5.4.2 Frequency

There are a few interesting things to note in studying the frequency of the original language terms for "spirit" and "soul". In the NASB, נפשׁ appears as "soul" 249 times out of 733 total OT uses, while רוח appears as "spirit" around 206 times out of 227 total occurrences. In the NT, ψυχή appears as "soul" 47 times out of 101, while πνεῦμα appears as "spirit" around 373 times out of 377 total occurrences.

Firstly, in both OT and NT, there is much more variation in how the terms for "soul" is used than the terms for "spirit". Only about 34% of נפשׁ occurrences, and 47% of ψυχή occurrences, are translated as "soul" in the NASB. However, 91% of רוח occurrences and 99% of πνεῦμα occurrences are translated as "spirit". These data further emphasize that the terms for "soul" are broader in meaning, while the terms for "spirit" are narrow.

Secondly, the change in the balance of uses of these terms is rather striking. Of the combined uses of נפשׁ and רוח as "soul" and "spirit" in the NASB (455), the frequency is weighted 54% soul and 46% spirit. If we discard the NASB translations and simply compare the Hebrew terms, the weighting becomes 76% נפשׁ and 24% רוח (in a total of 960 occurrences of both terms). Of the combined uses of ψυχή and πνεῦμα as "soul" and "spirit" in the NASB (420), the frequency is weighted 13% soul and 87% spirit. If we discard the translations and compare the Greek terms, the weighting becomes 21% ψυχή and 79% πνεῦμα (in a total of 478 occurrences of both terms). Certainly, the NT authors prioritize the discussion of "spirit" over "soul" in their written material.

Thirdly, even with the great disparity of length between the two testaments, πνεῦμα appears much more frequently in the NT (377) than רוּחַ the OT (227). This is primarily due to the great emphasis on the Holy Spirit among the NT authors. The disparities of frequency highlighted in points two and three here seem to indicate a movement away from soul toward the favoring of spirit. Is this reflective of God's evolving emphasis in the unfolding of His promise-plan for humanity? It seems possible. At the very least, one could say there is an evolving topical emphasis toward spirit in the text of Scriptures. However, considering the giving of the Holy Spirit to all of humanity, it would probably not be incorrect to characterize the shift as being historical as well as literary.

Analyzing the frequency of usage cannot alone tell us much. However, at the very least, these data aid in confirming that רוּחַ and πνεῦμα are more precise terms than נפשׁ and ψυχή, and that the NT authors reference spirit more often than soul.

4.5.4.3 Comparisons

There are passages which reference both soul and spirit and certainly seem to indicate the interchangeability of these terms. Hannah states that she is "oppressed in spirit" and that she has "poured out" her soul before God (1 Sam 1:15). Job states "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 7:11). Isaiah writes

that his soul longs for God and his spirit seeks Him (Is 26:9). Mary states that her "soul exalts the Lord" and her "spirit" rejoices in God (Lk 1:46-47). Paul expresses his hope that he will hear that the church members are "are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind [ψυχή] striving together" (Phil 1:27). Even though these two nouns function according to different verbs here, it certainly seems they are meant to be seen as a unity. The parallelism found in these verses is unmistakable in creating a sense of equivalency in the uses of soul and spirit. We see in these examples, therefore, that there is certainly an overlap in the activities of soul and spirit.

However, the difficulty in using parallelism to judge equivalency of terms is that the literary device—particularly in its Hebraic usage—might either be synonymous or antithetic. While context provides clues regarding the author's intent, proper interpretation is not always clear. We may certainly look to the surrounding terms to determine synonymity, but it is common for antithetic terms to serve as contrasts among general synonymy. For example, "For our soul has sunk down into the dust; Our body cleaves to the earth" (Ps 44:25). The concepts of sinking to dust and cleaving to earth function synonymously, but we are not meant to read "soul" and "body" as equivalent terms. Similarly, the Psalmist writes, "My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You" (Ps 63:1). The terms "thirsts" and "yearns" maintain synonymous parallelism, but it would be misinterpretive to extend this structure to include "soul" and "flesh". For this reason, we may wish to ascribe less weight to passages which seem to situate "spirit" and "soul" in parallelism, and perhaps view such evidence as suggestive but inconclusive.

The most striking difference between the uses of "spirit" and "soul" in the Bible is in reference to God. Perhaps approaching this question from the bottom up—that is, attempting to locate the meanings of "soul" and "spirit" primarily in their reference to man—is the wrong strategy. Might a theological point of departure, rather than an anthropological one, provide any insight? In the NT (NASB) there are 24 occurrence of "Spirit of God", 28 occurrences of "Spirit of the Lord", and 93 occurrences of "Holy Spirit", but not a single occurrence of "Soul of God", "Soul of the Lord", or "Holy Soul". As an illustration of the severely restrictive way in which נפש or ψυχή is applied to the divine, note the near ridiculousness of capitalizing "Soul" in contrast to the ubiquitous acceptance of capitalizing "Spirit". Soul is used in reference to God a few times, usually in an anthropomorphic manner, often framing God's emotions. However, the biblical text neither ascribes a soul to God, nor describes God as a soul. This is in stark contrast to God and Spirit. Jesus directly states that God is Spirit (Jn 4:24). This theological recognition of the distinctive use of רוּחַ

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and πνεῦμα aids in differentiating the terms of soul and spirit as used in Scripture—a differentiation which might be applicable in an anthropological context, particularly in the endeavor to establish scriptural methodology in human-divine relations. In the Christian context, it seems appropriate to allow the ontology of God to lead the investigation in defining how the human relationship with God functions, particularly in light of God's description of intent in the creation of man: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen 1:26). If God is ontologically identified as spirit, then perhaps we should prioritize correct enumeration of רוח and πνεῦμα in the identification of biblical anthropology.

The concept of spirit as an ontological mode seems to be a strong aspect of differentiation between spirit and soul, and is highly relevant in identifying scriptural anthropology in the context of the relationship with God. Immediately following the statement that God is spirit (Jn 4:24), Jesus goes on to say that the worship of God must be done "in spirit". The implication seems to be that communion between man and God must be done "in spirit" precisely because God is Spirit. The mode of spiritual relating is necessary to make contact with God, who is Spirit. The various statements regarding the believer's access to God's presence (Eph 3:11-12; 2 Cor 3:11-12; Heb 10:19) must be reconciled with God's habitation in a location of spirit, that is, heaven (Ps 11:4; Is 63:15; Mt 5:34, 23:22; Acts 7:49; Heb 8:1; Rev 4:2). How does humanity, in living bodily form, come boldly before the throne? The answer, it seems, is by the human spirit. Approaching the question of differentiation between spirit and soul from this angle highlights the true importance of the anthropological spiritual capacity. If one excludes the discussion of the Holy Spirit, then the scriptural record many very well suggest a basic interchangeability of soul and spirit. However, in view of the ontological and relational compatibility between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit described in Scripture, it may be theologically reductive to equate the operations of the human spirit with the operations of the soul.

In conclusion, the overlapping meaning between the concepts of soul and spirit is substantial, particularly in their expressions of emotion and relationship. However, there are quite a few important points of distinction. Soul is overwhelmingly an anthropological term. The concept of spirit, on the other hand, is balanced in its application to divinity and humanity. Soul is more grounded in the earthly life, particularly in its association with animals. Spirit is more indicative of the supernatural life, particularly in its association with angelic and demonic beings. Soul is more closely associated with negative emotions, such as despair, and with negative ontology, such as sin. Spirit is more closely associated with

righteousness and the expression of godly activity, particularly in the activity of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. Finally, soul is associated with the human itself—that is, his or her current state in totality. This is instructively seen in the common pronominal use of נפֶשׁ, and the common use of ψυχή to mean "human life". Spirit, however, is more closely associated with ontology and transformation.

Attempting to maintain an equivalency between "spirit" and "soul" in order to argue for dichotomy is unsustainable in the face of Scriptures which clearly use such terminology in contrasts or opposition. On the other hand, emphasizing their differences in support of trichotomy may be done to the detriment of properly enumerating the ways in which they are similar, as well as recognizing the significance of other scriptural terms which fall outside of the trichotomist scope. With these issues in mind, one might be justified in rejecting both the dichotomist and trichotomist models.

4.5.4.4 A Holistic Solution

Is it possible that the dichotomist/trichotomist debate is a sort of emergent red herring which distracts us from the most important aspect of the scriptural account of anthropology? That is, the holistic unity of man? Utley (2001:47) argues that Hebrews 4:12 "is *not* a proof-text on the nature of mankind as a two-part (dichotomous) or three-part (trichotomous) being (cf. 1 Th 5:23). Mankind is primarily represented in the Bible as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7)." Ellingworth and Nida (1976:125) discuss the three-term list in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 with this summary: "In biblical thought generally, each of the three terms designates the whole of man seen from a particular point of view, spirit being the inner man who thinks and worships, soul being equivalent to life in its outward manifestations, and body being man in his weakness (though not explicitly in his sin)." Certainly, it is the emphasis of wholeness and unity that is predominant in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (cf. Green 2002:268-269).

In further support of the holistic view of man is the broad range of anthropological terms used in Scripture: dust and soul (Gen 2:7); heart and spirit (Ex 35:21; Job 15:12–13); heart and soul (Dt 4:9; Pr 24:12); soul, heart, and flesh (Ps 84:2); dust and spirit (Ecc 12:7); soul and body (Mt 10:28); soul and spirit (Heb 4:12); spirit and body (Jas 2:26); and health and soul (3 Jn 2). There are also the lists given by Jesus in conjunction with the greatest commandment, which all together mention heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27). Further, there are anthropological terms such as "self" (Col 3:10), "outer

man", and "inner man" (2 Cor 4:16). In light of such high variance one might conclude that attempting to codify a precise scriptural anthropology is a fool's errand. Or perhaps the best way to understand a synthetic scriptural anthropology is through a holistic lens. This approach may address the problems of both the dichotomist and trichotomist models, for in a holistic formulation, the differences between "spirit" and "soul" may be maintained while also recognizing their significant overlap.

A holistic anthropology may also be preferable in light of comparing other terms with soul and spirit, such as "heart". It seems as though "heart" and "spirit" are more interchangeable than "soul" and "spirit" in the OT. There are 18 verses which suggest equivalency between heart and spirit (Ex 35:21; Dt 2:30; Josh 5:1; Ps 51:10, 17, 77:6, 78:8, 143:4; Prov 15:13, 17:22; Is 57:15, Is 65:14; Lam 1:20, 2:11; Eze 18:31, 21:7, 36:26; Dan 5:20). Ezekiel 11:19 also does the same, but not explicitly so. Compare this with the two verses in which soul and spirit are clearly treated with a sense of equivalency: Job 7:11 and Isaiah 26:9. Just from the quantitative comparison, it would be appropriate to argue that "heart" and "spirit" are more interchangeable than "soul" and "spirit". Further, the uses of heart and soul together seem to draw a distinction between them. Particularly in Deuteronomy, we find a common formulation of "with all your heart and with all your soul" (Dt 4:29, 6:5, 10:12, 11:13, 13:3, 26:16, 30:6) or "on your heart and on your soul" (Dt 11:18). It is doubtful that the terms heart and soul are meant to be synonymous due to the individuated application of prepositions (e.g. בְּכָל־לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ), that is, with heart and with soul. Similar prepositional uses with these two terms is found in Joshua (22:5; 23:14), 1 Kings (2:4, 8:48), 2 Kings (23:3, 25), 2 Chronicles (6:38, 34:31), and Jeremiah (32:41). However, some verses using heart and soul could be read as communicating equivalency (Dt 28:65, 1 Chr 22:19, Ps 24:4; Prov 2:10, 24:12; Jer 4:19; Acts 4:32). We see here that the mere addition of "heart" in this discussion—to say nothing of investigating other terms such as "mind", "breath of life" (נשמה), "dust", "strength", or "health"—lead to further complexity and a greater recognition of the strengths of a holistic view of scriptural anthropology.

Grudem (2002:478-482) rightly states that we should not continue adding facets to our anthropology based on terms such as "heart", "mind", and "strength"—leading erroneously to an absurd sexchotomy. However, Grudem and others in the dichotomist camp seem to oversimplify the scriptural record by requiring equivalency among all noncorporeal anthropological terms—a stance which is clearly not reflective of the text. The soul is at times differentiated from spirit (e.g. 1 Cor 15:44-46). The mind is at times differentiated from the spirit (e.g. 1 Cor 14:15). The heart is at times differentiated from the soul (e.g. Dt

4:29). The heart is at times differentiated from the spirit (e.g. Eze 11:19). Even if intra-passage comparisons of such terms are inconclusive, one is still left with the synthetic differentiation of usage between such terms throughout the Bible. Directly equating the functionalities of spirit, soul, mind, and heart as they are used in Scripture seems unnecessarily reductive. If so, then a paradigm which does not account for their differentiations would not be an accurate characterization of scriptural anthropology.

In the biblical record, the various metaphysical facets of the human being are not directly synonymous nor interchangeable, but neither is it true that they are entirely distinct. The scriptural concepts of soul, spirit, heart, and mind are all incorporeal, but these various aspects of man are not directly equivalent. They may all point to different invisible functions of the human, but to state that they are independent facets would also be a mistake. Perhaps their function is similar to the organs of the body, which carry unique, yet overlapping, responsibilities, and whose correct operation only occurs as an indivisible whole. A holistic view of the non-corporeal aspects of man does not erase distinctive functionalities of spirit, soul, heart, and mind, but rather views them in an interrelational manner.

A holistic model could satisfy both the dichotomist and trichotomist camps. The dichotomist position might continue to view anthropology as primarily divided along the lines of corporeality. The various facets of the human would therefore fit in one of two categories. A holistic view might also satisfy the emphases of the trichotomist camp. Such a view would categorize the various anthropological faculties within three primary divisions, rather than two. Correctly positioning such concepts as heart, mind, and strength within the categories of body, soul, and spirit, may be more difficult than simply placing them in a binary of soul/body. However, doing so may also be more fruitful in discovering the nuance of their various functions. While the dichotomist model simplifies the distinction along a sole axis of corporeality, the trichotomist model is more detailed in its accounting of the both the function and interrelation of the various aspects of the human being.

Coincidentally, Kierkegaard is mentioned in Seebass' extensive review of נפשׁ. Seebass (1998:503) writes, "Following an observation by Søren Kierkegaard, we can interpret human beings as creatures related to themselves. If we understand the language of this definition prephilosophically, it catches the essence of the OT noun *nepeš* extraordinarily well." Kierkegaard often uses the term "spirit" for this self-relation. Kierkegaard's terminology appears not to be directly reflective of Scripture here. According to Seebass,

the concept of self is more accurately correlated to the biblical use of soul. While Kierkegaard uses "spirit" both in reference to the self-relation and the God relation, perhaps it would be more accurate to see the self-relation as an issue of soul, and the God relation as an issue of spirit. Even if soul and spirit reference the same anthropological component or facet, might it be helpful to maintain this distinction in terminology as it pertains to functionality? I would suggest the answer is yes, based upon the very distinctions made between these two terms in a systematic view of the biblical text.

This attempt to recast Kierkegaardian thought in more scriptural terminology aids in recognizing the differentiation between soul and spirit as it particularly relates to this dissertation. Spiritual formation certainly involves the self-relation, for personal growth is an inextricable component of Christian formation. However, if we understand this aspect according to the term soul, it is a purely anthropological endeavor—that is, man relating to self. This use of soul accurately reflects the scriptural use, which nearly exclusively applies soul to human and animal life. On the other hand, one cannot adequately discuss spiritual formation without also addressing the human relationship with God—for it is toward God's righteousness that the believer strives, and it is by God's hand that the Christian is changed. This aspect of spiritual formation corresponds more closely with the overall scriptural concept of spirit—even more so when considering the formative role of the Holy Spirit. Recognizing such distinctions is fruitful, regardless of how one sits in the dichotomist/trichotomist/holistic discussion. If there is no differentiation of substance between soul and spirit, the operative difference is still significant. This operative difference is of particular importance in the context of a relational approach to spiritual formation, within which John Robert Stevens certainly functions.

4.5.5 Critique of Stevens' Anthropology

This section has thus far arrived at a view of scriptural anthropology independent of Stevens' teachings. The differentiation between soul and spirit is latticed throughout Stevens' concept of a walk with God. For Stevens, the correct delineation of soul and spirit has a profound impact on the relationship with God, the receipt of revelation, the maturation of the believer, and the transformation of the entire person. The trichotomist view is therefore a predominant theological foundation to his theory of spiritual formation. However, Stevens also relies on terminology such as "heart" without effectively harmonizing such terminology with trichotomist terms such as "soul" or "spirit". This leads to incoherence and confusion in the theory. Stevens' insistence on the trichotomist model

is at odds with his inclusion of a broader scope of scriptural anthropological terms. This conflict is resolvable, but it must first be properly critiqued.

Stevens emphasizes the spirit as the correct faculty by which the human communes with God. The main evidence upon which he bases this view is the spiritual ontology of the Trinity. To relate to Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, the believer must use the human spirit. Stevens emphasizes spirit primarily because it is the apparatus which allows for the receipt of transference from God, who is a spirit. If true change is only achieved by the hand of God, then it is of pivotal importance to correctly identify how the power of such change may be received into the human being. In Stevens' model of a walk with God, therefore, the human spirit is the primary anthropological aspect in the pursuit of spiritual formation. This concept finds support in the systematic study of spirit and soul in this section. While there are certainly relational aspects of soul, it is more connected with self-identity and the earthly realm. Spirit is presented in Scripture as an ontological mode in which the human communes with the divine—particularly in the NT treatment of the Holy Spirit. In this particular emphasis, Stevens' teachings reflect this systematic review of the scriptural evidence.

However, if the spirit is the primary component of relationship, it is curious that it is not mentioned in conjunction with the greatest commandment. The relational admonitions to love the Lord with all our being does not include the component of spirit, but rather "heart" and "soul" (Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27). In some ways, these passages on the greatest commandment are the strongest evidence against a strict trichotomist anthropology. If the spirit is the central relational component, why is it not listed by Jesus in identifying the whole human being? Stevens does not address this directly, but he resolves the tension by asserting that the heart is closely identified with spirit (Stevens 1976a:129-130). However, Stevens (1987:476) also characterizes the heart as "that mystical part of our life that is the center of all our emotions, of our soul and our spirit." If the heart is a close synonym of spirit, but the spirit is distinct from the soul, then how is it also true that the heart is the center of soul and spirit? Such imprecise handling of non-trichotomist terminology causes a direct methodological confusion regarding the believer's transformative walk with God. Even in discussing directly how transformation occurs by revelation, Stevens first states that revelation occurs by the human aspect of spirit, for what is born of spirit is spirit (Jn 3:6). However, he immediately follows this up by stating that the Holy Spirit moving upon the heart causes change (Stevens 1972a:176). Stevens clearly sees a compatible functionality between spirit and heart, but he does not directly explain how this

compatibility fits into a trichotomist model. Attempting to cast the heart as encompassing aspects of both soul and spirit may aid in preserving a trichotomist doctrine, but it does not help the believer locate and utilize his or her own faculties of heart. Certainly the overlapping usage of the scriptural anthropological terms may allow for, or even encourage, a sort of "Venn taxonomy" of the human being. However, in a strict conception of the trichotomist paradigm, how does one attempt to utilize a part of the soul and a part of the spirit simultaneously? It seems better both scripturally and practically to recognize the heart first as its own operational aspect of the human being, and second as but one part of a whole.

Stevens seems to emphasize the trichotomist model primarily due to his Pentecostal upbringing. While Stevens may have seen doctrine as a negative force toward the calcification of faith, certainly he was not deaf to the hermeneutical whispers of preconceived notions. Perhaps the greatest evidence that Stevens' trichotomist views are primarily reflective of his preexisting doctrinal view is that Stevens gives little direct teaching on the issue of trichotomy. He applies the trichotomist position generously, but does not devote much space to its independent enumeration. These are the hallmarks of a doctrinal presupposition.

However, if Stevens were truly a strict trichotomist, he wouldn't take the holistic stance he often takes. As an example of his holism in the context of the believer's formative relationship with Christ, Stevens (1974b:13; *emphasis mine*) writes: "[Christ] has to be more than someone who you've accepted superficially, with elementary salvation. It means to the depths of your being, to your very *responses*, your *subconscious mind*, your *desires*, in your *body* which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, in your *mind*, in your *spirit* and in your *soul*, Christ has penetrated until He has invaded every part of you!" Here, Stevens mentions all three aspects of trichotomy, along with the additional concepts of the believer's responses, subconscious mind, desires, and mind. However, he mentions them all with the intent to convey the entirety of the human being. Clearly Stevens sees descriptive value in holism, as well as in the use of anthropological aspects beyond body, soul, and spirit. In another example of his holism, Stevens (1972a:175-176, *emphasis mine*) writes, "You can take a long time striving to reform, but it's very difficult to mature and measure up to your potential. However, if you wait on the Lord and renew your *strength*, you will be changed. As you wait on the Lord, and there's a revelation to your *heart*, although you may not be aware of it if it doesn't reach your conscious *mind*, your *spirit* will be aware of it, and then you will begin to change." Here, Stevens uses the

scriptural terms of strength, heart, mind, and spirit in order to explain the transformation that occurs by waiting on the Lord. However, of these four terms, only one is found in the three-element list of trichotomy. While Stevens at least attempts to account for the terminological relation between "heart", "spirit", "mind", and "soul", in his writings, he does not discuss what "strength" means, nor how it relates to the entirety of the human being. Clearly he sees a connection, however, for he states that by renewing his or her strength, the believer receives from God in a transformative manner.

The bottom line of this critique is that Stevens states he is a trichotomist, but his writings reflect a more holistic view which is not precisely articulated. While this situation would be less than satisfactory in any context, it is of particularly severe consequence here due to both subject matter and approach. In subject matter, spiritual formation primarily concerns the maturation of the human being. A clearly delineated anthropology is a requirement in achieving a cohesive and effective theory of spiritual formation since the human being is the object of all transformative efforts. Stevens' approach makes this even doubly important, for his theory emphasizes spiritual activity of relationship in the pursuit of transformation. By allowing for confusion in his discussion of the human operations of a relationship with God, Stevens allows for confusion in formation activities.

However, it seems the confusion which arises from championing the trichotomist view could be erased without needing to conduct widespread revision, as Stevens writings most often reflect the scriptural uses of anthropological terms. What we see in a close examination of Stevens' concept of a walk with God is that Stevens leans into a holistic view of scriptural anthropology, perhaps obliviously. In some ways, the inconsistencies in Stevens teachings are encouraging, for they actually reflect the scriptural record. Certainly, limiting the anthropological underpinnings to a trichotomist model is not actually reflective of Scripture. Further, it is not reflective of Stevens' overall teachings. However, in attempting to maintain a trichotomist model while also staying true to the particularities of how the anthropological terminology is used in scriptural contexts, Stevens ends up being somewhat at odds with himself. In fashioning a cohesive theory of spiritual formation, the devotion to the trichotomist model should be abandoned. However, it seems that most confusion in this regard is alleviated in a holistic model. By viewing spirit, soul, and body as but three scriptural terms of many indicating facets of the human being with different faculties—distinct in function but unified in being—the difficult language of spiritual formation is perhaps made more conceptually and practically accessible.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the analysis and critique of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation from an exegetical perspective. It first reviewed the weaknesses of Stevens' writings. These weaknesses could be generally described as a lack of detail—particularly in his theological foundations and assumptions, in terms left undefined, and in his sometimes "hidden" exegesis. Next, this chapter presented a summary and critique of Stevens' hermeneutical strategy. His approach to hermeneutics arises from three intertwined concepts: the view of Bible as the Word of God, the text of the Bible as concealed revelation, and the interpretational necessity of a relationship with God. This section concluded that while Stevens' hermeneutical approach is scripturally enactable, it may require a high level of spiritual maturity for its success. The chapter moved on to a systematic study of the biblical concept of "a walk with God" in order to properly critique Stevens' use of it as his paradigmatic concept. This section concluded with the recognition that Stevens' use of this terminology was commensurate with the biblical use, with the amendment that the scriptural concept of covenant must be included as a major component. Finally, the subject of biblical anthropology was given a systematic treatment in order to establish a proper theological foundation of the human being in the context of spiritual formation. This research concluded with the proposal to jettison Stevens' trichotomist position in favor of a holistic anthropology, which seems to be more in line with the biblical data. The next chapter will analyze and critique elements of Stevens' theory from a theological perspective.

Chapter 5

Theological Engagement with Stevens' Theory of Spiritual Formation

5.1 Introduction

The last chapter focused on a critique of aspects of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation from an exegetical standpoint. This chapter focuses on the assessment, analysis, and critique of Stevens from a theological standpoint. The criteria for selecting these topics for deeper analysis and critique include: major aspects of each axis, foundational or central aspects which greatly affect the theory as a whole, concepts which display definitional deficiencies, topics which have not been adequately systematized by Stevens, and principles which must be confirmed and/or sharpened by research into interpretations which differ from Stevens' own. The major topics addressed here are the related existentialist concepts of subjectivity, relationship, ontology, and the ethical, as well as the Lordship of Christ, pneumatology, revelation, the Kingdom, the nature of sin, and the methodology of change. These topics will be discussed theologically, drawing primarily from works which relate directly to spiritual formation, as well as those of Kierkegaard. The purpose of this chapter is to review the major relevant aspects of each topic in the context of spiritual formation in order to adequately analyze and critique Stevens' own treatment of the subject in his theory of spiritual formation. The theological assessment, analysis, and critique of Stevens begins with comparisons with Kierkegaard's theological formulations.

5.2 Subjectivity, Relationship, Ontology, and the Ethical

There are a number of foundational elements to Stevens' theory which are not clearly accounted for by Stevens but are directly addressed by Kierkegaard. The undergirding theo-philosophical explanation of such existential issues as subjectivity, relationship, ontology, and the ethical emerge from a synthetic view of Stevens' theory on spiritual formation. However, Stevens' writings do not adequately enumerate a proper conceptual approach to these topics which fits into the paradigmatic concept of a walk with God. In these four areas, the primary critique of Stevens is his missing discussion of foundational theological and philosophical accounting for the experiential and subjective aspects of a walk with God. The aim of this section, therefore, is to ameliorate this general problem by way of an investigation into these topics in order to arrive at topical models which best undergird Stevens' theory.

5.2.1 Subjectivity

While the subject or even discipline of spiritual formation as a whole could be criticized for being subjective, Stevens' approach to spiritual formation could be even more so. Certainly any theological theory which gives allowance for the free operation of the Holy Spirit invites this criticism, as the potential for the charge of subjectivity is directly proportional to the degree of the unqualified expectation of God's activity. Stevens' characterization of a walk with God is one in which God, His voice, and His presence, are always available to the believer through Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. While this may be lauded as a reflection of a high degree of faith, how can such supernatural activity be objectively confirmed to have occurred at all, much less confirmed to be godly? Further, Stevens expects that such spiritual interaction with God results in spiritual transformation and progressive Christian maturity. How can these internal changes be confirmed and measured? The theory could therefore be fairly critiqued as being subjective on both the divine and human sides of the equation. Stevens does not adequately address how such subjectivity should be understood and accepted—or perhaps redefined—in the context of a walk with God. To ameliorate this deficiency we begin with a deeper engagement with Kierkegaard's embracement of subjectivity, as well as more contemporary Christian scholarship on the matter.

The spiritual formation of the person into their true state, via relationship with God, was Kierkegaard's goal in much of his writing (Moser and McCreary 2010:127). Kierkegaard

was disinterested in an abstract concept of God. Rather, he promoted the believer's pursuit of the Christian God as an experienced, internal reality which causes transformation. This occurs through the cultivation and direction of the believer's passion. Passion, which emerges from a subjective and inward seeking of God's truth, causes the individual to be his true self in a relationship with God (Allison 1998:131). The "spring of subjectivity" involves religiousness, inwardness, emotion, and jolting confrontation (Walsh 2009:48). However, the avoidance of inward exploration causes most people to never fully recognize their own selfhood, for the subjectivity of self is replaced with a distanced objectivity. "The subjective inquirer, by contrast, is concerned above all with her relation to the truth, with appropriation, and with what may be required in terms of personal transformation for her to exist in the truth" (Rae 2010:44). Personal identity is shaped by understanding, and the understanding of existential issues only occurs in subjective epistemic modes. Kierkegaard (2009:62) writes, "Whereas objective thinking invests everything in the result and assists all human-kind to cheat by copying and reeling off the results and answers, subjective thinking invests everything in the process of becoming and omits the result. The subjective thinker is continually in the process of becoming". For Kierkegaard, subjectivity is a requirement in the discovery of personal identity in relation to God, for individuality is, by nature, not objective. Further, Kierkegaardian subjectivity is a basis for formation itself (becoming).

Kierkegaard's subjectivity emerges directly from the high value he places on the self. Objective activity essentially erases the process of formation at work upon the human being, for the thinker intentionally omits him- or herself from observation and decision-making. Objective thinking is thus incommensurate with spiritual formation. On the other hand, subjectivity not only allows for, but seeks out, the formative forces of existence. If Kierkegaard is correct, then one way to deal with the criticism of subjectivity in Stevens' view of spiritual formation may be to simply embrace it. Spiritual formation is meant to focus on the means by which believers mature. The human being is the subject of his or her own life. Formation is a subjective enterprise. Therefore, subjectivity should not be viewed in negative terms when the self is at stake.

The issue of subjectivity may be better understood in addressing Stevens' approach to the proper role of personal, God-given purpose in spiritual formation. Some approaches to Christian spiritual formation are explicitly oriented toward finding the believer's "true" self (Pennington 2000; Benner 2009b; Crabb 2013; Benner 2012). Kierkegaard's own project clearly moves along this trajectory. However, it seems Stevens' positioning of individual

purpose is rather diminutive in his theory, particularly in comparison to Kierkegaard. In the context of an endeavor that is so obviously focused on the individual, is it possible that Stevens is underemphasizing this aspect of spiritual formation?

The two main theological reasons for Stevens' position is his desire to balance individuality with community, as well as his insistence on the believer's commitment to the will of God in the relational process of maturity. An over-emphasis on individual destiny could easily subvert the foundational Christian focus on community. While individuals may have particular callings in Christ, the true picture of the Church is the organic communal expression of the Body of Christ (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:12-27). The potential subjectivity of personal purpose must be grounded with a more objective ecclesiological framework. Further, Stevens' enumeration of the relational process of maturity places the focus of the individual upon obedience to God's will. The self-centeredness which might naturally emerge from a theory focused on discovering and achieving personal calling would obviously prohibit growth. Stevens is clear that individual destiny is only uncovered through obedience to God. The guiding factor in determining the proper portrayal of this concept must be based on the scriptural characterization of Christlikeness and the Kingdom *telos*. For Stevens, there is an individual "destiny" upon each Christian, but this calling does not emerge from a subjective self-focus. Rather, the identification and enactment of personal purpose is contingent upon God's continued enabling in a relationship with Him. What could be subjective in the believer's view of his or her own individual calling becomes grounded in the objective truth of obedience to God's will. Stevens' treatment of a potentially subjective topic such as the believer's personal calling is indicative of his approach to subjectivity in general. While Stevens encourages spiritual encounters with God which may fall outside the scope of the descriptive parameters of rationality, he tempers this subjectivity with a strong discouragement of self-focus and a continual insistence on a Christlike obedience to the Father, as well as a generous need for the believing community. While this may not be satisfactory in easing all concerns behind the charge of subjectivity, at least this gives greater detail to the precise brand of subjectivity involved.

Exploring the Pentecostal background of Stevens' views may also give further insight into this issue. Cross (2009:5-8) argues that it is a Pentecostal distinctive to emphasize the experience of the God of the Bible in the present day in their personal lives. Cross characterizes the resistance to this attitude as the result of scientific reductionism in which all true experience must have an explanation corresponding with observable reality.

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However, this concept arises from a strictly materialistic or naturalistic worldview which does not comport with the biblical worldview. The required objectivity of Enlightenment rationalism is simply not commensurate with the biblical narrative. The spiritual realm, in which God lives, is accessible and interactable for the believer via the human spirit and/or Holy Spirit. To dismiss or ignore this is to reject the biblical worldview. Relatedly, Felix-Jäger (2014:91) states that Pentecostal spirituality centers on the expectancy of experiencing God. The Pentecostal theological view cannot be understood without recognizing its appeal to experience. Felix-Jager agrees with Althouse that the Pentecostal understanding of experience is confessional and devotional in nature, rather than apologetic. These correspond with subjectivity (confessional and devotional) and objectivity (apologetics). In the Pentecostal view, Christian spiritual experiences are not required to be objective. This view of spiritual experience carries with it fundamental expectation of transformation in encounters with God. Felix-Jager (2014:91) writes, "The Pentecostal's appeal to experience is transformative in that it aims to lead individuals to deeper commitments to Christ, and it is reconstructive in that it envisions the church as the context for receiving these experiential encounters."

Applied to Stevens' concept of a walk with God, transformative spiritual encounters would include, among others, allowance for God's extra-biblical voice, personal interaction with the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the appropriation of Jesus' nature through the Lord's Supper. Such experiences cannot be objectively described in full, nor objectively measured. It is unclear, however, why such impartial objective verifiability of divine encounters should be a priority. While objectivity is held in high esteem in the post-Enlightenment West, this priority was not held by the authors of the Bible, nor by the historical figures who walked with God, nor by millions of Christians throughout the world who still live in a spiritually aware milieu—largely in countries outside the West. Why should the priority of objectivity birthed in a purely human historical moment supersede believers' expectations of the activity of the Holy Spirit? It appears unwise to attempt to live out the Christian life with attitudes foreign to the very document upon which that life is built.

The experiential component of the Christian life is not only allowed for in Pentecostal circles, however. Willard maintains that a relationship with God is fundamentally experiential (cf. Porter 2010:246). The experiential aspect of a relationship with God includes such things as His speaking, His indwelling, His fellowship, and His love. The characterization of experience here includes two aspects. The first is the believer's conscious awareness of communication, communion, and union with God. This first aspect

centers on the divine-human interaction. The second is the genuine effect of such encounters in the believer's being. This second aspect is what allows for transformation in a relational approach to spiritual formation (Porter 2010:247). The intimacy with God, as well as the transformation which results from such intimacy, must be recognized as subjective experiences. Given that Stevens' approach to spiritual formation is thoroughly relational, subjectivity cannot be avoided. Once again, the embrace of subjectivity may be a proper solution to the problem at hand.

However, it is possible to view the relationship with God as an objective reality. Ziegler (2018:78-79) contrasts a relational approach to spiritual formation with what he labels "subjective moral formation". Subjective moral formation makes the human the center of the formative process, focuses on virtue in the social sphere, and assumes the effectiveness of self-help techniques. In opposition to this stands a relational and ontological view of spiritual formation, which occurs in participation with the Trinity via Christ. Ziegler (2018:79) writes, "Objective trinitarian participation, grounded ontologically as it is in the risen humanity of Christ, draws believers to relate to the present living God in whom our life is hid and found; and from this relational identity issues forth a life oriented toward Christ as sign and witness to his objective reality." Ziegler maintains many of Stevens' formative priorities, and counterintuitively characterizes them as objective. This view is best explored by a rhetorical question: What can be more objectively true than God Himself? If the pinnacle of objective reality is God, then subjectivity may be more properly defined as empiricism divorced from God. To establish this idea more properly, we must further explore the concept of relationship.

5.2.2 Relationship

Stevens' placement of relationship as both means and end of spiritual formation must also be accounted for. What is the best theo-philosophical rendering of Stevens' central formative idea? It is possible to see the relationship with God as a sort of existential epistemology. DeWeese (2011:173-176) maintains that Christianity proposes that God exists and can be known, especially in light of John 17:3. He differentiates between various ways of knowing God, such as via proposition, recognition, and acquaintance. One might propose God exists through an appeal to logic (proposition), but that is a rather different sort of knowledge than knowledge by acquaintance. The knowledge by acquaintance is a relational knowledge that will always be more accurate and full than other forms of knowledge, at least in the context of persons. Knowing the person of Christ

requires a relational epistemology. Is it possible that Stevens' theory should be viewed in this light? In order to continue to develop a retrofit foundation for Stevens' formative view of the relationship with God, we again turn to Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard differentiates between the subjective and the abstract. Viewing God as an abstract concept is not a reflection of true Christianity. As an example of this, Kierkegaard maintains that Christ's identity as Teacher, and our relationship with the Teacher, is more important than His teachings themselves. The believer must follow Christ Himself prior to following his teachings, for we must be in relation to the truth in order to genuinely acquire the truth (Kierkegaard 1991:205-211). He relies on John 17:3 for biblical confirmation of this view, for knowing Jesus is to know the truth. A relationship with God may be subjective, but Kierkegaard asserts that it is not abstract. The concrete experience of an interactive God leads to transformation. Turnbull (2010:503) writes, "Kierkegaard is concerned with maintaining that the relationship between Christian and God, or Christian and Christian, cannot be understood in conceptual terms. It cannot be understood in such terms because he claims such relations are not conceptual." Kierkegaard stood against abstractions and speculation, particularly in the enactment of genuine Christianity. A relationship with Christ may be subjective, but it is not abstract or conceptual.

Stevens' view generally aligns with Kierkegaard's on this point. The transformative Word of God is conveyed in an existentialist epistemology of relationship. The truth is internalized in a walk with God, which is first and foremost an ongoing, progressive relationship. This relationship leads to increased internalization of God's Word, which naturally feeds a process of spiritual formation leading to maturity. The view of the Christian life informed by Enlightenment epistemology is often abstract. An extreme manifestation of this framework would inordinately stress orthodoxy, to the detriment of orthopraxy and ortho-ontology. The knowledge of the Word of God would be enough to qualify an individual to be a genuine Christian, regardless of how that Word has affected the believer. However, Stevens maintains that the Word of God can only be encountered in a relationship with Jesus Christ, and that God intends for that Word to be internalized toward Christlikeness. Stevens further maintains that this does not happen through the mind alone. Kierkegaard's differentiation between the subjective and the abstract is beneficial in establishing a foundation for Stevens' stance on this point. To make Christianity a primarily mental exercise is to make Christ abstract. While the Christian should strive for orthodoxy, this is much less important than maintaining a genuine relationship of love and submission to Christ. This relationship may be subjective, but it is not abstract.

Another perspective which may aid in establishing the proper theo-philosophical foundations for Stevens' relational paradigm is a process view of formation in which relationship is the driving dynamic. Gouwens (1996:90-92) argues that Kierkegaard's conception of self is more related to Augustine's "narrative understanding of the self" rather than to the psychological or philosophical views of his contemporaries. The Augustinian journey is one in which the human self travels from God and then to God. The understanding of self, therefore, emerges from viewing one's life in relationship to God, which is an ongoing process. Gouwens (1996:91-92) summarizes Kierkegaard's view: "To be a self is to be engaged in a dynamic process, one involving a journey or progress of self-purification of one's moods and emotions on the way to self clarification". Stokes (2009:63) identifies this as "a process-driven self". For Kierkegaard, the self is always in a process of formation. The self is a task, accomplished in relationship. "What is 'decisive,' [Kierkegaard] argues, is not the telos regarded in itself, but a person's relation to it—a dynamic, temporal relatedness which encompasses the telos, and indeed constitutes it" (Carlisle 2010:185). The relationship is ontological, for it defines and constitutes the interior *telos* of self. That *telos*, for Kierkegaard and Stevens, is God. For Stevens, the existential epistemology of relationship accounts for a process of formation which does not require immediate perfection of the human. This is allowed for by the sacrifice of Christ, who inaugurates a free relationship with the Heavenly Father through the covering of sins by His blood. With this free access, believers are able to interact with ultimate ontological righteousness, and thereby be transformed. The ongoing relationship with God, encountered in various ways via the Trinity, is the process by which spiritual formation is accomplished.

A relational view of spiritual formation has many advocates in the literature. Coe (2009:37) avers that all spiritual formation occurs in the established context of God's acceptance and love, and therefore the pursuit of spiritual formation cannot be an attempt to earn His love through performance. All spiritual formation is already "in Christ", regardless of the state of the believer. He emphasizes that the Christian attitude cannot be that salvation is accomplished by God while formation is accomplished by humans. Peterson (2010:Loc.1306-1309) states that "God reveals himself in personal relationship and only in personal relationship." This is because God is a person, rather than a phenomenon, a force, a proposition, or abstraction. Asumang (2010:444) concludes that the process of spiritual formation exemplified by the disciples in the Gospels is epitomized by a continually deepening relationship with Jesus. For Benner (2009b:Loc.250-253), the

knowledge of God and self are interdependent. By balancing a focus on God and self, we come to know both in a deeper manner. Further, true identity is found by the process of losing oneself in God (Benner 2009b:Loc.1072-1075).

Gause (2009:104-105) links together the concepts of relationship and holiness in the "sociality" of the Trinity, which is expressed "by their love for one another and their unity with one another. The love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit is explained by John in the simple dictum, 'God is love' (1 Jn 4.8). The being of God is fulfilled eternally and unchangeably by the loving responses which each offers the other and each reciprocates. This is the essence of divine holiness, and it is the essence of God" (cf. Jn 17.13; 2 Cor 13:14). In this way, Gause sees holiness as a social/communal grace, found in the participation of the relationships of Triune God. If the holy Persons of the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are definitionally and ontologically relational, and Christlikeness is the goal of spiritual formation, then the holiness aspired to in Christian spiritual formation should itself be characterized as fundamentally relational. In other words, a relationship with God is not only the means, but also the product of Christian growth.

In these views, knowledge of God is dependent upon relationship with God. If Christian spiritual formation is dependent on God, and knowledge of God can only come through relationship, then placing a relationship with God at the center of spiritual formation is an appropriate choice in constructing a theory. However, the view of relationship as an existential epistemology does not go far enough, for a true knowledge of God and His Word must be internalized. In this way, there must be an accounting of ontology in Stevens' theory.

5.2.3 Ontology

Pinnock (1998:11; emphasis his) writes that "The central problem for theology is *its own epistemological base*." The central problem in spiritual formation is perhaps its ontological base, dealing as it does with the believer's being. Ontology was a critical concern for Stevens, even though he never used the term. Stevens (1974e:124-126) writes to ministers: "We are not raised up for what we can do, but for what we can be unto the Lord. Although you will be very busy working, you will accomplish more work if you realize that basically you were raised up for a walk with God, and it is what you are to the Lord that counts." The priority of the relational ontology ("what we can be" and "what you are to the Lord") aids in recognizing the importance of the paradigmatic concept of "a walk with God",

which is at root an ontological expression of relationship. However, Stevens does not enumerate directly how to account for this "being" in a theological or philosophical sense.

We begin this discussion by revisiting Kierkegaard's relational ontology. While the philosophical inquiry into ontology is more often associated with Hagel, Kierkegaard's concerns of individuality, selfhood, authenticity, and transformation are essentially ontological. Kierkegaard does not see the self as an automatically established ontological reality. Rather, the self is established in a process of becoming. Further, this process must be intentionally undertaken by the human. Kierkegaard's approach to ontology is "fundamentally relational" (Evans 2006:268; cf. Stokes 2009:63-64). Kierkegaard recognizes that the self is already in the process of formation since birth, and that relationships with other humans are often the driving force behind the nature and direction of that formation. Being, for Kierkegaard, exists outside of the mind, and therefore outside of rationality (Malantschuk 2003:27). This self only can be found in a relationship to God. The relationship is the connective tissue of the ontological synthesis between the finite and the infinite which generates authentic being. Being emerges from and is sustained by self relating to itself, and relating to God. Evans (2006:22; cf. 285-287) summarizes Kierkegaard's view: "God is the ontological foundation of selfhood and is the Other we must know to become our true selves fully, but God has given humans the freedom to ground their selves in what is less than God." Relationship is an inextricable element of human ontology—both in relating to self and to God. Formation occurs by relationship, but the kind of formation which occurs is dependent upon the relationship's nature and participants. Kierkegaard (1989a:393) writes, "If an existing person relates himself with passion to eternal happiness, then his life will express the relation. If the eternal does not absolutely transform his existence, then he is not relating himself to it." The relationship with God, itself, causes the believer's life to reflect that relationship in transformation. Christ is the truth, ontologically. To genuinely know the truth, one must become the truth through Christ. Kierkegaard (1991:201) writes, "I only know the truth when it becomes a life in me". That Christ is the truth in an ontological sense requires an ontological methodology for proper interaction and reception. The ontological methodology is relationship.

For Stevens, the mark of genuine Christian maturity is a fundamental change in being. This ontological transformation only occurs through the external forces of divine activity in Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. In this way, Stevens' concept of a walk with God represents the ontological application of relational epistemology. Spiritual growth does not

automatically emerge from the increase of biblical or theological knowledge. The process of spiritual formation is therefore dependent upon the proper distinction between relational knowledge and conceptual knowledge. The rational faculties of the human being may be useful in recognizing how to pursue spiritual transformation, but they alone cannot lead to transformation. However, in a relational epistemology—that is, comprehension which arrives in an interaction with God's being in Christ—Christian truth is genuinely apprehended through internalization. How should we understand this process?

Kierkegaard viewed divine love as the unifying power between human and God in which there is no distinction between subject and object in that relationship (Turnbull 2010:498). The erasure of distance between subject and object in the power of love results in a subject-subject relationship in which there is union between Christ and believer. In fact, Pattison (2003:59-62) argues that Kierkegaard's view of restoration into the image of God —a goal of spiritual formation—necessitates that the divine-human relationship be a subject-subject relation. All relationships in the natural world are subject-object relations, in which the human discerns an "other" to interact with. However, God must be interacted with in a state of relational identification. In this subject-subject relationship, the believer participates in Christ's very being and is resultantly transformed by His righteousness—not by a cognitive reception, but by a spiritual reception.

Here we find a deeper and more precise philosophical concept applicable in establishing the foundations of Stevens' relational approach to spiritual formation. Stevens emphasizes the formative power of the believer's relationship with Christ. This relationship must be personal, and motivated by love. Further, this relationship should be defined by the unity Christ prayed for in John 17:22-23. A subject-subject relationship with God is a relationship of oneness based on the supreme spiritual connectivity of love (cf. 1 Jn 4:16). If a subject-subject relationship can be said to exist, it would automatically produce change in one or both subjects for it is a relationship of self-identification. One or both beings would change in order to come into conformity with the other in some manner. Without this ontological reconciliation, the subject-subject relationship would definitionally dissolve into a subject-object relationship. However, God is unchangeable (Mal 3:6), so therefore the pursuit of a subject-subject relationship with Him would result in the transformation of the believer. While this conception of the transformative power of unity with Christ is much more philosophical than Stevens would have ever ventured, it supplies a missing basis in his account of relational formation. Applied more liberally in the context of Stevens' theory, a genuine walk with God establishes a subject-subject relationship between believer and

God in which the believer is consistently changed to be conformed to the Subject of subjects (cf. Dt 10:12-17).

This concept finds contemporary similitude in academic discussions surrounding the Trinity and the ecclesial community. Sandage et al (2008:187) state that all spirituality is relational in that it is a mode of relating to the sacred. They maintain that the nature of the Trinity leads to a relational view of ontology and spirituality. They further see relational spirituality as a holistic endeavor which does not divide thinking, being, and doing, and therefore positively resists the Cartesian and Modernist worldviews. Del Colle states that a true trinitarian understanding of the ontology of God must be relational. Del Colle (1993:111) writes, "trinitarian speech about God reveals that the ontological basis of personhood is an ontology of relation. It is relation that constitutes the distinct identities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is consistent with the christological level of our reflections with its foundation in the revelation of the divine economy and the believer's discrete relations to the divine persons." The relationships between Members of the Trinity are ontologically definitive and provide an example and basis for the believer's relationships with God and fellow believer. God's nature, revealed in the Trinity, is substantially defined by relationality. Majerus and Sandage (2010:47-48) discuss Torrance's view of the connection between ontology and relationship in the context of the Trinity. In the Trinity's *perichoresis*, each Member is only truly known in the relationships between the three. In this way, the ontology of the Trinity is found in holism. This ontological view of the Trinity is applied in the individual and community, for the understanding of self can only occur in the context of relationships. Just as the Trinity expresses both individual and relational identity, so too is the ontological truth of the Christian self found in a balance of individual and community. Spiritual formation of the Christian self must therefore be seen as relational and holistic.

While the Kierkegaardian contributions to the foundations of Stevens' theory were primarily philosophical, here we find a strong theological basis for a relational understanding of ontology. The Trinity's inter-relation is ontologically definitional. Their identities are inextricable from each other. They cannot be understood in separation. Stevens sees this ontological unity as available in Christ. Stevens (1983:341) writes, "The Trinity indwelling your life is not like three peas in a bottle. When Christ moves within you, He moves within your thoughts and within the patterns of your life; He moves into your emotions and into your nature." The relationship of unity demonstrated in the Trinity is the model of union with Christ, in which He is ontologically present within the believer. This takes place in thoughts, habits, emotions, and even into the believer's very nature.

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This concept of inter-related identification is found in the spiritual formation literature. Benner (2009b:Loc.545-546) states that Christ's identity in the incarnation "was defined by his relationship to his Father." Willard agrees with the ontological nature of the relationship with God, as Porter (2010:263-264) summarizes: "the ultimate relational rootedness is in the person of God…. And, once again, it is through this divine relationship that the various dimensions of the person are reordered and conformed to the image of Christ." Willard further extends this relational ontology to the relationship with other believers, that is, Christian formation in community. Nassif (2012:n.p.) states that Orthodox spirituality is "a gospel spirituality that is centered on Jesus Christ in his Trinitarian relations." The way in which Christ relates to the Father and the Spirit is the example of how the believer also does so. The goal of these relationships is a communion which causes deification or union with Christ (cf. 2 Cor 3:18). Packer (2009:Loc.1508-1512) states that holiness is a relationship with God, initiated by God and established in salvation and justification. Foster sees the disciplines as a means by which the believer engages in "indirection"—seeking the attainment of the righteousness of the Kingdom as in an internal, ontological reality. Foster (2009:15-16) writes, "Only God can reprogram the deeply ingrained habit patterns of sin that constantly predispose us toward evil and transform them into even more deeply ingrained habit patterns of 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17)." The disciplines are relational activities of inwardness that invite God's transformational presence.

These perspectives clarify Stevens' theory of spiritual formation as one which views the ontology of the believer, and its transformation, through a relational lens. What is left unstated—by Kierkegaard, Stevens, and others—is that the ontological aspects of spiritual formation are expressed on two levels. The first is the most obvious, which is the transformation of the internal ontology of the believer. That is, the being of the believer must be formed by God toward Christlikeness. Without this element, spiritual formation has not been attained at all. However, the second level of the role of ontology in spiritual formation is that the relationship itself is a state of being. This is what Stevens' concept of a walk with God encapsulates. The walk with God may be expressed in relational action, but it is, at its root, a description of a maintained ontological state. The ontological pattern of the Trinity—particularly the identity-forming relationship between Father and Son—is the basic pattern of formative connectivity between believer and God. This relational state of being is to remain unbroken. Attaining Christlikeness requires internal ontological transformation, but such transformation occurs in a relational state of being.

A clarifying concept which brings these two dimensions of ontology together is that of union with Christ. While Stevens does not utilize this terminology, it would have been an excellent encapsulation of his relational view of spiritual formation toward Christlikeness. Austin (2015:186; cf. Eph 3:14-21) argues that the Eastern concept of theosis is best understood as "a progressively transformational and loving union between the believer and Christ. This relationship includes a shared mind and heart, but it is also an empowering union that is grounded in God's love and its transformative effects on the heart and mind of the believer who seeks him via a variety of spiritual disciplines." The concept of theosis in this context is fairly synonymous with sanctification and Christlikeness, but also includes the two levels of ontology as expressed in relationship: the believer's being is transformed, and the relationship itself is an ontological state. The concept of union with Christ emphasizes first the relational ontology of oneness, and from that starting point, the believer's being is changed. Stevens made Christ the center of a walk with God, for He is the Word and He is the Way. Union with Christ is a strong conceptual encapsulation of the relational and ontological emphases of Stevens' view of spiritual formation, hence, in this regard, the much more precise term of Christosis.

5.2.4 The Ethical

Here we arrive at a point of weakness in Stevens' theory, which is the nearly absent discussion of Christian morality. Certainly, a complete theory of spiritual formation should include at least a minimal picture of the ethical activities or manifestations of a mature Christian. Stevens instead prioritizes the lifestyle activities of a walk with God, which are best characterized as orthopraxic actions of a relationship with God. Ethical and moral concerns are implicit in this locus, but they are rarely directly addressed. Stevens seems to replace ethical concerns with two principles: Christlikeness and the Kingdom. Those who express ontological Christlikeness will naturally act in ways that are pleasing to God. Further, those who pursue the Kingdom will act according to God's law. For Stevens, these are not moral or ethical issues, but rather spiritual and relational issues. However, even if it is true that a properly moral life will automatically emerge from a transformed being, Stevens' lack of clearly identified ethical markers of Christian maturity is a critical weakness of his theory.

The root of why Stevens' discussion of morality is so thin is his ordering of ontological transformation as necessarily prior to ethical action. This view is mirrored in Kierkegaard's approach. Kierkegaard is certainly concerned with the ethical, but he recognizes the

limitations of the purely ethical. Kierkegaard posits that moral action does not emerge from a universal set of ethics, but rather from a relational commitment to the highest good, that is, God. Kierkegaard sees ethical living as a goal of becoming, but he sees true morality as resting first upon an ontological foundation. Evans (2006:268) writes, "the self is rooted in being and cannot be understood solely in ethical terms. It is because selves are beings with certain qualities that they are beings who can become, whose identity is defined through their becoming." Kierkegaard's view on the matter seems to presage Stevens' own. This view is also shared by Ziegler (2018:83-84), who asserts that an ontological, relational view of spiritual formation recognizes that ethical actions emerge from a rootedness in Christ (cf. Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:14). True morality, therefore, must primarily be an ontological concern, rather than an orthopraxic one. Ziegler (2018:85) reviews Torrance's view of godliness, stating that it is foundationally christological. In this way, any expression of godliness in the believer's life can only be a product of Christ being manifest by the Spirit to the believer, personally in the present. Christ is alive, and participating in His relationship with the Father is the foundation of genuine Christian ethics. Ziegler (2018:90) writes that in this paradigm, "our doing flows from our relating".

These views aid in explaining Stevens' threadbare identification of the ethical and moral considerations of spiritual formation. For Stevens, correct actions can only be authentically undertaken if they emerge from correct being. Stevens' theory is therefore primarily an ontological brand of spiritual formation. It is clear that Stevens' neglect of ethical considerations in spiritual formation is a direct result of his prioritization of relationship. Stevens replaces morality with the relationship with God. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, Stevens recognized that believers still sin, and therefore an overemphasis on sin has the potential to distract the believer from the answer to their sin, that is, Jesus Christ. In other words, to focus on the ethical at all may lead to a destractive focus on sin, and therefore a diminished focus on God. Secondly, and relatedly, a believer's moral life is purified in a relationship with the One who is righteous, not through self-effort. The emphasis of the ethical, however, naturally leads to a self-focus and an attempt at self-betterment. Thirdly, Stevens sees the pursuit of the fruit of the Spirit as a more scriptural focus than the attempt to live according to a moral code. Considering the Pharisees as a foremost NT example of a religio-ethical view of serving God, their hypocrisy is to be avoided through a complete reliance on God for proper behavior. Fourthly, Stevens prioritizes obedience over morality. This may seem to be a strange bifurcation, but Stevens maintained that what humanity may deem to be ethically correct may at times conflict with

the will of God. Certainly, some of the Pharisees' objections to Christ's actions reveal this distinction (Mt 23:4, 27; Mk 2:15-28; cf. Is 29:13).

In all of these factors, Stevens attempts to orient the believer toward Christ Himself, rather than His teachings. Certainly, a view of spiritual formation in which maturity is judged by outward ethical acts is easier to measure objectively. However, it is also easier to "fake" by hypocritically feigning holiness with little to no interior transformation toward Christlikeness. If the ontological self is the object of spiritual formation, then the attempt to judge spiritual maturity by external actions is not an appropriate measure. Stevens places the relationship with God as the paradigmatic concept of spiritual formation (a walk with God), as well as both means and *telos* of spiritual formation. It is not an overstatement to assert that if the concept of relationship were removed from Stevens' theory, its cogency would be destroyed. In his overwhelming focus on relationship, however, Stevens ends up leaving moral and ethical considerations nearly unaddressed. If Stevens' relational prioritization is biblically and theologically sound, then perhaps it is acceptable to subsume the ethical into the divine relationship, as Kierkegaard did. However, the role of morality itself must still be adequately addressed in any theory of spiritual formation. Moral action is the external proof of internal character. Transformation by the hand of God should result in godly ethical behavior. For this reason, the form of such ethical behavior should be at least minimally identified and described in the context of spiritual formation. While Stevens' correctly views the ontological state of the believer as the progenitor of ethical behavior, it is still a deficiency to neglect the description of mature Christian morality.

5.3 Lordship of Christ

Stevens mirrors many authors on spiritual formation in placing Christ at the center of spiritual formation. However, his conception of the operation of Christ in the process of maturation is specified in the concept of Christ's Lordship. Lordship catalyzes Stevens' pervasive teleological stance that spiritual formation must be pursued both in the process of obedience and in the anticipation of accomplishing God's will as a mature believer. This is further particularized in the connection between obedience to Christ's Lordship and the establishment of the Kingdom. In all these respects, the Lordship of Christ permeates Stevens' approach in a holistic manner. The relational distinctive of Stevens' theory is predicated on, and partially defined by, the Lordship of Christ (see "Christlikeness" in 3.2.2.1 and 3.4.2.1). However, the important questions to be answered are whether the emphasis on Christ's Lordship is commensurate with spiritual formation, and whether

Christ's identity as Savior should not take precedence.

The NT emphasis on the Lordship of Christ is certainly attested to in numerous verses. The Greek term for "Lord" (κύριος) used in reference to Christ is counted conservatively around 170 times in the NT. The term "Savior" (σωτήρ) is used around 17 times in reference to Christ in the NT. One must take into account the fact that κύριος is sometimes used as a term of address (cf. Jn 9:36; Acts 9:5), so the frequency of use should be mitigated with this in mind. Jesus Christ is often referred to as "our Lord" (Lk 12:42; Acts 15:26, 20:21; Rom 1:4, 4:24, 5:1, 21, 6:23, 16:18, 24; 1 Cor 1:2, 7-10, 5:4, 9:1, 15:31, 57; 2 Cor 1:14, 8:9; Gal 6:14, 18; Eph 1:3, 17, 3:11, 5:20, 6:24; 1 Th 5:9, 23, 28, 2:19; 2 Th 1:8, 2:1, 14, 3:6, 18; 1 Tim 1:12, 6:3, 14; Jas 2:1; 2 Pet 1:8, 14, 16, 3:18; Ju 4, 17, 21; Rev 11:15). At times, this occurs in connection with reference to God (Rom 5:11, 7:25, 8:39, 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Th 1:3, 3:11, 13; 2 Th 2:16; Heb 13:20; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; 1 Pet 1:3; 2 Pet 1:2; Ju 25), or the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:30). "Our Lord" is also used in conjunction with "Savior" (2 Pet 1:11). Jesus Christ is also often referred to as "the Lord" (Jn 21:7; Acts 7:59; 1 Cor 5:5, 6:17, 11:23, 16:22-23; 2 Cor 4:14; Eph 1:15, 61; Phil 2:19, 4:23; Col 3:24; 1 Th 2:15, 4:1; 2 Th 1:7; Phm 5, 25; Rev 22:21). In some instances, He is referred to as both Lord and Savior (Lk 2:11; Phil 3:20; 2 Pet 2:20). At times, the usage of "the Lord" comes in conjunction with a mention of God the Father (1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2, 11:31; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2, 6:23; Phil 1:2; Col 3:17; 1 Th 1:1, 4:2; 2 Th 1:1-2, 12, 3:12; Phm 3; Jas 1:1). These uses are most often found in formulaic greetings given toward the beginning of epistles, often in conjunction with "grace to you". "The Lord" is also mentioned along with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11), or as a part of all three members of the Trinity (2 Cor 13:14). There is a preponderance of evidence that the Lordship of Christ is a scriptural emphasis regarding the identity of Jesus. In this way, Stevens' emphasis on Christ as Lord is reflective of the Scriptures.

Hurtado (2003:180-182) traces the development of Jesus as Lord in the NT. It's use begins as "a polite expression of deference". However, immediately following His crucifixion and resurrection, the usage of "Lord" referred to "a heavenly figure whose lordship took on a transcendent dimension." He concludes that "Lord" became a divine title for Jesus very early in the Christian Church. Hurtado (1998:112) characterizes the "Jesus as Lord" confession in Romans 10:9-13 as an act of "Christian initiation". If so, this would make Christ's Lordship a fundamental aspect of Christian faith in the Early Church, as the knowledge of, recognition of, and submission to Christ's Lordship quickly became inalienable aspects of the Christian faith. Further, as the NT canon was written, Jesus' title

as Lord reflects a deepening view of equality between Jesus and God. In NT quotations of OT passages in which the sacred Name of God (יהוה) is replaced with "Lord" (אדון), the title of Jesus as Lord indicates a close identification with the Father. This occurs as early as Peter's speech in Acts 2, particularly in reference to "the day of the Lord" (v20, quoting Joel 2:1). This united identification of both Father and Son as Lord is more than a linguistic curiosity. The sharing of this title reveals the unity of the two, and relating to Jesus as Lord is a way in which the believer relates to Him as God.

In the Bible, Jesus' Lordship is discussed with greater frequency than His status as Savior. However, how should we characterize the relationship between these two descriptors of Jesus? Sandlin (2003:37-38) maintains that the biblical evidence reveals the Early Church emphasized the Lordship of Christ as the central message of the Church. Salvation was but one aspect of Christ's Lordship. Also, the sovereignty of God is expressed in the concept of Christ as Lord, particularly that title's close identification with God the Father. Relatedly, Bock (2010:138) argues that there is no distinguishing of the concept of Lord and Savior in the NT. Bock (2010:138) writes, "It was because Jesus is Lord, and exalted by God to show it, that salvation can be preached in His name and faith in Him launches forgiveness and a new life—what the New Testament intentionally calls rebirth. The New Testament never intends us to separate forgiveness from new life. Rather forgiveness leads into new life."

The encompassing nature of the title of Lord is certainly in view in Stevens' emphasis on Lordship. The concept of Christ as Lord is a definition of the kind of relationship the believer is to have with Christ. Christ cannot merely be a historical figure to the Christian believer. Nor can He only be Savior. The Lordship of Christ defines a present-day relationship of obedience. This is the relationship required in the pursuit of a walk with God. This is the relationship required in Christian spiritual formation. Viewing Christ only as savior allows for the possibility of an erroneous division of salvation and the process of transformation. Once one is saved, one might mistakenly conclude that a Savior is no longer necessary. However, Christ as Lord posits an ongoing dependency upon Him, and is therefore a stronger descriptor of the role of Jesus in the context of relational spiritual formation.

It is perhaps helpful to view Jesus as Savior as the initial "introductory" identity of Jesus, and His Lordship as the identifying descriptor of the ongoing Christian life—that is, the believer's walk with God. MacArthur (2012:Loc115-121) argues that confessing Jesus as

Lord is an act of spiritual rebirth in the context of salvation. There is no spiritual growth unless the believer makes Christ the sovereign of his or her life in genuine submission to Christ's Lordship. MacArthur (2012:Loc649-654) writes, "At salvation we surrender to Christ in principle, but as Christians we will surrender in practice again and again. This practical outworking of His lordship is the process of sanctification." The continual submission to Christ as Lord is a requirement for spiritual growth toward sanctification. Willard (2014b:4-5) agrees, arguing that the lack of discipleship in the Church indicates the absence of relating to Christ as Lord. For Willard, Christ's Lordship is not an optional concept in Christianity. He asserts that there is no NT evidence that supports the notion that a believer may receive salvation without also expressing obedience to His Lordship. Willard (2014b:15) writes, "only avid discipleship to Christ through the Spirit brings the inward transformation of thought, feeling, and character that 'cleans the inside of the cup' (Matthew 23:25) and 'makes the tree good' (Matthew 12:33)." Obedience to His Lordship is therefore a requirement of spiritual formation, according to Willard. For Stevens, this is the direct result of prioritizing the relationship with God as the central generator of formation.

The spiritually formative connotations of Christ's Lordship are explored in contemporary scholarship. Colijn (1991:11-12) argues that Paul's differentiation between being "in Christ" and "in sin" is an issue of lordship (Rom. 6:16-23; Eph. 2:1, 3). While the Lordship of Christ brings life, the lordship of sin leads to death (Col. 2:13). Further, being under the Lordship of Christ indicates the believers' participation in the Kingdom of God (Rom. 1:6, 14:8-9; Gal. 5:24). Hurtado (1998:110-111) notes that the notion of Christ's Lordship includes both His Lordship of the present day, alive in His resurrection, and as future Lord of the eschaton. Blair connects the Kingdom of God with Christ's Lordship. The only effective way to pursue the Kingdom is through a submission to the Lordship of Christ. Foster (2009:97) states that each believer is faced with the question of whether to follow Christ to become like Him and dwell in His Kingdom, or to serve ourselves and build our own kingdom. Relatedly, Palacios (2011:26) characterizes the nature of spiritual formation as a process in which the heart is brought under the Lordship of Christ. The sins of the heart mentioned in Mark 7:21-22 must be removed by placing the heart into submission to Jesus rather than to Satan (cf. Acts 5:3; Jn 13:27). It may be important, therefore, to recognize Christ's Lordship as antithesis of Satan's "lordship". Kim (1996:196; cf. Jn. 14:30; 1 Cor. 2:8; 2 Cor. 4:5) makes the case that the presuppositions of Christ's teachings on the Kingdom include the idea that the fallen creation is under the lordship of Satan. Satan's temptation of humanity to be as gods in themselves reflects the adversary's own

perspective as a self-styled "lord". This contrast between the Lordship of Jesus and the attempted lordship of Satan dovetails with Kierkegaard's view of the concept. Kierkegaard emphasized the principle that man cannot serve two masters (Mt 6:24) in his either/or formulation. The believer either relates to Him as Lord, or does not (Rae 2010:149). While Kierkegaard applies this concept to the relationship with God the Father, it is certainly commensurate with the concept of the Lordship of Christ.

Ultimately, Jesus' Lordship is a summarizing term regarding the believer's relationship with Christ. Moreland and Craig (2003:6) opine that while many evangelicals may maintain orthodox beliefs, those beliefs do not lie "at the center of their identity". They argue that "a revival of intellectual engagement is absolutely critical for restoring vibrant, life-transforming apprenticeship under the lordship of Jesus, the Master Teacher. No apprentice will become like his teacher if he does not respect the authority of that teacher to direct the apprentice's life and activities." Relating to Jesus as Lord is not only a requirement for spiritual formation to occur, but also a requirement in the genuine reception of orthodoxy. The relational embodiment of the term is certainly in view in certain uses of the Greek κύριος (Lord). After discussing 1 Corinthians 8:5, Foerster and Quell (1964:1091) conclude: "κύριος is here a concept of relationship. It denotes that on which men make themselves, or are in fact, dependent…. Again, there is only one Lord on whom they are dependent and through whom are all things, through whom they have their very being as Christians. Here again it is plain that κύριος is the One through whom God has come into the world to work and to save."

Overall, the above theological review of the concept of the Lordship of Christ reveals five primary aspects. Firstly, the identification of Christ as Lord is much more prevalent than the identification of Christ as Savior. This emphasis in the NT should therefore be reflected in any Christian topic. Secondly, Jesus as Lord includes the concept of His relationship of oneness with the Father. Therefore, identifying Jesus as Lord includes a relational component toward the Father which can be shared with those who call Him Lord. Thirdly, the title of Lord is associated with rebirth and new life. In this way, the Lordship of Christ is intimately connected with the concept of spiritual formation. Fourthly, and relatedly, Lordship conveys an ongoing relationship of obedience to Christ. This is a requirement in the process of sanctification. Fifthly, the concept of Lord retains within it an eschatological dimension in its association with the coming Kingdom. In this way, relating to Jesus as Lord asserts the displacement of all other lords toward the complete establishment of His sovereignty on earth.

These five aspects are all reflected in Stevens' inclusion of the Lordship of Christ in his theory of spiritual formation. Overall, Stevens seems to emphasize the relational, submissional, and eschatological dimensions of the term. Regardless, for Stevens, every facet of a walk with God must be understood and enacted in the context of Christ's Lordship. It defines the believer's relationship with Jesus, and with God. Stevens' utilization of Christ's Lordship in the context of spiritual formation is in accord with general evangelical scholarship. The above analysis shows that there is little to nothing to negatively critique here, for emphasizing Jesus as Lord in the center of an ongoing, formative walk with God is highly scriptural and theologically sound. However, the above review has systematized the five aspects of Christ's Lordship in order to provide a greater theological foundation for Stevens' theory.

5.4 Pneumatology

Pneumatology is a critical component of Stevens' concept of a walk with God. Accounting for all Members of the Trinity is a theological necessity, so Stevens' pneumatological approach is a strength in this regard. However, this strength also emerges as a weakness in that the precise activity of the Holy Spirit is at times glossed over. His precise role in spiritual formation is not addressed with as much detail as might be beneficial in Stevens' writings. The way in which the Spirit is discussed in Stevens' writings seems to be like water to a fish: always present to the point of near invisibility. This is certainly a hyperbolic rendering of the problem, but the metaphor is apt. This problem seems to stem from Stevens' Pentecostal doctrinal background as well as, paradoxically, his reaction to his contemporary Pentecostals. The Pentecostal view assumes the prevalent role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. However, this assumption may come with it a deficient accounting for the particulars of His involvement. This may explain the pervasive way in which Stevens' mentions the Spirit, often unaccompanied by a robust detailing of pneumatology. Certainly, a pneumatology so ever-present as to become invisible lacks the requisite intentionality required in a Trinitarian accounting of spiritual formation. Relatedly, Stevens' viewed his Pentecostal contemporaries as emphasizing the baptism of the Spirit and the experiential aspects of the Christian faith far more than they should have. This may have contributed to his decision to leave some pneumatological topics unaddressed. For these reasons, it is necessary to review theological perspectives on pneumatology in order to assess and critique Stevens.

While some scholars see the Holy Spirit as an impersonal "force" or "substance" (e.g.

Welker 2013; cf. Turner 2013:191), others, particularly Pentecostals and Charismatics, view the Holy Spirit as a person (Beck 2009:216). The Holy Spirit is also viewed as the presence of God (Del Colle 1993:96; Beck 2009:199). Regardless of how the Holy Spirit is conceived, however, the Holy Spirit is certainly in view when discussing anything "spiritual" in Christianity. Curran (2010:5; cf. Willard 2014b:112) argues that the term "spiritual" in the NT primarily describes "a person in whom the Holy Spirit is manifest." Beck (2009:199) writes "It is no exaggeration to state that our understanding and praxis of spiritual formation is only as sound as our theology of the Holy Spirit."

Two elements here begin to fill in the gaps of Stevens' description of the Holy Spirit in a walk with God. The first is that the Holy Spirit is a person to be related to. Stevens does not see the third Member of the Trinity as an impersonal force, but rather as Spirit with distinct personality and expression in the life of the believer. This is clearly implied in Stevens' writings on a walk with God, but not overtly stated. Secondly, there could be no spiritual formation without the Holy Spirit, for Christian spirituality is fundamentally dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit. For Stevens, the truly spiritual believer is one in whom the Holy Spirit is given free course. Walking with God is a spiritual enterprise, and it requires walking by the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

Del Colle (2000:107-108) maintains that the Holy Spirit's function manifests in three ways: as the presence of God, the power of God, and God's direction. Packer (2005:43-49) ascribes three roles to the Holy Spirit. First, He facilitates a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Second, the Holy Spirit transforms the believer into Christ's character. Third, the Holy Spirit imparts experiences of love, redemption, and adoption into the Father's family. Beck (2009:199-200) maintains that the Holy Spirit supplies to the believer the knowledge of God, and imparts faith, hope, and love to believers. Grudem's (2002:635-649) bottom line definition of the Holy Spirit's work is "to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the church." He lists four primary activities of the Holy Spirit in which he does this: empowerment, purification, revealing, and unification. Further, Grudem states that the degree of the Holy Spirit's activity in the life of the believer is highly dependent upon the believer's own decisions and actions. Curran (2010:5), in discussing the spiritual disciplines, states that "the word spiritual is a reminder that one of the functions of Christian actions is to foster an awareness of the reality of the Spirit of God, both in human beings and in the created world." He states that the spiritual disciplines are therefore acts which bring us into contact with the Holy Spirit. Del Colle (2000:107) argues that Pentecostals and Charismatics see the Holy Spirit as the point of connection between

the human and God, and emphasizes the Holy Spirit's role in forming the believer into a new creation.

The above views enumerate the ways in which the believer's relationship with the Holy Spirit functions. These aid in clarifying Stevens' views, for the relational aspects of the Holy Spirit are fundamental to Stevens' concept of a walk with God. Of particular note here are Grudem's four activities, which seem to best summarize the activity of the Holy Spirit in Stevens' theory. First, the Spirit empowers the believer through gifts and supernatural aid. These empowerments are not optional, for the believer is unable to fulfill the requirements of a walk with God without the Spirit. Second, the Holy Spirit purifies the believer. This is an essential aspect of spiritual formation, for the negative aspects of the sin nature must necessarily be removed for any lasting transformation to occur. Third, the Holy Spirit reveals. This activity is necessary in Stevens' relational and revelational approach to the Word of God. Further, the progressive direction of a walk with God is dependent upon the leading of the Holy Spirit. Fourth, the Spirit unifies. The Holy Spirit's activity of unification is central to Stevens' formative priority of relationship. The believer's unification with Christ, as a relational and ontological reality, is enabled by the work of the Spirit. These activities of the Spirit are all mentioned by Stevens in the context of a walk with God, but are not directly addressed with enough detail.

The Spirit's unique function in the context of spiritual formation is a common thread in the secondary literature. There are certainly nuanced disagreements regarding the precise nature of the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Averbeck 2008:46), but nearly all agree that the Holy Spirit functions in the life of the believer toward growth in some manner. Averbeck (2008:53) argues that the Holy Spirit serves to form believers in three ways: personally, communally, and prophetically (missionally). Dreyer (1998:29) sees the Spirit playing various "roles" in spiritual formation, including "inner promptings", functioning in education and community, and aiding in the ministry of believers who encourage others in their formation. The Holy Spirit functions in both individual and communal dimensions. Dreyer (1998:34) argues that these dimensions are correlative and influence each other. Turner (2013:195-196) argues that it is in the use of the gifts in community that points to how they are meant to bring the believer and the Church into maturity (cf. 1 Cor 12:8-10). Turner (2013:200) further sees the maturity in view in Ephesians 4:13-16 must be seen as both an individual and corporate reality. The Holy Spirit is theologically associated with a formative relationship with God, particularly in the Pentecostal tradition. Hess (1996:122) states that the Scriptures describe the role Holy Spirit as one of centering the human spirit in God,

and as the distributor of new life and new knowledge. For Grudem (2002:635-649) the Holy Spirit's aids in the believer's regeneration and the bestowal of "new spiritual life", toward the empowerment for service (Jn 3:5–8; Acts 1:8; Rom 8:13; 15:16; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 1 Pet 1:2), and also moves in the process of sanctification (Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; Jn 16:8-11; Acts 7:51; Rom 8:4, 15-16; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal 5:22–23; Phil 1:19; 2 Th. 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2; cf. Titus 3:5). In all these views, regardless of their formulation, the Holy Spirit is an integral Agent of spiritual formation.

While Stevens would likely agree with most of these descriptors of the Holy Spirit's activity, he seemed to emphasize two primary roles for the Holy Spirit in spiritual formation: first, as the one who establishes the fulness of Christ as an internal reality within the believer, and second, as purveyor of God's transformative Word. Stevens (1983:341) states that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the believer is not meant only for speaking in tongues, prophesy, or miracles. Rather, it is meant to impart Christlikeness to the believer. Stevens is not alone in identifying this role of the Holy Spirit. Vann (2009:55) writes, "The activity of the Holy Spirit initiates a relationship of intimacy with God which intends to form us into the likeness of Jesus Christ." Stevens' relational view of formation toward Christlikeness only works with the activity of the Holy Spirit as Agent of both Father and Son. The intimacy of a close relationship with God is facilitated by the Spirit. Willard (2014b:105) states that Christlikeness is a gift of grace, and that the "resources" for it involve "the interactive presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who place their confidence in Christ." Del Colle (2000:112) maintains that the baptism of Spirit and the spiritual gifts are elements of the process of being conformed to the image of Christ. The interaction with Father and Son by the Holy Spirit imparts Christlikeness. While Christ's nature may be the *telos* of spiritual formation, it cannot be achieved without consistent interaction with the Holy Spirit.

Stevens also sees supreme formative value in the Holy Spirit's role in revealing God's transformative Word. While the synthetic view of Stevens' teachings on a walk with God reveals this, Stevens does not directly identify this as the primary role of the Spirit in spiritual formation. Stevens' stance seems to be clarified by the views of Cross (2009:23-24), who argues that the Holy Spirit is seen in Pentecostal theology as the Agent by which present day believers find contemporary experience and application of the biblical narrative. The *pesher* ("this is that") interpretation of Peter in Acts 2 is a present potentiality for all who live in the Holy Spirit. Stevens (1978g:106-107) maintains that the Holy Spirit makes that Word alive to the believer (2 Cor 3:4-6). Porter (2008:145-146) writes, "The Word of God is the primary means the Spirit utilizes to open the human heart to a richer

experience of the love, grace, and truth of God." In this way, the believer should look for the experiential encounter with the Holy Spirit in the midst of reading the Scriptures. This aids in explaining Stevens' characterization of the experiential aspects of the Holy Spirit, for they are founded upon the purveying of the Word of God. In other words, the experiences with the Holy Spirit should not be seen as mystical moments ungrounded from life or truth, but rather moments of uplifting revelation in which the Word of God is internalized. Such internalization of the Word naturally requires personal application in an existential manner. However, such experiences are only valid insofar as they reflect the Word of God confirmed in its inscripturated form. Porter (2008:145) agrees with Carson (1991:500) and Packer (2005:62) that such experiences in the Holy Spirit have generally been downplayed by Evangelicals. However, this minimization of the experiential aspects of the Holy Spirit is itself being minimized in more recent discussion of pneumatology. Beck (2009:200; cf. Dreyer 1998:31) writes, "In more contemporary formulations, pneumatology emphasizes themes like vitality, creativity, transformative power, divine friendship, and liberation." Stevens would not disagree with such formulations, but he would certainly qualify that genuine encounters with the Holy Spirit will not be divorced from the *Logos*. Rather, such experiential occasions impart the Word of God toward Christlikeness. The personalization—or, perhaps, "experientialization"—of the Word of God is a pervasive pneumatological view in Stevens' writings.

Here it may be helpful to see the parallels between Stevens' concept of a walk with God and the Pentecostal concept of the Spirit-filled life. The concept of "life in the Spirit" is essentially a Pentecostal/Charismatic paradigmatic concept of spiritual formation. Bowers (1995:74-77) writes, "The distinctiveness of the Wesleyan-Pentecostal vision of Christian life is, without doubt, its call to life in the Spirit. Christian life is understood to be wholly dependent on a dynamic, experiential relationship with God in Christ continuously mediated by the Holy Spirit." According to Bowers (1995:75), the Wesleyan-Pentecostal tradition sees the Holy Spirit as the agent of sanctification, as the Spirit-filled believer is equipped to live a righteous life. The Spirit-filled life aspired to by Wesleyan-Pentecostals is a life of holiness, expressed in continued responsiveness to the Spirit. The orientation toward Spiritual formation is both a lifestyle and a goal, and must be seen as an ongoing process in the Holy Spirit. Formed morality emerges out of the believer's continual responsiveness to the Holy Spirit. Alvarado (2012:148) argues that acts of "Spirit-filled worship" in the Pentecostal community move the believer toward formation for they are encounters with God. Such formation functions in a communal setting, and only occurs by

the Holy Spirit. "Pentecostals affirm that it is the Spirit of God, who teaches, nurtures, and transforms one into a faithful life in Christ. As a matter of fact, it is this 'life in the Spirit' that informs the reading of Scripture, the singing of songs, the observance of the sacraments, the preaching of the gospel, and the prayers of the saints in the Pentecostal context of worship."

The Spirit-filled life is very similar to Stevens' concept of a walk with God. However, Stevens' paradigmatic concept focuses on the Father, with christological and pneumatological elements following. The paradigmatic concept of the Spirit-filled life emphasizes first the ongoing directive relationship with the Holy Spirit. In some ways, these two paradigms seem to view a model of the Christian life from differing perspectives. The Spirit-filled life may seem more "practical" in that the Holy Spirit is the daily interactive Member of the Trinity, and the Christian life is seen as one in which the Spirit is consistently heard and followed. However, Stevens' paradigm of a walk with God emphasizes a more holistic "big picture" approach in which the will of God is foundational in both christological and pneumatological dimensions in an eschatological framework of walking toward the Kingdom.

In Stevens' emphases on the Holy Spirit as the Agent of Christlikeness and the purveyor of the Word of God—as well as in the similarities between the Spirit-filled life and a walk with God—Stevens' position is best understood in a Trinitarian manner. Stevens' theory is highly relational in nature, and therefore the role of the Spirit can only truly be understood in the context of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit's relationship with the Father and the Son, as well as the Spirit facilitation of the believer's relationship with both Father and Son, is the only lens through which to understand Stevens' pneumatological view. Stevens' synthesized view is mirrored by Averbeck (2008:53), who provides a definition of spiritual formation which addresses each member of the Trinity: "the ministry through which we seek to stimulate and support the ongoing spiritually transforming work of the Holy Spirit in and through the personal lives, relationships, and ministries of genuine believers so that we all progressively become more conformed to the image of Christ according to the will of God the Father." The Heavenly Father guides the process according to His will, but the goal is Christlikeness, and the means are given by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer to "orchestrate" such formation. In this way, Trinitarian relations are expressed in the process of spiritual formation, for Christlikeness and the will of God are priorities of pneumatological activity. Del Colle (1993:93) adds to this: "The 'knowledge of God' that distinguishes Pentecostal and charismatic initiation is intrinsically one in which

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the presence of God to our regenerated human faculties is christologically and pneumatologically inscribed—no existential relation to Christ without awareness of the Spirit and no awareness of the Spirit without an existentially known relation to Christ!"

But how, exactly, do christological and pneumatological elements of spiritual formation function together? Dreyer (1998:28) argues that pneumatology functions within Christology, and that the concepts of being "in Christ" and "in the Spirit" "mutually interpret and enrich each other." Purves (1996:116) argues that Christology and pneumatology should not be as distinct as they have been. He notes that a trinitarian view of God should not see the Holy Spirit's formative activity in terms of subjective experiences, but rather in view of "the measure of man as the image of God, as found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, who provides us with both the predicate and paradigm of Christian living." Studebaker (2003:254-257) argues that Christology and justification are often viewed in objective terms, while pneumatology and sanctification are often viewed in subjective terms. This has resulted in an implicit subordination of the Holy Spirit to Christ in the context of soteriology. Studebaker (2003:266-270) argues that the Holy Spirit should not be subordinated to Christ in Pentecostal soteriology. The Holy Spirit "reproduces" the work of Christ in the believer, for the Holy Spirit aided in Christ's incarnation (Mt 1:18; Lk 1:35), His ministry (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Acts 1:2), death, resurrection (Rom 4:25; 8:11), and ascension. The work of the Holy Spirit can therefore not be divided from the work of Christ (Mt. 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33).

The refusal to divide the works of the Holy Spirit from the work of Christ in the process of sanctification is essential to Stevens' theological stance. The holism of his Trinitarian view requires an equality of emphasis on each member. The paradigmatic concept of a walk with God is therefore well-chosen in that it does not highlight the Holy Spirit over and above Father and Son. Rather, God with Whom the believer walks is found in a relationship with three distinct persons, unified in Spirit.

While the above discussion delineates the pneumatological foundations of his theory, what remains is to arrive at a summary understanding of the model of the Spirit's activity in the process of spiritual formation inherent in Stevens' view. The model proposed by Kierkegaard is that the Holy Spirit is the purveyor of God's formative grace (Rae 2010:57, 161). Transformation is an act of grace, and that grace is given by the Holy Spirit. The new life in the Spirit comes after the dying to self, just as the apostles experienced on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. For Kierkegaard, the Holy Spirit creates new life rather than

enhances natural life (Kierkegaard 1990b:71).

Relatedly, Cross (2009:21-22) presents another model in which the Holy Spirit bridges the historical distance between the modern believer and Jesus. The believer's contemporaneity with Christ discussed by Kierkegaard is mediated by the Spirit. While Kierkegaard himself did not involve the Holy Spirit in this endeavor, Cross proposes that the Spirit is the Agent Who brings the believer into transformative contact with the resurrected Christ. Further, just as the historical gap is bridged, so too is the ontological gap, for the contemporaneity with Christ brings the believer into Christlikeness (Cross 2009:23).

Another model of how the Holy Spirit produces change in the believer is the "infusion-transformational model" in which the Holy Spirit is viewed as a substance which transforms the believer when imparted during baptism (Rabens 2010:25-120; Turner 2013:191). However, Turner, following Rabens, argues that a "relational model" is more convincing. In this model, transformation by the Holy Spirit occurs in the context of a relationship to God, Jesus Christ, and the Christian community (cf. Rom 8.12-17; 2 Cor 3:17-18).

Austin (2015:176-178), following Alston (1988:121-150), presents four models by which the formative work of the Holy Spirit occurs. In the *divine fiat* model, God sovereignly causes change in the believer. The *interpersonal model* views the Holy Spirit as a moral influence similar to a human friend, through encouragement and suggestion. Alston advocates for the *sharing model*, based on 2 Peter 1:3-11. In this model, there is an interpenetration between human and Holy Spirit in which no barriers in relationship are present "so that the attitudes, interests, and reactions of God which we share as we participate in his nature are as immediately available to us as our own, and can influence us in the same way that our own do." Austin, however, advocates for the *union with Christ model*, which is a hybrid of the *interpersonal* and *sharing* models. In this view, there is a deep, barrier-free, interpersonal relationship between the believer and Christ. The sharing of attitudes and thoughts occurs in a relationship enabled by the Holy Spirit.

It seems that in the models proposed by Kierkegaard, Cross, Turner, and Austin, the Spirit is seen primarily as a mediator—whether mediating God's grace, contemporaneity with Christ, or union with Christ. Stevens, however, underlines the Holy Spirit as a person. Stevens does not see the Spirit as only mediating a formative relationship with God in Christ, but also as a Person to be related to in the process of walking with God. The Holy

Spirit is not just a representative of the presence of God, but also a divine source of guidance and life in and of Himself. Certainly, the Holy Spirit is integrally involved in connecting the believer into a transformative relationship with the Father (Eph 2:18), and into the Lordship of Christ (I Cor 12:3). However, the Holy Spirit also himself provides gifts and transformation (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 1:3; 1 Cor 2:12).

Further, the receipt and functioning by the Holy Spirit is itself a hallmark of Christlikeness, in that Jesus had the Spirit without measure (Jn 3:34). In this way, the role of the Holy Spirit should not be relegated to a mere mediatorial role, for He was intimately involved in the formation and ongoing ministry of Christ (Lk 3:22, 4:1-2; Heb 9:14; Rom 1:4). If Christlikeness is an appropriate teleological endpoint of spiritual formation, then a consistent relationship with the Holy Spirit is itself a quality indicative of Christian maturity. Stevens' model of pneumatological activity in spiritual formation is therefore more properly understood as one aspect of a holistic Trinitarian, relational view. It is most similar to Alston's sharing model, for the believer's relationship with the Holy Spirit is one in which there is no barrier, with the infilling of the Holy Spirit affecting the whole person. This kind of relational oneness is a necessity if the Spirit is to have any effectiveness in generating a new nature within the believer (cf. Jn 3:6; Rom 12:1-2; Gal 3:3; 5:22-23; 6:14-15; Eph 2:2-10; Stevens 1974b:34-35; 1978c:15-16). Of particular note in this regard is Stevens' view that πνεῦμα in Galatians 5:16-18 can (and should) be read as referring to both the human spirit and the Holy Spirit—linguistically encapsulating their intermingling in close relationship (Stevens 2007a:405-406). However, this model does not function in isolation from its Trinitarian grounding, for Stevens viewed the relationships between the believer and the Member of the Trinity in a holistic manner.

The primary critique of Stevens regarding the topic of pneumatology is his lack of detail. The Holy Spirit is present throughout his discussion of a walk with God, but His role is not described directly with requisite theological detail. In the above analysis, seven major points emerged which ameliorate this deficiency. Firstly, Stevens sees the Holy Spirit as a person. This is an important identification, for the Spirit may be viewed as an impersonal force in Christian theology. Secondly, and relatedly, Stevens views the person of the Holy Spirit as a distinct member of the Trinity with whom the believer may have a distinct relationship. Thirdly, to be spiritual is to be engaged with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit puts the "spiritual" in spiritual formation. This point may underlie the nature of Stevens' lack of direct discussion, for he seems to take it for granted that any spiritual activity in a walk with God automatically requires the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Fourthly, such spiritual activity

functions in four primary categories, as formulated by Grudem: empowerment, purification, revealing, and unification. Fifthly, the Holy Spirit is the direct initiator of Christlikeness for the believer. Sixthly, the Holy Spirit purveys God's Word toward its internalization. These last two points function in tandem as direct activities of spiritual formation. Finally, Stevens views the role of the Holy Spirit in a walk with God as a holistic aspect of the Trinity. The Spirit's activity cannot be understood independent of the other two members of the Trinity. In this way, pneumatology is comprehensible only in conjunction with Christology and theology.

5.5 Revelation

Stevens' relational approach to spiritual formation rests on the possibility of divine interaction with humans. Stevens asserts that one key way in which this interaction occurs is by revelation. It seems that Stevens uses the term "revelation" to indicate a concept which exists somewhere between the more contemporary uses of "illumination" and "special revelation." Mainline Evangelicals generally view special revelation as the revealing of God's salvation to sinners through the Scriptures as a form of grace (Harris 2006:13-14). Stevens goes beyond this view and asserts that God can speak to people by His Holy Spirit in any context. For Stevens, it is possible to receive personal revelation, both in the scriptural text, as well as separate from the scriptural text. It is important to note, however, that in Stevens' view any revelation received in any manner will comport with the biblical text, and must be confirmed by the biblical text. In this way, his use of the term is closely related to the common contemporary use of "illumination". However, Stevens does not see the process or receipt of revelation as being constrained by the biblical text.

Stevens holds that a walk with God cannot be maintained if it is based primarily on the believer's perception. Stevens (1975a:73-74) states that "No one walks with God as a result of what he sees in the natural. You are in a walk with God because the Lord revealed it to your heart." The perception of the believer is subjective and prone to misinterpretation through the flawed faculties of the natural man. However, revelation from God—if received clearly—is objective truth from the Source of all truth. In order to properly analyze and critique Stevens' view of revelation, this section will function in four parts. First, it will examine why the accounting for revelation is a necessity in Christian theology. Second, it will examine cessationism and its relationship to revelation. Third, it will review scholarly models of revelation. Finally, it will discuss the role of revelation in spiritual

formation.

5.5.1 The Theological Necessity of Revelation

Many theologians view revelation as a foundational concept in Christian theology. Bavinck (1909:208) considers revelation to be the starting point of faith. "Religion is without doubt a matter of the heart; but it cannot be separated from all objective knowledge of God through his revelation in nature and history, in Scripture and conscience…. Experience does not come first, after which interpretation follows, but revelation precedes, and is experienced in faith." In this way, revelation is a universal bedrock of Christian belief, for it provides an objectivity to the knowledge of God through history and Scripture. Further, Packer (1958:89) recognizes that the very nature of Christianity as a revealed religion requires a proper understanding of the undergirding role of revelation. If the religion itself is based on revealing, then certainly revelation must function for the average Christian in some manner. One's concept of revelation may very well reflect one's approach to Christianity itself. Henry (1999a:215-224), in his extensive treatment of the topic in six volumes, agrees that revelation is the foundational starting point upon which all understanding of God, and all Christian belief, is built. He writes: "only on the basis of God's self-disclosure is man able to make any legitimate statements whatever about him". Essentially, the "presuppositions" of Christianity are the product of revelation, for they cannot be adequately explained or deduced in any other manner. For Henry, this foundational revelation is found in Scripture. However, Henry (1999a:224) fairly states that "in expounding the truth of revelation, the biblical writers provide no extended treatise on religious epistemology". Whichever epistemic system one ascribes to, it must be compatible with the revelation communicated in the Bible.

Stevens would agree with the general sentiment expressed here. Without revelation, there is no true Christian belief. Scripture is fully inspired by God's divine revelation to its human authors. Stevens would also agree that the Bible contains the complete revelation of God to man. However, the point of divergence between Stevens and the conservative evangelical view is that Stevens allows for special revelation by the Holy Spirit outside the confines of Scripture, with the strong caveat that such special revelation will always find confirmation in Scripture. This is a nuanced view and is easily subject to misunderstanding, as seen in Bloesch's (2000:187–88) assertion that John Robert Stevens valued new revelation over the Scriptures. Bloesch writes, "Stevens teaches that the Bible is outdated and needs to be supplemented by prophecies inspired by the Spirit

for our time." Bloesch cites Larson (1989:177), who lists this view as a reason why Stevens' movement should be considered a cult. Larson does not give an exact source for his assertion on Stevens' views on this point. Regardless, this is a misreading of Stevens' characterization of the relationship between special revelation and the Bible. Stevens (2007b:510) explains that his critics "say that we believe we can receive a direct revelation from God; and this is true. However, it is also true that this direct revelation from God always comes forth out of the Scriptures and through the knowledge of them as the Spirit enables us." Whatever one might criticize about Stevens' allowance for—and encouragement of—contemporary experiences of special revelation, it is not true that he sees such revelation as superseding, supplanting, or superior to Scripture. Rather, special revelation is subordinate to Scripture in that it cannot be considered true revelation unless and until God confirms such revelation in the biblical text. This view is echoed in J. Rodman Williams' concept of "subordinate revelation", which recognizes that while modern-day revelation is possible, it is never equal to the revelation of Scripture (Lewis 2011:284).

It is important to note in this context that Stevens' view of revelation in this manner integrates concerns of spiritual formation. Stevens (2007a:517–518, original emphases) writes:

> Some Christians take exception to the application of this teaching, listing it as "false doctrine." Because we teach that God's intent and purpose is that believers become living epistles of Christ, they imply that we claim that the word we speak is equal to the Scriptures, and that in time we will not or may not even use the Bible. This is not true! This has not ever been said. We exalt the Scriptures as the *Living* Word of God.
>
> Too many Christians "exalt" the "inspiration" of the Bible, while it is sitting on their shelf accumulating dust! This was not God's intention. He intended to transfer that *written* truth into a *living* truth and write it on our hearts (Hebrews 10:16). God intends to write His Word upon our hearts, to make us His living epistles, read and known of all men (II Corinthians 3:2). This is the plan and purpose of God, and we are not exalting ourselves or saying that our teaching is superior to the revelation of the Scriptures. Rather, *we glorify God that we can and will be the fulfillment of the Scriptures*, and what God has promised will come to pass.

The Word of God is transformational, and its receipt via revelation in the lives of believers is the very mechanism of spiritual formation represented in the metaphor of "living epistles" (2 Cor 3:2-3). Stevens ardently believed the fulfillment of the new covenant promises that the Word would be written on the human heart (Jer 31:33). Stevens sees revelation as the means by which God accomplishes this promise. For Stevens, the Bible is never outdated, particularly because it is the source of such promises and provides the basis of truth by which the process may be judged. Stevens' encouragement of the internalization and expression of the Word of God is a spiritually formative view of the believer's relationship to Scripture.

Stevens overall view of revelation generally accords with Henry's summary of the nature of revelation in fifteen theses. In these theses, Henry (1999:7-16) describes revelation as solely divinely initiated in frequency and content, given for the benefit of human beings, "uniquely personal both in content and form", expressed both universally and redemptively, embodied in Jesus, mediated by the *Logos*, conveyed intelligibly, overseen in its distribution by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, contributed to the writing of the Word on the hearts of believers, and culminating in the ultimate self-disclosure in the "consummation of the ages". This is a magisterial and comprehensive view of revelation. It echoes many of Stevens' descriptive points on revelation, including its embodiment in Jesus, its mediation in the *Logos*, its distribution by the Holy Spirit, its role in the internalization of the Word in the believer, and in its connection with the eschatological Kingdom. In many ways, this thumbnail sketch of Henry's summary enumerates Stevens' view with surprising clarity. However, Stevens' would disagree with Henry's limitation that revelation is now only found in the text of the Bible. If revelation is divinely ordained by the Father, embodied in Jesus, and conveyed by the Holy Spirit, why should the text of the Bible become a proxy for such Trinitarian activity? In practice, the cessationist constraint on revelation restrains the believer's interaction with the Person of God. There is an incongruence here between the full understanding of revelation as conveyed in the Bible (upon which Henry builds his case) and the actual allowance for revelation in the lives of contemporary believers. It is perhaps ironic that the very source of such a comprehensive view of revelation—that is, the Scriptures—seems to be placed as a bottleneck in the contemporary applicative experience of its fullness. In order to accurately judge the propriety of limiting the availability of revelation to the text of the Bible, we must discuss the merits and limits of cessationism.

5.5.2 Cessationism and Revelation

The greatest opposition to Stevens' view of revelation surrounds the issue of cessationism. If the activity of the Holy Spirit outside of His work in the text of Scripture has ceased, then Stevens' concept of revelation is impossible. MacArthur (2013:241; cf. 114) emphasizes the issue of subjectivity in starkly negative terms when it comes to extrabiblical revelation, maintaining that revelation cannot be objectively confirmed to be from God unless it comes directly from the text of Scripture: "The continuationist position invites any Christian to interpret any personal impression or subjective feeling as a potential revelation from God. Moreover, it removes any authoritative, objective standard for questioning the legitimacy of someone's supposed revelation from God." He emphasizes Grudem's admission that revelatory prophecy can often be erroneous, comparing the accuracy of modern prophetic revelation to "a Magic Eight Ball, tarot cards, or a Ouija board". MacArthur (2013:114) further states that the injunction against proclaiming a false message in the name of the Lord has been completely ignored by continuationists (cf. Dt 18). To be clear, MacArthur (2013:117) does allow for illumination. He further makes exceptions for the phases of the *ordo salutis*, so that salvation unfolds in the context of special revelation—in the experiences of Predestination, Election, Calling, Regeneration, Faith, Repentance, Justification, Sanctification, Perseverance, and Glorification. However, MacArthur does not allow for anything related to special revelation independent of its need in the process of believer's receipt of salvation.

MacArthur sees claims for extrabiblical revelation as resulting in dividing the Bible from the Author, for "charismatics expect Him to speak and act in newfangled ways that are unconnected to Scripture" (MacArthur 2013:67-68, cf. 80-81). MacArthur (2013:68) characterizes Pentecostals and Charismatics as avoiding or downplaying the detailed study of the Bible because it "thwarts the work of the Spirit". MacArthur (2013:116; cf. 129-130) relies on the Westminster Confession of Faith in his view that *sola scriptura* necessarily means the cessation of revelation: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men." No extrabiblical revelation is needed today because the Bible is whole and sufficient, and therefore godly extrabiblical revelation is impossible. In his view, those who advocate for the possibility of modern revelation necessarily deny *sola scriptura* (MacArthur 2013:242-243). He further states that Scripture attests to its own

completion (cf. Heb. 1:1–2; Ju 3; Rev. 22:18-19). MacArthur (2013:117) quotes 2 Timothy 3:15–17, holding that this passage emphasizes the reliability of Scripture alone as God's Word, and that Scripture is sufficient toward wisdom and salvation and every good work.

There are a number of Pentecostal/Charismatic scholars who have addressed MacArthur's criticisms. Ruthven (2014:55-58) argues that the Bible emphasizes prophetic revelation as a normative experience and that denying the voice of God stands as a "central temptation" for mankind (Gen 3; Ex 20; Ps 97:5; Mt 4; Lk 4; Heb 3:7, 15, 4:7, 12:25). Further, he characterizes the Spirit of revelation to be a central aspect of the New Covenant (cf. Is 59:21; Jer 31:33; 2 Cor 3; Heb 8-12). Ruthven also maintains that a number of passages speak directly against the cessation of the *charismata* (Joel 2:28; Rom 11:29; 1 Cor 12:5; Acts 2:17). Keener (2014:101-102) argues that the true understanding of the scriptural canon is that it is not the limited collection of what God has said, but rather "the critically agreed-on measuring stick for evaluating other revelation." Keener characterizes the Pentecostal/Charismatic view of hearing God's voice today as a personal, intimate experience of relational guidance, rather than the development of new doctrine. In this way, MacArthur's emphasis on revelation as the generating of new subjective doctrine is a mischaracterization of the Pentecostal/Charismatic view. Storms (2014:111) primarily relies on 1 Corinthians 14:26 in his refutation of cessationism, for Paul allowed that believers would gather and contribute to their collective worship with various gifts, including revelation. Storms writes, "He [Paul] anticipated that a normal part of Christian experience was receiving revelatory data or insight from God." Certainly, Paul's statement that "When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation" (1 Cor 14:26) alone weakens the cessationist position. MacArthur seems to agree with this because he does not address this Scripture directly in *Strange Fire*.

In MacArthur's emphasis that the Scriptures state that they are complete, he cites a few NT passages, including the imprecatory warning against adding to the Word of God in Revelation 22:18-19. However, MacArthur conspicuously does not mention similar injunctions in Deuteronomy (4:2, 5; 12:32). If we were to make a hard and simplistic rule from these Mosaic warnings, then all authors of canonical texts after the Pentateuch might be suspect. Considering the historical development of the canonical texts, it seems unlikely that such warnings are about all extra-biblical revelation competing with Scripture, but rather humanly generated concepts being intermingled with the Word. Allowing for special revelation does not necessarily add to or change God's Word because it would be, by definition, a reception of God's Word.

MacArthur (2013:117) quotes 2 Timothy 3:15–17, holding that this passage teaches that Scripture alone is useful for training in righteousness. However, it seems he takes the theological conclusions of this passage too far when he writes: "What clearer affirmation of the absolute sufficiency of Scripture could anyone ask for? Are extrabiblical messages from God necessary to equip us to glorify Him? Obviously not." This conclusion is far from obvious. Nowhere in this passage do we see qualifying or limiting language such as "only the Holy Scripture" or "the Scriptures alone". In fact, a thorough application of these verses might lead to a continuationist perspective in that all Scripture is useful for equipping the believer, including the narrative of Acts. If Acts is seen only as historical information rather than potential training in righteousness, then the moving of the Holy Spirit is not normative. However, if even narratives make "the man of God adequate", then it is not a stretch to view the activity of the Holy Spirit described throughout the NT as a model for contemporary Christian experience. Stevens certainly takes this position, for he views all Scripture to be the record of what is available to the believer in Christ. While it is doubtful that this short discussion would be convincing to those with cessationist view, it should at least clarify the biblical evidence which sustains a continuationist position. In this way, Stevens' view of revelation is at bare minimum scripturally plausible.

Stevens is not blind to the dangers of allowing for contemporary experiences of revelation. Many of the criticisms raised by MacArthur are ones that Stevens himself addresses. Stevens for example differentiates between the epistemologies of the faculties of soul and spirit, stating that the human must receive revelation by the Holy Spirit via the human spirit. The faculty of soul, associated as it is with the carnal mind, the natural man, and with sin, is much less reliable in the receipt of revelation (cf. Heb 4:12; Stevens 1976g:19-2; 1981a:56-57). However, Stevens also warns against an overemphasis of spirit leading to an improper pursuit of mysticism. Stevens further acknowledges the human propensity to intermix or confuse human opinion with divine revelation. Even in the successful receipt of revelation, there is a danger of developing pride and/or negative independence in an overinflated sense of one's spiritual maturity (Stevens 1978f:1-2, 5-7). However, the high probability that a child might fall over while learning to walk should not prohibit the learning process. The receipt of revelation is certainly a learned and developed spiritual faculty, which requires safeguards.

The primary safeguard Stevens identifies is confirmation. This concept is based on the biblical requirement of two to three witnesses to confirm any matter (Dt 19:15; cf. 1 Cor 14:29; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19; Stevens 2007b:762). Believers who seek revelation should

be rather slow in determining the authenticity of any revelatory message, and cannot rely solely on themselves in the process (1976g:24; 1978e:15-21). There are two primary sources of confirmation. The first is the Scriptures, to which any genuine revelation would conform. The second is community, particularly in the ecclesial context through fellow believers and church authorities (cf. Gal 2:2c; 1976g:27-29). If the apostle Paul submitted his revelation for confirmation (Gal 2:2), then certainly all believers must do the same.

It seems that MacArthur's primary grounds in his stance against continuationists, and Pentecostals and Charismatic more specifically, is that their behavior seems to him to deviate from scriptural norms. MacArthur (2013:71) rightly states that "No true work of the Spirit will contradict, devalue, or add new revelation to the Scriptures (cf. Rev. 22:17–19). Instead it will elevate biblical truth in the hearts and minds of believers." Stevens would agree with this statement. Keener (2014:101) argues—and both MacArthur and Stevens would agree—that the "the best argument for cessationism is extreme charismatics." Stevens himself was embarrassed by some of his contemporaries in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, and he clearly hoped to distance himself from them by choosing not to align his churches with any Pentecostal denomination. Regardless, it is a flawed argument to state that because some believers abuse the potential for special revelation—using it to brand their personal opinions as direct communication from God—then all attestations to contemporary pneumatological experiences of revelation are false. Perhaps some Pentecostal/Charismatic figures place no limiting factors upon the Spirit's revelational activity. However, Stevens does. The moving of the Holy Spirit will be orderly, without confusion, edifying, and, most importantly, reflective of the teachings of Scripture.

In the face of the potential denial of God's direct communicative activity in the contemporary age, Willard (2012:Loc.1028-1045; cf. Loc.4246-4251) asks "Why, if God is personal, would he not also talk with us?" Willard maintains that a personal God engages in conversation "as it is appropriate". He further maintains that the ramifications of Romans 8:14 should not be relegated to "neither blind, robot-style obedience nor feeling stuck interpreting vague impressions and signs." However, Willard (2012:Loc.1193-1202) states that the mature Christian is the one to whom God primarily speaks. This echoes Stevens' conception of the relationship with God as both means and ends of spiritual formation. Revelation has formative qualities and occurs in relationship. However, the maturity of the believer is not the proper *telos*, but rather the state of the believer's increasing intimacy with Christ. Revelation, therefore, is both an event which creates maturity in the believer, but also an ongoing Christian experience for those who are mature in their relationship

with God.

5.5.3 Models of Revelation

If revelation is possible, then we must establish a model by which its disclosure and receipt is described. Stevens' teachings on revelation are internally consistent but not clearly described in a unified manner. His concept of revelation is multidimensional, therefore his lack of a clearly articulated model is a glaring deficiency.

Harris (2006:13-28) reviews four main models of revelation: propositional (limited to Scripture), historical (revelation through historical acts of God), religious experience (deep inner awareness and/or mysticism), and dialectical presence (revelation embodied in Jesus Christ). The propositional model relies on the illumination of the Holy Spirit in Scripture as the contemporary Christian experience of revelation. The historical view emphasizes God's revealing through events of history, particularly His acts of salvation. The religious experience model proposes that God reveals through an inner religious consciousness. The dialectical presence model is proposed by Neo-orthodoxy theologians who see God as both revealed and concealed. Their theological views were highly influenced by Kierkegaard. God is ontologically so different than humanity that He cannot be known. However, God makes Himself known through the person of Jesus Christ. Harris (2006:25) writes, "Jesus Christ becomes the existential link to reconcile God and man, not in the form of propositions or history or experiences exclusively, but in the form of a personal I–Thou encounter." In particular, Jesus is the Word of God revealed in the incarnation. Ultimately, Harris does not see these four views in conflict with one another, but rather—following McGrath—as various emphases of the biblical view of revelation. Harris (2006:30) writes, "God can be found to speak in the pages of Scripture, he shows himself to be sovereign over a history that draws toward the eschaton, and he is made known through our experience of him, that personal encounter which occurs in Christ Jesus our Lord. These four emphases are based upon the presupposition that revelation does occur and through that revelation, the Triune God can be known." For Harris, the two primary forces of revelation are the Word of God and the Spirit of God, which together function in all four views.

Of these models, Stevens' view of revelation seems to correspond to those of religious experience and dialectical presence. Stevens would agree with the propositional view insofar as the Scriptures are inscripturated revelation, to be seen as the foundation for any

contemporary revelation. However, he clearly does not limit special revelation. Stevens would also agree with the historical model, in that God reveals Himself in the events of history—particularly the historical events described in the Bible. However, Stevens did not wish to leave such revelation as a historical fact, but sought to make such revelation alive for contemporary believers. Without a personal impact, such revelation is merely an abstraction. While Stevens allows for experiential interaction with revelation, such experiences only occur in the relational context with Christ and the Holy Spirit. Stevens would warn against the pursuit of mystical experiences which do not involve the seeking of Christ.

Harris' insight that these four models all reflect the scriptural record is echoed in Stevens' view of revelation. Each model interacts with each other in holistic ways, and Stevens touches upon these interconnections. Stevens situates the understanding of Scripture as predicated first upon a revelation of Jesus Christ (Jn 5:39-40; Stevens 1974a:105). This connects the propositional, historical, and dialectical presence models. The incarnation of Jesus is a historical revealing of God, the truth of which is conveyed to us first through Scripture, which reveals a living Christ to whom believers may have an intimate relationship. In turn, this deepening relationship allows for a greater understanding of the Scriptures, by revelation. Perhaps the best way to understand Stevens' theological position is that it begins with his understanding of the Word of God, living and powerful, incarnate in Christ. The Word must be interacted with by revelation, for the Word exists first in the spiritual dimension (Jn 1:1-5; cf. Stevens 1986:616). Stevens' foremost example of revelation is Peter's revelation of Christ (Mt 16:16-17). This revelation established a proper relationship because Peter came to know, by divine revealing, who Jesus was as the Son of God. In that moment, the relationship was defined by revelation. There can be no relationship with God without revelation, for God, as supernatural being, must be understood through supernatural epistemology. This supernatural epistemology is revelation, whose distribution is governed by God by His Word. Further, as Pink (2005:n.p.) states, the Word of God cannot be truly understood without "a supernatural application of the Truth made unto the heart by the special power of God". The Word itself must be revealed to be known.

This holistic view of revelation must include the work of the Holy Spirit. Cross (2009:30-31) states that even Calvin prioritized the testimony of the Holy Spirit over reason itself, and that this view allows for the experience of revelation. The experience of revelation, sourced internally or externally, "illumines Christ in the Word of God". Cross (2009:30-31) writes,

"The point that Pentecostals make here is that this experience is an encounter with GOD made possible through the agency of the Spirit. Because of the nature of the one who encounters us, our experiences with God are transformative and informative. In this way, faith is inseparable from experience." The prioritization of the work of the Holy Spirit over the text of Scripture seems reflective of Jesus' own teachings on the matter, for He stated that the Spirit would lead His disciples into all truth (Jn 16:13).

Finally, Stevens also includes the concepts of dedication and obedience in the pursuit of revelation, for revelation is given by God for God's purposes. This attitude is reflected in Deuteronomy 29:29, for the "secret things" are under the purview of God, Who reveals them to His people that they may "observe all the words of this law". The revealed Word of God only functions correctly in the context of obedience. The process by which dedication functions in a walk with God is described by Stevens as the "dedication-revelation". In this process, the believer's dedication garners God's response of providing a revelation by the Word of God (Stevens 1986:615-616; 2007a:105). Dedication and revelation are intertwined in that the greater dedication to the will of God one has, there is a greater potential for revelation. However, the greater revelation one has, there is an attendant greater requirement of dedication. The foremost example of this is Paul, whose dedication and capacity for revelation is unparalleled. Paul himself connected these two principles when he declared that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision he had received (Acts 26:19). This principle is inherent in Stevens' conception of the Lordship of Christ, for obedience to Jesus is a definitional aspect of a relationship with Him.

Considering these various aspects of revelation, Stevens' model of revelation may be described as the Word-relationship model. The object of revelation is the Word of God. The Word is found in an inscripturated form in the Bible, as well as in living, human form in Jesus Christ. Revelation is based on a relationship with the Word of God in both forms. However, the relationship of revelation is also dependent upon the teaching activity of the Holy Spirit. Further, dedication and obedience is the required relational state in which revelation occurs. The Word-relationship model of revelation fits well in the paradigmatic concept of a walk with God. A walk with God functions in revelation through the inscripturated Word and the spiritual relationship with God, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. How, then, does this model function in the context of spiritual formation?

5.5.4 Revelation and Spiritual Formation

It is not uncommon among theologians to see transformational power in divine revelation. Henry views the writing of the Word upon the hearts of believers as a continuing work of God's revelation. Henry (1999a:385) states, "Scripture itself is given so that the Holy Spirit may etch God's Word upon the hearts of his followers in ongoing sanctification that anticipates the believer's final, unerring conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Word." In this way, Henry emphasizes the spiritually formative power of revelation (cf. 2 Cor 4:6). Harris (2006:11) adds to this when he writes of the biblical handling of the concept of revelation: "The Hebrew and Greek terms which lie behind these words refer to a host of divine activities from theophanies to apocalyptic manifestations, from God's handiwork in the cosmos to the work of grace in the human heart." MacArthur (2013:228) also describes the process of sanctification as a process of internalizing God's Word (1 Pet 2:1-3). This leads to being conformed to the image of Christ by the Holy Spirit through scriptural revelation of Jesus (2 Cor 3:18). MacArthur writes, "truly being filled with the Spirit comes from being indwelled by the Word of God (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16–17). Walking in the Spirit is seen by the fruit of a changed life (cf. Gal. 5:22–23). Evidence of the Spirit's work is measured in terms of growth in holiness and Christlikeness, not emotional outbursts or ecstatic experiences." While MacArthur bases this process solely on the believer's interaction with and obedience to the biblical text, Stevens would agree with this description of the formative process. Therefore, on both the cessationist and continuationist positions, the Word of God is seen to produce transformation in the believer through revelation. In whatever model one ascribes to, revelation contributes to spiritual formation.

But how exactly does this transformation by revelation occur? Turner (2013:201-202) argues that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation mentioned in Ephesians 1:17 provides knowledge of God which is ontological in nature. Paul's prayer surrounding these gifts in Ephesians 1 is not exclusionary, but includes all believers. Turner (2013:202) writes, "the activity of the Spirit brings wisdom and revelation centred [sic] on 'knowledge of God', resulting in a state (hence the perfect participle?) of heart-enlightenment". Further, a similar formational power is seen in Colossians 3:16-19, in which the Spirit of prophecy causes transformational understanding (Turner 2013:203-204). Revelation therefore results in spiritual formation through the Spirit-bestowed gifts of revelation and prophecy. This could be seen as a process in which the Word indwells the believer in an enlightenment which transforms the heart. Relatedly, Kierkegaard views the apprehension

of truth as an ontological transformation in itself. This is in opposition to the Socratic position in which the truth is already internal to the human, but the comprehension is merely the uncovering of something already internal. In Kierkegaard's view, resistance to truth reflects the refusal of change. For this reason, prolonged ignorance is sin (Pattison 2003:24-25). For Kierkegaard, Christ is the Teacher who applies truth toward ontological change. Christ teaches with the intent to transform.

Stevens' position is a reflection of these ideas, for he identified revelation as the transformational reception of the Word of God. The knowledge produced by revelation is not merely cognitive, but affects the ontology of the believer. This transformation is what sets revelation apart from rational knowledge. If revelation is merely a bestowal of understanding, it would not contain formative power. Stevens goes further, however, in casting revelation in a relational light. In fact, revelation's transformational power could be seen as being derived from its relational nature. In revealing God and His Word, revelation initiates the principle in view in 1 John 3:2, that humans are changed in seeing God. Revelation contains not only knowledge, but also carries within itself a conveyance of ontological aspects of the Trinity. Particularly in conjunction with the understanding of Jesus' identity as *Logos*, surely the Word of God reveals God Himself in the process of revelation. If revelation is viewed as a conveyance of the Word of God, then it is ontologically associated with Christ Himself as *Logos*.

The Word-relationship model which seems to encapsulate Stevens' view recognizes the ontological reality of a relationship with God as a state of being in which revelation flows from Members of the Trinity to the believer. Revelation is a fundamental expression in this relationship, for it is represents the divine side of communication. Further, revelation itself contains the being of Christ in some way, for it is a communication of the Word of God. In this way, revelation should also be seen as a means of formative relationship. Revelation is a communication from God, and communication is a requirement of genuine relationship. The nature of the relationship between believer and God will be based upon the nature of the believer's revelation of God. The inclusion of revelation in Stevens' theory of spiritual formation therefore ties back into the previous discussion of relationship, ontology, the Lordship of Christ, and pneumatology. Revelation is given by the Holy Spirit, is expressive of Christ, and has the potential to cause ontological transformation as a vehicle of the believer's interactive relationship with God.

5.6 Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is a prevalent concept throughout Stevens' theory. It functions as a motivating goal and ongoing purpose of spiritual formation. Firstly, the very acceptability of tackling any *telos* beyond the maturation of the believer should be discussed. In other words, is the inclusion of a "meta-telos"—that is, the purpose or goal of the *telos* of Christlikeness—at cross-purposes with the discussion of spiritual formation? Does the discussion of the Kingdom distract from the real issue at hand?

Jesus places great emphasis on the Kingdom in His teachings. Jesus alone uses the term βασιλεία (kingdom) more than 120 times (e.g. Mt 4:17, 23, 6:10, 9:35, 13:19, 16:19, 18:3-4, 21:23, 31, 24:14; Mk 1:15, 9:47, 10:15, 12:34, 14:25; Lk 8:1, 9:2, 11, 11:2, 17:20-21, 18:17, 22:16, 18). This is not surprising considering Jesus' self-identification of his own purpose in Luke 4:43—that is, to preach the Kingdom of God. By far, the most common uses of this word by Jesus are in the phrases "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of heaven". Matthew heavily favors "Kingdom of heaven", while Mark and Luke heavily favor "Kingdom of God". It is doubtful there is any difference in meaning between these two phrases as they are used in numerous synoptic passages. Further, Jesus uses these two phrases in an equivalent fashion in Matthew 19:23-24. After His resurrection, Jesus continued to teach about the Kingdom (Acts 1:3), and before his ascension the disciples ask if the Kingdom will be restored immediately (Acts 1:6). In Acts, Paul also preaches on the topic of the Kingdom (Acts 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 31). It is uncontroversial to recognize the Kingdom as a central Christian theological concern. Buzzard (1992:99; cf. Marshall 1990:213-214; Runia 1992:45; Chilton 2005:249; Scotland 2011:275) writes, "There is an impressive consensus among scholars (rare, perhaps, in the field of New Testament studies!) that the Kingdom of God forms the very heart of all that Jesus taught." If the Kingdom of God is at the heart of Jesus' teachings, and Jesus should be at the heart of Christian spiritual formation, then it is certainly appropriate to address the topic in this context.

While the goal of spiritual formation is more precisely identified as Christian maturity, it would seem beneficial to explore God's purpose for such maturity. Stevens emphasizes Kingdom for this very reason. However, what exactly does the Kingdom have to do with walking with God and spiritual formation? Stevens' three characterizations of the formative function of Kingdom must be theologically evaluated and critiqued. These three functions are: seeking first the Kingdom, the internalization of the Kingdom, and the establishment of

the Kingdom by mature believers.

Stevens sees the attitude of seeking first the Kingdom as a necessary motivation of pursuing God's will. Is it commensurate with scriptural context to cast the seeking imperative of the Sermon on the Mount as a spiritually formative attitude? There are two models proposed in the literature which may assist in assessing and critiquing Stevens' view.

Willard (2014b:33) argues that the injunction of Matthew 6:33 to seek first the Kingdom is similar to the promise of the keys to the Kingdom in Matthew 16:19 (cf. Rom 8:32; Phil 4:19). Willard (2014b:34) writes, "We must seek out ways to live and act in union with the flow of God's Kingdom life that should come through our relationship with Jesus. There is, of course, no question of doing this purely on our own. But we must act. Grace is opposed to earning, not to effort." In this way, seeking the Kingdom is a formative activity. For Willard, the Kingdom represents the fulness and abundance of God, and the believer has access to this with immediacy due to Jesus' bestowal of the keys to the Kingdom to His disciples in every age. In pursuing a relationship with Jesus Christ, the believer gains access to the transformative storehouses of the Kingdom. In this model, the Kingdom is a spiritual reality in which the believer may participate through a relationship with Christ. Participating in the spiritual Kingdom today, with Jesus, places the believer into contact with the fullness of God, and this, in turn, promotes transformation.

Wright (2010:Loc.1149-1153) casts the role of the Kingdom in the development of Christian character as an anticipatory motivation to reflect the glory of God in the present day. Wright states that the strength of seeing Christian formation in these terms is its avoidance of rules-based Christian ethics. Looking at formation as interlinked with the anticipation of the Kingdom provides a paradigmatic framework which connects present-day activity and ontology with the promises fulfilled in the future. Further, Wright argues, this view suggests a process, rather than an immediate requirement of perfection. Finally, Wright states that viewing ethical questions in the overarching view of God's purpose for human life provide critical context in which to relate to morality in an effective way—not as an issue of achieving entrance into heaven, but rather "The practice and habit of virtue, in this sense, is all about learning in advance the language of God's new world" (Wright 2010:Loc.1154-1191). Christian virtue should not be self-focused in attempting to achieve happiness, fulfillment, or self-realization. By keeping the Kingdom goal in mind, believers pursuing formation orient themselves toward Christlikeness. This reflects Jesus' statement that His

followers should seek first the Kingdom (Mt 6:33). In Wright's paradigm, the Christian life ceases being about right action and becomes a holistic endeavor of a lifestyle reflective of God (Wright 2010 Loc.1191-1224). This model could be described as "anticipatory formation". The growth which occurs in conjunction with seeking the Kingdom is motivated by the desire to reflect the coming Kingdom in present-day Christian character.

Both of these models seem to fit Stevens' approach, which emphasizes the spiritual dimension of the Kingdom but also views the believer's activity today as an anticipation of the fulness of the Kingdom on earth. However, Stevens adds another primary dimension, which is submission to God. After the worshipful salutation of the Lord's Prayer we find twin prophetic statements: "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done." The primary focus of the most common Christian prayer is the establishment of the Kingdom on earth, and the realization of God's will. Stevens writes, "When we seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, then we have the promise that the other things will be added. Then we can come with the petition: 'Give us this day our daily bread'" (Stevens 1976a:176-177). For Stevens, the daily bread in the prayer is the food of maturity given by the Father toward the enacting of His will. What God gives is meant to further His will in the earth, which is why the attitude of seeking first the Kingdom is a fundamental aspect of spiritual formation. The seeking first of the Kingdom is a submissional stance which prioritizes God's will in the pursuit of Christian growth.

If spiritual formation is to be integrated into theology at large, this relational and eschatological element is of fundamental necessity. It is a biblical meta-telos of Christian maturity which identifies the proper visional motivation for the believer. It is both immediate (e.g. Willard) and anticipatory (e.g. Wright). However, in both cases, the seeking of the Kingdom is a reflection of the prioritization of God's will in the pursuit of spiritual formation. In a relational theory of Christian spiritual formation, the submission to God must certainly be a primary aspect. In this way, Stevens' inclusion of the Kingdom along the lines of the "seek first" imperative fits with his relational conception of spiritual formation as embodied in a walk with God. The direction of the walk with God journey is toward the Kingdom.

The second way in which Kingdom appears in Stevens' theory of spiritual formation is the internal manifestation of the Kingdom within the matured believer, whose nature becomes a reflection of the Kingdom lifestyle. What is the precise nature of the internalized Kingdom? Is it truly reflective of maturity?

The Kingdom is clearly associated with the righteousness of God, as the believer is meant to "seek first His Kingdom and his righteousness" (Mt. 6:33). God's Kingdom is an expression of His Law, and therefore its citizens would be perfectly righteous. By seeking God's righteousness, the believer becomes an ontological expression of the Kingdom through the internalization of righteousness. The synoptic passage in Luke omits the reference to righteousness and states only that the believer should seek the Kingdom, and that doing so will elicit a response from God that "these things will be added to you" (Lk 12:31). This reveals God's attitude to "add to" those who seek His Kingdom.

The achieved Kingdom represents the perfection of the human being in God's overarching promise-plan. Jesus states that the least one in the Kingdom is greater than John the Baptist, who was the greatest born of women (Mt 11:11; Lk 7:28). The believer's righteousness must surpass the scribes and Pharisees in order to enter the Kingdom (Mt 5:20). Greatness of stature for those in the Kingdom is based upon doing the will of God in obedience, for those who keep and teach God's commandments are great in the Kingdom (Mt 5:19). Only those who do the will of the Father will enter the Kingdom (Mt 7:21). Relatedly, the Kingdom will be populated by such people as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Mt 8:11). Paul leverages the concept of the Kingdom as a means by which to establish the appropriate "walk" of the Christian—that is, to walk in a way that is worthy of God's Kingdom (1 Th 2:12). The concept of the Kingdom in the biblical record reflects a strong connection with righteousness and spiritual maturity.

This connection between the Kingdom and individual maturity is discussed in the spiritual formation literature. Boone states that Pentecostal Christian formation occurs in an environment of the Kingdom on earth. Boone (1996:132-133) writes, "As such it will be a social-spiritual matrix which is permeated by the ideals, values and ethics of the kingdom of God." Formation, therefore, emerges from and reflects the worldview of God's Kingdom. For Boone, this occurs in the context of compassionate community. Bowers explains that the Wesleyan-Pentecostal pursuit of the Spirit-filled life which leads to holiness causes the Kingdom to be both a present and future reality. Bowers (1995:76) writes, "The regenerating, sanctifying and empowering Spirit is the Spirit of the kingdom." In this way, the Spirit-filled Christian bears witness to the Kingdom in the present. Such lived testimony should be present in all aspects of the believer's life, including "social, economic, cosmic" dimensions. Foster (2009:141-142) states that the Kingdom is available through Christ. Further the spiritual disciplines are meant to train believers for "for life in the kingdom." Foster links this idea with John 14:6, Colossians 3:3, and 2 Timothy 1:9, for in Christ we

"become our true self in the Word made flesh". For Foster, the Kingdom represents perfection, and life in the Kingdom would therefore require a finalized process of formation in Christ. Kang (2008:200) discusses the Kingdom in relation to Christian education and formation, maintaining that formation toward the Kingdom involves thought, belief, attitudes, action, and lifestyle, which must all reflect "kingdom norms" rather than cultural norms. Further, teachers in the Christian educational context must live out the expressions of these Kingdom norms in an authentic manner, demonstrating Kingdom principles in maturity and willingness to pursue ongoing transformation. This includes both an internal manifestation, as well as the establishment of the Kingdom through the teacher. In all these perspectives, spiritual formation can be seen as an internalization of the qualities of God's righteous Kingdom.

These views provide a contrast to Stevens' theory which point to one of its weaknesses, which is his overemphasis on the spiritual over the natural. Perhaps the strongest critique of Stevens' teachings on the Kingdom is his overemphasis on the Kingdom as a spiritual reality. While it is accurate to recognize the spiritual nature of the Kingdom—that is it exists in its fulness in heaven—Stevens' teachings are rather weak when it comes to delineating how exactly the Kingdom is established in a practical manner on earth, or what it looks like. This is a sharp example of a widespread eccentricity in Stevens' writings—which is an overemphasis on the spiritual dimensions of the Christian life to the detriment of discussing the concrete ethical or social dimensions. To be fair, this criticism is somewhat mitigated by the angle at which we are assessing his teachings on the Kingdom—that is, from the perspective of formation in a walk with God. Stevens does address communal concerns surrounding his treatment of the Kingdom (1981b:483-492; 2007c:272-297). However, he still does not achieve a concrete vision regarding the kinds of socio-cultural manifestations one might expect of mature individuals on a Kingdom mission.

In Stevens' writings, the communal aspect of the Kingdom is largely relegated to its manifestation in the Church. While this is an important aspect of how the Kingdom becomes visible on earth, Stevens nearly ignores altogether the missional aspects of the establishment of the Kingdom. It seems as though Stevens assumes that the internal transformation of the believer in pursuit of the Kingdom will automatically lead to proper social engagement. Stevens is mostly apolitical, but also at times seems anti-political, stating that in order to prioritize the Kingdom, believers must disengage from ungodly Babylon (Rev 18:4; Stevens 2007c:161). For Stevens (1986:371), being citizens of the Kingdom (Phil 3:20) is the preeminent political attitude for believers. The lack of detail

regarding the individual's activity in social and political dimensions of the Kingdom is a rather dramatic deficiency in a theory of spiritual formation which emphasizes the Kingdom as an important element. This underscores the weakness of an individualistic paradigmatic concept. The image of walking with God skews toward the singular, and perhaps leads to a critical blindness to community and global mission. While Stevens emphasizes community in the process of Christian maturity, his treatment of it is limited to the mature believing community. This leaves unaddressed the practical ways in which the mature believer is meant to establish the Kingdom on social, cultural, or political levels. However, Stevens was most likely constrained in his discussion of this due to a reticence to be associated with Liberal theology. In the effort to place distance between himself and liberal Christianity, Stevens possibly avoided the discussion of topics they emphasized—such as the liberation of the oppressed on political and societal levels. This naturally leads to a gap in his writings.

On the other hand, Marshall (1990:223) argues that Jesus' concern in His teachings on the Kingdom of God is not social action, but the individual's relationship with God, out of which will result proper Kingdom behavior. The relational issues of forgiveness, community, love of God and neighbor, and dedication to Christ all express proper Kingdom lifestyle. Marshall furthers his relational view of the Kingdom in recognizing Jesus' inculcation of the person of the Father in his discussion of the Kingdom, particularly in the Lord's Prayer (cf. Mt 13:43, 25:34, 19:28; Lk 12:32. 22:29ff), as well as the connection between the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom (cf. Jn 3:3, 5; Rom 14:17; Gal 5:21ff; 1 Cor 4:20). From this perspective, Stevens may be right to prioritize the relational/spiritual aspects of the Kingdom, as it seems to reflect the emphasis given in the teachings of Jesus. Perhaps this is primarily indicative to the proper ordering of the Christian life, rather than a conveyance of value. In other words, a certain degree of individual maturity is a prerequisite for Kingdom mission. This does not mean that individual maturity should be valued as greater than community or mission. Stevens' view in this regard seems to be strongly informed by the KJV translation of Luke 17:21: "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Stevens does view the Kingdom as a coming, world-wide, physical reality. However, his teachings largely focus on the spiritual dimension of the Kingdom. Most modern translations render the last half of Luke 17:21 in this way: "For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst" (NASB). While the latter translation seems more in favor today (cf. Stein 1993:438), there are still some proponents of the former (cf. Hendriksen and Kistemaker 2001:804-805). The context of the passage supports the

"within you" translation, for Jesus' purpose here seems to be summarized in His statement that "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed" (v20). The Christian focus is not on the visible Kingdom, but rather the Kingdom as it is reflected in the hearts and actions of its citizens (cf. Phil 3:20). While Stevens' spiritual view of the Kingdom may rightly highlight what is of primary importance, this does not dismiss the gap of missing details on the social and political ramifications of the Kingdom in the context of the activities of spiritual formation.

The third aspect of Stevens' inclusion of the Kingdom in his theory of spiritual formation continues to show a similar weakness of over-spiritualization. This aspect involves the external establishment of the Kingdom through mature believers. Firstly, we must ask whether it is theologically accurate to state that the Kingdom is created on earth through the actions of Christians.

Graybeal and Roller (2009c:49-50) look at the sending out of the seventy (Lk 10:1-11, 17) as an illustrative story of "being the good news" of the Kingdom. The actions of the mature disciples miraculously demonstrated the truth of Jesus Christ and the power of His Kingdom. This story may serve as an example of what present-day disciples of Jesus should express in their communities and the world. Marshall (1990:234) writes, "The idea that the [kingdom of God] expands of its own accord independently of the action of God's agents is thoroughly false…. If Jesus came to bring the [kingdom of God], we must also conclude that his followers were commissioned by him to carry out the same task." The Great Commission is the mission of the Kingdom. Jesus' as King necessarily requires that His disciples care about His Kingdom. Scotland (2011:288-290; cf. Cartledge 2016:102, 106) states that seeing the Kingdom as maintaining dimensions in both present and future (both "now" and "not yet"), has caused Charismatics to see the Kingdom as both a spiritual and physical reality. This theological view of the Kingdom "provides a sustaining spirituality and a motivating force and ideology to engage in incarnating the gospel by acts of compassionate care and social transformation" (Scotland 2011:289). Relatedly, Chilton (2005:249) states that Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the Kingdom (Mt 6; Lk 11) "because he hoped for it to be fully present to all people." Chilton maintains that Jesus' teachings show the Kingdom to be "active", and therefore the response to the Kingdom cannot only be cognitive. Chilton (2005:249-250) focuses on how the Kingdom was first demonstrated in Jesus, but also how the current activity of believers becomes "an instrument of its revelation, an aspect of its radiance" which reveal and manifest the Kingdom today. There are certainly meritorious theological views which assert a role for

believers in the establishment of the Kingdom.

On the other hand, Wright (2010:Loc.1149-1153) states that while the establishment of the Kingdom is achieved by Jesus and the Holy Spirit, believers anticipate the coming Kingdom by Spirit-led practices of faith, hope, and love which reflects the glory of God. In this view, believers do not create or manifest the Kingdom in any real way, but rather express their expectation of faith in a character which reflects Kingdom holiness. It is possible, therefore, to see the establishment of the Kingdom as beyond the scope of believers' responsibilities. If so, this third element of the Kingdom is moot.

Of the three aspects, this one is the most suspect as to whether it should be included in a theory of spiritual formation. Certainly, addressing the eschatological dimension of spiritual formation is necessary in a holistic theory. The motivational (seek first the Kingdom), and ontological (internalized Kingdom) aspects of Kingdom are viable—and perhaps integral—elements of Christian maturity. However, the establishment of the Kingdom by the spiritually mature reflects the consequential fruit of spiritual formation, rather than the process of spiritual formation. Seeking first the Kingdom emphasizes the submissional aspect of the Kingdom as a formative concern, and the internalized Kingdom emphasizes the manifestation of the coming Kingdom in Christ's disciples on earth today. However, the establishment of the Kingdom does not emphasize any aspect of spiritual formation aside from its realization.

However, we may clarify this further by seeing the establishment of the Kingdom as occurring primarily by divine activity, but still furthered by believers through whom He acts. The participation in missions, evangelism, and social actions may have spiritually formative power to them. These may overlap with the "seek first" category, but they also should be seen as contributing to the establishment of the Kingdom. Therefore, Stevens' third aspect of Kingdom might be appropriate to a theory of spiritual formation in a limited capacity. Certainly the divine aspect which determines the presence of the Kingdom is not a concern of spiritual formation, for it crosses the boundaries of the topic and best belongs in conversations regarding eschatology. The human effort toward the Kingdom may be seen as having relevance, though. It may be beneficial to include this discussion as a way to connect spiritual formation to the larger concerns of Christian theology, but its usefulness in the study of Christian growth is somewhat limited.

Once again, it is important to note that Stevens overwhelmingly discusses these elements

in spiritual terms. Without attendant detail on practical Kingdom matters along the axis of socio-cultural transformation, the inclusion of the Kingdom in a theory of spiritual formation is incomplete. It is less than satisfactory to leave the cultural, social, and political aspects of the Kingdom unaddressed in a theory which purportedly recognizes the visible establishment of the Kingdom by transformed believers. This problem is exacerbated by Stevens' somewhat premillennialist view. He believed that Jesus' return is imminent (Stevens 2007b:1236) and that there would be a thousand year period in which His Kingdom would be established (Stevens 2007b:921-925). What are mature believers to do on a global scale to aid in establishing the Kingdom on earth? If the Kingdom is an ongoing concern in spiritual formation, then a description of what it might look like beyond the confines of the individual and the ecclesial community would be important inclusions. For these reasons, the goal of Kingdom work accomplished by mature believers should perhaps be mentioned as a byproduct of spiritual formation, but not included as a primary eschatological dimension of spiritual formation.

5.7 The Nature of Sin

Stevens focuses on the sin nature dramatically more often than the actions of sin. In his view, Christians are not meant to be stuck in a cyclical loop of sin and forgiveness, but rather must be liberated by Christ into a new nature which precludes sinful activity. Making the sin nature itself the tactical priority of the salvation of Jesus deeply affects Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. Is Stevens' emphasis on the sin nature reflective of the biblical emphasis, particularly as it relates to the salvific work of Jesus? If not, Stevens' theory of spiritual formation might not be in complete accord with Scripture. An investigation into the theological bases of this focus on the sin nature is required to ensure that the theory correctly accounts for the Christian issues of sin and salvation. One of the core issues in this regard is Stevens' view of the human nature as lacking any capacity for self-generated change, particularly due to its inherent sinfulness. This view causes Stevens to take a stance that sees transformation as impossible without divine intervention. One of the provenancial ideas which shapes Stevens' theory is the inability for the human to achieve lasting spiritual change independent from God. While it seems that the foundational doctrines of sin and salvation support Stevens' view, it may be possible that he is overstating the case. The focus on the nature of sin rather than the actions of sin once again emphasizes the centrality of ontology in Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. In some ways, the ontological view of sin mirrors the very nature of spiritual formation itself,

which is concerned with the growth of the believer—that is, the ontological state of the individual. In this way, approaching the issue of sin from a primarily ontological standpoint is commensurate with the makeup of the topic of Christian maturity. Due to this ontological approach, we again turn to Kierkegaard in the beginning of this exploration.

For Kierkegaard, sin cannot be truly understood in abstraction, but must be a personal matter in seeing the sin in oneself. The awareness of sin is required to know the self, for the human being is a sinful creature. Authenticity begins with this recognition. In turn, this awareness of sinful self presents the opportunity for the human to either accept or reject Christ. It is this choice which directs the formation of the human either toward Christ in faith, or away from Him in offense (Davis 1992:158). In Kierkegaard's view, the need for the revelation of sin outweighs even the need for the revelation of salvation (Marino 1998:312). Without a revelation of sin, there can be no recognition of the need for salvation. Truly religious people will confess their inability to achieve ethical ideals due to the human nature of sin. If there is to be any movement toward the realization of self, it must begin with an awareness of internal sin. This once again brings us back to Kierkegaard's relational approach to spiritual formation, for the awareness of sin is meant primarily as a motivation toward the inner life and to Christ as the answer to change the sin nature (cf. Davis 1992:157-158).

In order to achieve the ethical, the human being must be brought out of the prohibitive sinful state. "Allowing oneself to be transformed by God is, in short, more important than fulfilling one's duty" (Moore 2007:xxiv). Moral duty is impossible to achieve without transformation. Only Christianity provides an answer to this problem of the sin nature. The recognition of sin and the choice to turn away from sin is a gift from God. The genuine believer, therefore, relies solely upon God from the very foundation of the Christian life. In this way, Kierkegaard suggests that sin is a relational issue, rather than an ethical issue. Anxiety and despair are expressions of sin in that they reflect the human's alienation from God (cf. Mt 6:24-34; Walsh 2009:80). Sin reflects a disconnected relationship with God. Death in the Christian context, according to Kierkegaard, is a life of separation from God (Rae 2010:90-95; Puchniak 2011:185-186). The human need for a meaningful existence is found in the relationship with God in which personal sin is acknowledged (Rudd 2008:187).

Kierkegaard makes a few important philosophical moves here. The first is that he equates knowledge of self with knowledge of sin, at least in the beginning stages of the process toward becoming an authentic individual. The self cannot be understood or worked with

prior to the awareness of sin. There is therefore no ontological progress without addressing the issue of sin. This accords with Stevens' view, in which the process of change is impossible if the sin nature itself is not addressed. The sin nature is the ontological root of external activities of sin.

Kierkegaard also recognizes the relational issues surrounding sin, maintaining that the awareness of the sin nature is a prerequisite for the recognition for the need of Christ. Certainly, Christ's salvation will not be seen as necessary by the individual unless he or she sees the overwhelming need for it due to the ugly truth of indwelling sin. Kierkegaard's relational understanding of sin, particularly as it functions toward the ethical, is a philosophical rendering of Stevens' view. While the ethical is an impersonal abstraction of religious values, sin is a deeply ontological matter. The ethical approach to sin attempts to regulate the sin nature, while spiritual formation attempts to transform the being in order to diminish the capacity or desire for sin. Ethics are often impersonal due to the propensity to decontextualize them from human nature and the limits of human capacity. However, sin is personal. The road to formation begins with an eye-opening revelation of personal sin nature. However, the contextualization of this revelation must be centered on sin's role in separating the human from God. The truly impactful aspect of sin is not the "wrongness" of an action, but rather the dividing force of sin itself which disables the divine-human relationship.

The ontological view of sin might be seen in terms of identity. Volpe (2013:230) suggests that the concept of discipleship is necessary in properly understanding the relationship between sin and Christian identity. Christian identity is oriented toward living in God to reflect His image, therefore taking on Christ's identity. Sin is therefore anything "which blocks reception, blurs reflection, and attenuates participation" (Volpe 2013:230). Sin functions according to desire and imagination, which together direct the attention of the believer (Volpe 2013:231). The transformation mentioned in Romans 12:1-2 is one in which the whole person—including body (bodily sacrifice), spirit (spiritual worship), and mind (renewing the mind)—reorient away from the world toward God. In this view, sin is not action or inaction, but rather "the orientation of all my action and inaction" (Volpe 2013:233).

The ontological view of sin is reflected in Willard (2014b:146-147), for whom sin is the product of a dysfunction in the inner life (Eph 2:1). However, this dysfunction ultimately boils down to the human will, which will always express sin in some manner, regardless of

the desire to do good (Rom 7:19). Willard (2014b:83-84) does not see the flesh nature to be inherently evil, but rather formed toward evil in a godless life (Gen 4:7; Rom 7:18). Willard understands the concept of "flesh" to include the body itself. The body has its own desires, but these desires are mutable in God (Rom 8:13; 1 Cor 9:27; 1 Pet 2:11; Jas 1:14-15). Willard (2014b:14) states that Christians sin, and that those who sin are slaves to sin (Jn 8:34). Willard (2014b:63-64) emphasizes that every believer, no matter how mature, still maintains the capability of sinning. For Willard, the Gospel cannot only be about sin, but must also address the transformation into new life. Further, for Willard, sin is the product of being separate from God, Who is righteousness (Porter 2010:254). Therefore an effective addressing of sin requires the reconnection of a relationship with God.

Both Volpe and Willard identify sin primarily as an ontological issue, whether being disconnected from identity in Christ, or possessing a dysfunctional inner life. If the inner being can be changed, then the actions of sin will desist. These models emphasize the transformation of the root cause of sin as the proper Christian addressing of it. They demonstrate the mirroring of the concern for the ontological in the topics of spiritual formation and the Christian view of sin. Stevens' view of sin is therefore a viable Christian perspective which is particularly of use in the context of spiritual formation.

Further, there are relational views of sin in contemporary scholarship. Land (1992:34-35) suggests that sin is ultimately a refusal of central existential purpose expressed in love for God and neighbor. Coe (2009:35-36) states that sin is a state of spiritual death (Gen 2:17) which results from a lack of unity with God (cf. 1 Cor 6:17). Therefore, sin is relational disunity with God. Being born into this sinful state results in a corrupted psychological state in which human life is lived independently of God. Habermas (2008:181) states that sin causes estrangement in relationships with God and fellow humans. Since Christianity is fundamentally relational, particularly due to the foundational doctrine of the Trinity, sin necessarily implies a faulty relational connection. Mosser (2002:41-42) describes Calvin's concept of *imago Dei* in terms of sin and theosis, stating that the original image of God was corrupted in rebellion and sin, but restored in unification with Christ. The relationship with God in union with Christ is transformational and addresses the failings of sin in an ontological sense. Perrin (2007:134) describes sin in terms of the goal of spiritual formation: "Sin is a description of the ways people have not achieved the goal of living fully the imago Dei in the here and now."

In these views we see an emphasis on the relational addressing of ontological sin. These

views clarify Stevens' approach in this regard, for sin can be seen as working in two directions in the divine relationship. Firstly, sin breaks the relationship with God. If humans are meant to find unity with God via Christ, then sin must be addressed at its root, for it disrupts this desired state. Secondly, the relationship with God is required to address the sin nature. Unification with Christ is the only antidote to ontological sin.

In the Scriptures, sin is certainly seen as a pervasive, consistent reality for humanity (Rom 7:17-19). However, Scriptures concerning sin often provide contrasting answers in God. The Psalmist states that his very conception was iniquitous, but God will give him wisdom in his inner being, and purify him to be whiter than snow (Ps 51:5-7). This presents a poetic picture of ontological transformation from sin to purity through the work of God. Humans are said to be slaves to Sin, but by dying with Christ, the believer is freed from that slavery (Rom 6:6-8). The ongoing state of slavery to internal problems can be disrupted by the applied sacrifice of Christ. Those who walk in sin are characterized by the futility of their thinking, their hardness of heart, their pursuit of impure practices, and their exclusion from the life of God (Eph 4:17-19). However, those in Christ, will lay aside that old self, be renewed in the mind, and take on a new self which reflects God's righteousness (vv22-24). The newness of self is an ontological answer to sin which comes by a relationship with Christ. In these Scriptures regarding sin, we see a pattern of an ontological problem and the relational answer.

This discussion has identified a few aspects of the role of sin in spiritual formation which contribute some missing clarity in Stevens' theory. Firstly, viewing sin as an ontological reality is commensurate with spiritual formation, which is ultimately concerned with the ontological state of the believer. For this reason, Stevens' focus on the sin nature rather than the actions of sin is appropriate in the context of spiritual formation. Secondly, and relatedly, the relational view of sin encompasses both human estrangement from God (as the result of sin) and the answer to the problem of sin in the relationship with Christ. Finally, the discussion of sin in general should be accompanied by God's answers of salvation and sanctification. Again we find the twin concepts of ontology and relationship standing at the center of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. The clarification of these foundational concepts as they emerge throughout Stevens' theory is an essential movement toward clarifying and augmenting Stevens' writings on a walk with God. As Kierkegaard maintains, the awareness of internal sin in the individual is the starting point for the awareness of the need for Christ. The recognition of sin almost automatically leads to an attendant recognition for spiritual formation. This is even more clearly articulated—as

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Stevens chooses to do—by focusing the discussion of sin on the sin nature itself. The distinction in how this shapes a theory of spiritual formation is rather dramatic. A theology of sin situated in sinful action would produce a theory of spiritual formation focused on self-improvement activity. However, a theory which emphasizes the sin nature will stress the necessity of ontological change. Certainly the transformation of being, rather than the improvement of action, is a stronger theological goal for Christian spiritual formation.

5.8 The Role of Impartation

Foundational to Stevens' concept of the nature of spiritual change is spiritual impartation. Stevens' conception of the sin nature requires God's concerted action toward the maturing of his believers. This occurs primarily, it seems, through the spiritual mechanism of impartation. Impartation is the spiritual bestowal of a divine gift or attribute, either directly by God to the believer, or indirectly, through such processes as the laying on of hands. Appropriation is closely related, involving the believer's active reception of a spiritual gift or divine attribute. Both impartation and appropriation are forms of transference, in which spiritual realities are transferred. A theory in which humans are not directly able to produce their own spiritual growth requires a detailed accounting for God's own activity, otherwise the theory would describe a futile endeavor. Stevens' presents transference as the mechanism which embodies God's activity in the process of Christian transformation. In exploring Stevens' position, we must first examine whether human change is completely dependent upon God, and if so, why?

Foster (2009:15-16) states that the ingrained patterns of sin are impossible to change through human effort. Foster (2012:136) maintains that the human does not have the capacity for spiritual self-improvement: "God is the One who brings about our inward transformation into Christlikeness." Willard (2014b:17) agrees, writing: "there can be no doubt, on the biblical picture of human life, that we were meant to be inhabited by God and to live by a power beyond ourselves. Human problems cannot be solved by human means." Only an external influence can break the internal constraint of sin. The external influence is the Gospel of Christ (Willard 2014b:148-150). This disruptive revelation is an expression of supernatural grace. The conviction of sin is the realization that the desire for good is overwhelmed by the dysfunction of human nature. This conviction must then lead to a determination to rely on God for any true change to occur. The human cannot be a passive participant in spiritual formation, for a choice must be made. However, this choice is a choice of a relationship with the One who causes change. As the new life in Christ is

experienced and discovered, the believer must make ongoing plans and choices to continue to participate in this new life. These ongoing choices keep the believer in a process of transformation toward Christlikeness. Wambua (2014:28) states that Pentecostals recognize that holiness is only attained by the work of the Holy Spirit. Attempts to refrain from sin do not lead to a transformation of the sin nature. Kim (1996:196) connects the fallen state of the world with Satan's desire to usurp God's Kingship as well as Satan's attempt to lead humanity into this very sin by suggesting that people may be as god themselves (Gn. 3:5; Rom. 6:23). This theological view connects in a holistic manner the nature of sin and the impotency of independent attempts at change. In this way, the very attempt at self-sufficiency is a sin for it presupposes a God-like position.

Certainly, the Scriptures are in accord with the views presented above. God asks the rhetorical questions as to whether the Ethiopian can change his skin or if the leopard can change his spots (Jer 13:23). The answers are clearly no. God seems to use this as a metaphor for whether the households of Israel and Judah are able to choose to do good and not evil (vv 8, 22). The answer, again, is no. This describes the state of fallen humanity. The sentiment is echoed in Romans 7:14-20, wherein Paul states that he wishes to do good, but cannot, due to the sin indwelling him. Paul states that the Christian life begins by the Spirit, and therefore attempting to become perfected by the flesh is a futile endeavor (Gal 3:3). The human attempt to find perfection by following the works of the Law will never attain it. To the Philippians (1:6), Paul states that God began the work in the believers, and that He also will perfect it. In this same epistle, he writes, "it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (2:13). However, this is tempered with the admonition that the believer must "work out your salvation with fear and trembling". While God is the one who provides salvation and change, the believer must still "work this out" in a relationship with God. Further, Paul states that his righteousness comes from God by faith, and is not self-generated by his adherence to the Law (Phil 3:10). In a passage of God's unfolding salvation in Christ in Romans 8:29-30, it is clear that God is the One who accomplishes such things as justification and glorification in the process of the believer's conformation to the image of Christ. Further, the prayer of sanctification in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 situates God Himself as the One who sanctifies the entirety of the believer. Finally, Hebrews 12:2 states that Christ is the "author and perfecter of faith". From inception to completion, the spiritual formation of the individual believer is dependent upon God's work in Christ, further mediated by the Holy Spirit.

The first building block of Stevens' means of change in Christian spiritual formation is therefore set. The believer is unable to generate his or her own transformation. The process is completely dependent upon God's activity. If God is the generator of change, then believers must find some way in which God's transformative power affects them. Stevens identifies the medium of such transformation in the paradigmatic concept of a walk with God. This stance is described by Foster (2009:44-45), who states that the entirety of Scripture poses a question from God: "I am with you—will you be with Me?" The relationship is initiated by God (Rom 5:8; Eph 2:8-9), but the believer must accept the invitation. Foster (2009:45) writes, "From Genesis to Revelation, throughout human history, the Bible tells the stories of people learning to turn back to God. Always, it is God's grace and power drawing them and supporting them, giving them the means to become transformed into the kind of people who will gladly and freely choose life in the eternally loving community of God's People." Foster (2009:45-47) gives the examples of Abraham, Moses, the Israelites, David, Esther, Daniel, Jonah, Mary, and Peter as those who reveal this truth of transformation by the challenges of a relationship with God. This description aids in specifying the theological foundation of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. The relationship with God is the formative connection between the believer and the Source of all change. However, we must still account for the mechanism by which this change occurs. Stevens identifies the principle of transference as this mechanism. However, is impartation a valid Christian theological principle? Do we find its discussion in the Bible?

First, we shall turn to Kierkegaard to begin this investigation. Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication is a description of imparted truth (Mooney 2007:207-209). While direct teaching communicates data, indirect teaching imparts and transfers existential realities such as virtue, freedom, commitment, and passion. Indirect communication is highly relational, involving expressiveness, questions, reflection, and friendship. The direct address of a teacher toward the conveyance of information is not effective with existential topics. For Kierkegaard, a true teacher is one that imparts heart, not skill (Mooney 2010:80-82). Kierkegaard maintains this view because he sees direct communication as an overpowering of the student's own activities of learning, which are of utmost importance with topics of self.

Kierkegaard applies this concept of indirect communication to Christ as Teacher, thereby bringing it into the domain of Christian spiritual formation. Christ is Kierkegaard's foremost example of indirect communication of imparted truth. Christian truth can only be properly interacted with, understood, and applied when subjectively appropriated (Pattison

2003:120). Direct religious teaching too easily devolves into legalism, in which actions are dictated in the imperative with no regard for individuality. The "imperatives of faith" must be appropriated internally for them to be genuinely exercised by an authentic self. Pattison (2003:157) writes: "the recipient's task is not merely to reduplicate the content of a given factual statement, to make their own the faith once delivered to the saints, but to come to self-affirmation in the freedom of their own response." This is an ontological reflection of received truth, rather than an orthodoxic or orthopraxic one. This view characterizes the primary concern of Christianity to be the spiritual formation of the believer.

Kierkegaard's view of transformation is essentially one of spiritual positioning. The individual must exist in authenticity before God in order to achieve transformation. Moore (2007:xxi) writes, "The speculative thinker makes Christianity into theology, instead of recognizing that a living relationship to Christ involves passion, struggle, decision, personal appropriation, and inner transformation." The appropriation of Christ—that is, the internalization of His substance in relationship—leads to inner transformation. Enns (2002:89) writes, "If, for Kierkegaard, appropriation is the key to becoming a theological self, then it seems to follow that this self is to be identified with something interior, hidden, known only to the individual." Kierkegaard viewed the entire project of Christianity as one of appropriation, in which Christ is internalized by the believer in a relationship with him. Relatedly, Turnbull states that Kierkegaard identified the essential aspect of being a Christian as the baptism in which the believer is touched by God's spirit. Turnbull (2010:498) writes, "The unique and absolutely differentiating mark of Christianity is the inwardness and appropriation of God's spirit alive in me." The reception of God's Spirit, internal to the human being, is the distinctive experience of Christianity. Impartation in the scope of a relationship with Christ is therefore a fundamental explanation of Christianity itself.

Many of these Kierkegaardian concepts are certainly at work in Stevens' theory of spiritual formation, but they are not directly discussed. The distinction between direct and indirect teaching is a useful one in seeing the purposes of both preaching and impartation. Direct teaching may convey truth in an informational sense, but impartation conveys truth in an interior sense. Perhaps we might see them as corresponding to the mental and spiritual dimensions of the human being. Both are needed in order to live a complete Christian life, but orthodoxy without ortho-ontology can be nothing but incomplete. Transference may also be understood as a mechanism which addresses both the relational and ontological needs of Stevens' view of the believer's complete reliance on God. Personal appropriation

of God's life occurs in a relationship with Him. This is a relational conveyance which only occurs indirectly. It is the spiritual mechanism of change toward Christlikeness.

Impartation and appropriation are also discussed in contemporary Christian scholarship. Mosser (2002:43) reads Calvin as proposing that the benefits given to us through Christ are only received by Christ's dwelling within the believer. For this reason, union with Christ is an impartational reality (cf. Mosser 2002:36). This makes impartation a fundamental mechanism behind Christ's salvation and sanctification. Harp (2014:49) writes, "Spiritual formation as a grace-catalyzed activity is divinely initiated, divinely inspired, divinely infused, and divinely imparted." God's grace itself is expressed in His impartation to His believers. Relatedly, Gause (2009:96) states that the Wesleyan Pentecostal view of sanctification "presses the language of impartation, cleansing and transformation." Therefore, Stevens' reliance on impartation is true to his denominational background. Impartation is further related to spiritual formation in that it seems to be an ontological understanding of spiritual relationship. Gause explains that the activity of both Word and Spirit imparts holiness because the ontological state of Word and Spirit is that of holiness. Gause (2009:100-101) writes, "Holiness of nature is paramount for both Word and Spirit because holiness of nature is ontological to both Word and Spirit. There can be no endowment of the power of the Holy Spirit that is not also an experience in righteousness and purity." Transference therefore does not contribute to the believers' being in non-transformative or non-additive ways.

How does impartation work? Nouwen (2010:Loc.381-386) includes the concept of transference in his description of spiritual formation: "This process of self-emptying and spirit filling is called spiritual formation—the gradual development of the heart of God in the life of a human being, aided by contemplative prayer, inclusive community, and compassionate ministry." In order to be filled, the believer must first be emptied. Appropriation requires an internal act of "making room" for the impartation from God by the Spirit. This is a practical explanation of a spiritual process. While the believer may be unable to produce change, he or she might certainly pursue self-emptying through confession, repentance, and prayer. Nouwen's concept seems to be a prerequisite attitude toward the Christian spiritual life.

Others rely on the disciplines as the means by which impartation occurs. Murphy (2001:325) states that acts of liturgy are not symbolic but rather an enacting and appropriation of spiritual reality. Murphy (2001:326-327) explains that engaging in

eucharistic liturgy, for example, produces "an alternative ontology, a countercommunity, a different polis, another way of being." The impartation of Christ in this act causes transformation. For Murphy, the shared acts of worship are far and above more effective toward catechesis than any formal instruction, as it would be devoid of the impartational knowledge of genuine practice. This could be seen as a form of indirect communication. Johnson (2001:318) states that spiritual formation occurs by the grace of God. However, "Our task can be seen as the subjective appropriation of God's objective salvific work on our behalf." Putting on Christ is this appropriation (Rom 13:14). Johnson characterizes the disciplines—also known as the means of grace, devotions, or Christian practices—as acts of appropriation. Wesley included such activities as the Lord's Supper, reading and meditating on Scripture, prayer, fasting, and works of charity among the means of grace which cause transformation (Johnson 2001:319). Foster (2012:208-210) discusses the laying on of hands as an act of transmittal. Foster (2012:208) writes: "It is one means through which God imparts to us what we desire or need, or what God in his infinite wisdom knows is best for us. It is one of the elementary matters of the Gospel without which we cannot go on to maturity (Heb. 6:1–6)." Spiritual gifts are imparted by the laying on of hands (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). The life of Christ is imparted in the miracle of healing, also by the laying on of hands (Mk 6:5; 8:22-25; 16:18; Acts 28:7-10).

All of this serves to confirm and clarify Stevens' conception of transference. Transference is a principle which functions within union with Christ. The believer's spiritual identification with Christ allows for an ontological conveyance of His attributes. Transference is also an act in which Word and Spirit are internalized. The Word of God is not only a conceptual encapsulation of God's truth, but is ontologically associated with God. The impartation of the Word of God is therefore a transformative act. The Word of God may be cognitively understood without causing an attendant change of being, but Stevens is disinterested in this way of relating to the God and His Word. Rather, the ontological transformation looked for by Stevens requires the methodology of transference. Further, the Holy Spirit imparts holiness to the believer. While impartation is ultimately up to God, the believer is able to act in self-emptying ways in order to prepare for affective appropriation. In these ways, transference fits into the relational mode of Stevens' approach to spiritual formation.

However, what is unclear is the way in which transference changes the being of the believer. Cross (2009:27-28) delineates Calvin's view that Christ's essence does not get transferred to the human being, but rather the Holy Spirit is the Agent by which believers are brought into union with Christ. Cross quotes Calvin's *Institutes* (xxi: 4.17.12), that the

Holy Spirit is "like a channel through which all that Christ himself is and has is conveyed to us". According to Cross, Calvin rejects the concept of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and instead emphasizes union with Christ. In this conception the righteousness of Christ is only "borrowed" in a sense as the believer maintains union with Christ. Christlikeness would therefore not be a permanent ontological change, but rather an ontological overlay of Christ's nature onto the believer for the duration of his or her union with Christ. Similarly, Austin (2015:180-181), following Rakestraw (1997:261), sees theosis not as an ontological change, but rather an ontological participation in divine life. Austin explains that the participation in view here is similar to the how the Church Fathers viewed it, which is that the human being's received life is derivative of God's, not in essence, as that of God. Austin (2015:181) writes, "We participate in God's knowledge, virtue, and love; we do not become God's knowledge, virtue, and love. Our nature is distinct from God's nature, but when deification is a reality in our lives we possess such qualities in part from God and in dependence on God, who possesses them fully and essentially by his nature." The human character is transformed, but it is still essentially a human nature, not divine. Union with Christ is engaged in relationship, and this union continually imparts elements of the divine nature toward spiritual formation.

The difference between imputation and impartation is an important one. Imputation designates a change in attribution acknowledged by a third party without any true interaction between the subject and object of imputation. Impartation, on the other hand, indicates a true interchange between the subject and object. While God may ascribe Christ's righteousness by imputation in the event of justification, genuine ontological change occurs by impartation, which occurs in the process of sanctification. Shontz (1997:39) relies on Beveridge in suggesting that justification is a result of imputation, while sanctification is a result of impartation. If this is true, then impartation would follow the pattern of Jesus, in which "human nature itself became sanctified", for God refused that the human nature of His Son would be in anywise evil upon his sacrifice (Shontz 1997:39-40). The impartation of Christ's nature is therefore a process by which the believer is transformed. Shontz (1997:40) writes, "Thus by the infusion of Deity into the human soul, the human soul is so permeated with the Divine influences that it takes on the characteristics of Deity." Similarly, Studebaker (2003:253) characterizes Wesley's view of justification as subjective, imputed righteousness, while sanctification is an implanted righteousness which results in objective change. In this view, both imputation and impartation are possible, and are found in different "stages" of Christian spiritual formation.

Ultimately, genuine ontological change is the result of impartation.

However, we are to find no clarity on this point with Stevens. His writings on these concepts suffer from a lack of precision, particularly in his use of the terms *impartation* and *imputation*. At times he seems to use them interchangeably (1988:263; 2007d:526-527), while other times he differentiates between them (1989:548-549; 2007c:510). It seems, however, that regardless of this lack of precision, Stevens agrees with the idea that genuine ontological change is possible through impartation. However, it also seems that Stevens sees the initial mechanism of salvation to primarily be one of imputation, for he states that Jesus did not sin, yet had all sin laid upon him via imputation (cf. Is 53:6; 2 Cor 5:21), and Christ's righteousness was imputed to the believer (Stevens 1977b:73). When Stevens does differentiate between the two, imputation reflects a starting point in initiating the potential of the believer's relationship with God. It is the same spiritual principle at work in Romans 4:11, in which righteousness is "credited" or "reckoned" to Abraham. Abraham was not ontologically righteous, but God credited it to Him due to Abraham's faith, and this at least contributed to the closeness of their relationship. Imputation does not fundamentally change the believer, but it covers the sinful nature enough to allow for a connection with the divine. The main problem in this regard is Stevens' lack of precision. When the terms are distinguished, Stevens' use of imputation and impartation ultimately reflect contemporary theological views.

While both concepts of imputation and impartation seem scripturally tenable, and Stevens seems to endorse both in different contexts, it is possible that the distinction is effectively moot. Their underlying similarity is the requirement of relationship. The human can neither impute nor ascribe to him- or herself God's righteousness. God must do so. And He has chosen to do so in Christ. Further, impartation cannot occur outside of God's activity, often by the Holy Spirit. Whether or not the transformation which occurs by impartation is only a reflection of participation in Christ's holiness, or if impartation reflects genuine ontological change, both conceptions require a maintained relationship. No matter how it is conceived, impartation will cease if the relationship with God is broken. Further, it is possible that if true ontological transformation occurs, this transformation may very well be undone if the relationship with God is renounced in some permanent way. Ultimately, the paradigmatic concept of a walk with God functions in either model, for it positions spiritual formation as one aspect of an ongoing relational process.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter assessed, analyzed, and critiqued Stevens' theory of spiritual formation regarding the following topics: subjectivity, relationship, ontology, ethics, the Lordship of Christ, pneumatology, revelation, the Kingdom, the sin nature, and transference. In the discussion of these topics, the primary points of weakness were missing details and/or a lack of clarity in his writing—such as his lack of accounting for charges of subjectivity, the lack of theological foundation in the pneumatological component of his theory, and his unarticulated model of revelation. Other issues were identified, such as Stevens' avoidance of detailed clarification of Christian ethics, the gap of socio-cultural ramifications of the Kingdom, and his imprecise uses of the terms imputation and impartation. Finally, the one topic which was found to be a poor fit for a theory of spiritual formation is his inclusion of the establishment of the Kingdom by mature believers as a goal.

However, there are a number of strengths which emerge. Firstly, Stevens' theory of spiritual formation functions upon a robust accounting for relationship and ontology in Christian theology. While some of the foundations in this regard needed to be supplied by Kierkegaard and contemporary scholarship, Stevens' theory is largely compatible with a number of views and is found to function with even greater efficacy with such theo-philosophical concepts in place. Secondly, Stevens' choice to center spiritual formation upon the Lordship of Christ is a highly scriptural choice, for it properly defines the relationship the believers are meant to have—that is, one of submission to Jesus. Thirdly, Stevens' emphasis on revelation and impartation are compatible mechanisms with his relational paradigm. Fourthly, and relatedly, these mechanisms properly account for the sin nature, the impossibility of any believer's attempt at self-change, as well as the necessary transformational relationship with God. Finally, the Kingdom focus reflects a Christlike attitude in spiritual formation, for Christ Himself emphasized the Kingdom and the Kingdom lifestyle. While the assessment of Stevens' writings on a walk with God uncovered missing foundations, areas of weakness, and problems worthy of critique, overall the theory stands up to theological scrutiny. Even more importantly, it is sharpened by a diversity of views, and enriched by the interaction with other voices.

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation aimed to systematically identify, assess, analyze and critique John Robert Stevens' teachings on a walk with God. The primary question posed at the genesis of this project was: What unique contributions does Stevens' theology of a "walk with God" make to our fuller understanding of the nature of Christian spiritual formation? The hypothesis was that Stevens' concept of a walk with God represents a theory of spiritual formation which is both holistic and relational. It was further suggested that Stevens theory would be best clarified and sharpened through a comparison with the existentialism of Søren Kierkegaard because Stevens' view of Christian spiritual formation is existential in nature. Particularly, in Kierkegaard and Stevens' shared view of Christian truth as requiring personal, lived experience, the two complement each other rather well. While Stevens is highly scriptural in his use of terms, and much more reflective of "traditional" modes of Christianity, Kierkegaard provided a clarifying contrast in the investigation into Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. This final chapter will summarize the findings of this study and reflect upon their implications.

6.2 Summary of the Chapters

6.2.1 Summary of Chapter 1

The first chapter aimed to introduce the major elements of the dissertation. This included a brief description of the topic of Christian spiritual formation, the four axes by which theories

of spiritual formation may be assessed, as well as the two general gaps in the current literature: holism and relationship. Further, the chapter described John Robert Stevens as a historical figure and made the case that he was a Christian author worth studying on an academic level. The overlapping views of Stevens and Kierkegaard were described in miniature, highlighting their shared commitments to the application of the Word of God in an expression of lived Christianity, which leads to maturity through transformation in a relationship with God. Finally, the major questions and hypotheses of the project were presented. These hypotheses, as well as the relevant findings of the dissertation, will be reviewed together later in this chapter.

6.2.2 Summary of Chapter 2

The second chapter presented a literature review as an overview of the scholarly field of theories on spiritual formation. The aim of this literature review was two-fold. First, it laid a foundation in place regarding the extant theories of spiritual formation. Second, it explored the two gaps identified in chapter one—that is, the lack of holistic theories and theories which center on the believer's relationship with God.

This literature review was conducted using a four axes model: goal, paradigmatic concept, theo-philosophical underpinnings, and activities. This model was developed for this dissertation and it offers a number of advantages. Firstly, it offers a categorical approach to assessment which allows for consistent comparison across theories. In other words, the goals of all reviewed works may be grouped together and compared easily along these four axes. Secondly, it allows for an objective look at a theory's internal consistency. Each axis should function in harmony with every other axis. Thus, the goal should be consistent with the paradigmatic concept, and the theo-philosophical foundations should support the activities, etc. Finally, this model aids in identifying gaps in theories. For example, some theories do not present concrete activities. In reviewing the literature along these four axes, the review was properly assessive and geared toward the identification of holistic approaches.

Along the axis of the goals of spiritual formation, the literature was found to exist in three major categories: Christotelic, personality and character, and universal. Christotelic goals focus on Christ as the embodiment of the endpoint of Christian spiritual formation (see Hayford 2001; Dawson 2007; Packer 2009; Howard 2012; Willard 2014a). The next category emphasizes the growth of the character of the individual, either morally or in

finding the true self (see Hybels 1987; Pennington 2000; Benner 2009c; Wright 2010; Foster 2009; Benner 2011; Driskill 2012). The final category involves universal goals which address spiritual formation in the context of the overarching plan of God—that is, how spiritual maturity affects God's will for mankind and the world (see Bowers 1995; Benner 2009a; Christenson 2001; Habermas 2008; Greenman and Kalantzis 2010; Wright 2010). It is possible that some theories address more than one of these categories of goals simultaneously.

The axis of paradigmatic concepts identified six major categories: journey, developmental, educational, biblical, devotional, and relational. Journey paradigms discuss spiritual formation as a movement through a spiritual landscape toward a goal given by God (Mulholland 1993; Stanley 2002; Demarest 2009; Nouwen 2010). Developmental paradigms emphasize progressive growth, often in terms of stages of maturity (Fortosis 1992; Fowler 1995; Dawson 2007; Ashbrook 2009). Educational paradigms discuss spiritual formation in the context of Christian education (Palmer 1993; Gangel and Wilhoit 1998; Habermas 2008). Biblical paradigms are images or concepts taken directly from Scripture (Christenson 2001; Sanders 2008; Anderson and Reese 2009; Peterson 2010; Idleman 2015). Theories in the devotional category present paradigmatic concepts related to the devotional life, such as the disciplines (Foster 2002; Willard 2009b; Whitney 2014; and Calhoun 2015). Relational paradigms utilize imagery of the believer's relationship with God as the central guiding concept of Christian spiritual formation (Benner 2009; Foster 2009; Thomas 2010; Frost and Frost 2016).

Along the Theo-philosophical axis, foundational principles of spiritual formation fell into six major categories: systematic theology, doctrinal theology, biblical theology, denominational/ historical theology, interdisciplinary studies, and relational brands of theology. Systematic approaches utilize the Bible as a whole in the effort to generate proper fundamentals of spiritual formation (Dawson 2007; Willard 2009a; Wright 2010; Willard 2014a). Doctrinal approaches view spiritual formation through doctrinal topics such as eschatology, the Trinity, discipleship, and the social gospel (LeMasters 1992; Keefauver 2000; Koessler 2003; Searle and Searle 2013; Packer 2005; Sanders 2008; Vondey 2015). Biblical theology approaches focus on specific books or authors of the Bible (Peterson 2000; Stuckenbruck 2002; Peterson 2010; Jenkins 2011; Kendall 2015). Historical and denominational theology approaches view spiritual formation primarily through the study of the Christian authors of old or through specific denominational viewpoints (Bowers 1995; Foster 2001; Dreyer 2005; Valantasis 2005; Sims 2013; Vondey 2015). Interdisciplinary

studies utilize work in a wide range of fields—such as philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and general religious studies (May 1992; Crabb 1993; Fowler 1995; Steele's 1998; Conn 1999:96; Shults and Sandage 2006; Sandford and Sandford 2007; Ashbrook 2009). Relational theo-philosophical foundations focus on the theology behind a relationship with God (Foster 2002; Jenkins 2011; Farley 2014; Frost and Frost 2016).

The axis of activities was found to divide into five primary categories: devotional, study, denominational, spiritual counseling and direction, and attitudinal. Devotional activities are often referred to as the disciplines, including prayer, reading of Scripture, fasting, repentance, community, worship, and communion (Mulholland 1993; Bowers 1995; Peterson 2000; Boa 2001; Mulholland 2001; Foster 2002; Dawson 2007; Willard 2009b; Barton 2010; Nouwen 2010; Wright 2010; Benner 2012; Nelson 2012; Piper 2013). The study category focuses on the formative power of studying of the Word of God (Packer 1994; Blevins 1997; Keefauver 2000; Foster 2009; Graybeal and Roller 2009a; Curran 2010). The category of denominational activities includes formative activities which arise from particular denominational viewpoints (Bowers 1995; McMahan 2002; Archer 2004; Alvarado 2012; Howard 2012; Vondey 2015). The activities of spiritual counseling and direction are common enough to warrant their own category among the activities of spiritual formation (Conn 1999; Moon and Benner 2004; Anderson and Reese 2009; Pienaar 2015). Finally, there are activities recommended in the literature which are more descriptive of necessary attitudes in spiritual formation which must be actively pursued, such as obedience, love, and surrender (Christenson 2001; Koessler 2003; Dawson 2007; Benner 2009a; Willard 2009a).

After the literature review was complete, the two hypothesized deficiencies (holism and relationship) were further assessed. The lack of holism was found to be a fairly consistent characteristic of the literature. This lack critiques the presentations of theories in which all four axes are not properly related to and supportive of each other. The example of a theory of spiritual formation which all four axes are harmonized in a holistic manner is Wright's *After You Believe* (2010). Theories which came close to being holistic, but were deficient in some manner include those of Packer (2009), Peterson (2010), and Willard (2009a, 2009b, 2014a, 2014b). For Packer and Willard, the particular issue regarding holism was the lack of adequate discussion of formative activities. For Peterson, holism was lacking in his neglect to utilize his paradigmatic concept of resurrection throughout his work.

Relational approaches to spiritual formation would be theories which prioritize the

believer's relationship with God as the primary generator of formation. The literature review uncovered a number of theories which fit into this category, including Packer (2005), Bruce (2008), Benner (2009), Foster (2009), Thomas (2010), Jenkins (2011), Farley (2014), Polo-Wood (2014), and Frost and Frost (2016). For example, Thomas views love as formational and Farley emphasizes "relaxing with God". Primarily, theories which exhibit relational qualities tended to utilize paradigmatic concepts which are relational in nature. Frost and Frost present "sonship" as the relational paradigmatic concept for the nature of spiritual growth. Foster presents the concept of the "with-God life" in which God desires to be with His people in all aspects of life. In the course of the literature review in chapter 2, it was discovered that there was a greater representation of relational theories of spiritual formation than initially hypothesized. However, it was found that such theories nevertheless fail to be at once holistic, scriptural, and clearly enactable.

The literature review not only provided a foundation for the discussion of spiritual formation in the remainder of the dissertation, but also demonstrated the strengths of the four-axis model. This model was therefore utilized in chapter 3.

6.2.3 Summary of Chapter 3

The third chapter gave a synthesized presentation of Stevens' concept of a walk with God. In his original writings, Stevens did not present a systematized overview of his conception of a walk with God. The third chapter therefore identified the major components of a walk with God, systematized these components, and synthesized Stevens' writings into a cohesive summary of Stevens' position. The writings of Søren Kierkegaard provided a contrapuntal voice by which Stevens' concepts could be immediately compared and clarified. This study followed the structure introduced in the literature review by categorizing Stevens' synthetic theory of spiritual formation along the four axes of goal, paradigmatic concept, theo-philosophical foundations, and activities.

Along the axis of goal, Stevens theory maintains five components: Christlikeness, the establishment of the Kingdom, a relationship with God, individual purpose, and community maturity. Christlikeness represents the completion of the process identified in Romans 8:29, that believers would be conformed to the image of the Son. The establishment of the Kingdom is a universal *telos* which situates the individual's progressive maturity into the bigger picture of God's plan for creation. The believer's growth is encouraged by seeking the Kingdom, and the maturity of the believer represents the internalization of the

Kingdom. Further, Stevens sees that the Kingdom is established primarily by mature believers; therefore maturity is a requirement among those who endeavor to see the Kingdom on earth. The believer's relationship with God is the central component of each axis. While Stevens sees the relationship with God as the generator of change, it is vital to recognize that Stevens also situates a relationship with God as a goal of spiritual formation. The more maturity a believer achieves, the deeper and closer the relationship with God will become. The focus of the theory from its very enumeration of the *telos* of spiritual formation is God Himself. The goal of a walk with God also involves identifying and pursuing the believer's individual purpose. However, this purpose is primarily aligned with the furthering of God's will, not the believer's personal fulfillment. Finally, the goal of spiritual formation must include the believing community, for spiritual maturity functions on both an individual and corporate level.

The paradigmatic concept of Stevens' theory is a walk with God, which comprises these ten elements: relationship, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, submission, dedication, love, hunger, directional progress, God's dealings, authenticity, and community relationships. A walk with God is primarily relational. This paradigmatic concept encapsulates an ongoing, practical, progressive relationship with God. A walk with God is founded upon the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The concept of Lordship identifies the nature of the relationship, which is one of obedience. In this manner, a walk with God is characterized by submission and dedication. In submission, the believer submits to God's direction while walking with him. In dedication, the believer commits to stay close with God, to seek His will, and to respond to His direction. The relationship of a walk with God, however, is untenable without the motivating forces of love and spiritual hunger. The walk with God incorporates the greatest commandment (Mk 12:28-30) as the foundational connective tissue of the formative divine relationship. The concept of spiritual hunger describes the believer's own internal desire for God and His righteousness. This is closely related to Kierkegaard's concept of passion, which drives the inward journey of becoming. A walk with God is characterized by directional progress both internally and externally—that is, the believer will move forward in a journey toward greater maturity, and accomplish God's will in the process. However, spiritual formation is dependent upon the dealings of God, in which God arranges difficult circumstances in order to encourage the believer's seeking of God for His equipping through transformation. God's dealings are a part of the purifying process in which the sin nature is removed. A walk with God requires authenticity on the part of the believer. Authenticity, in turn, is made up of honesty, a rejection of empty religiosity, and a genuine

desire to walk with God. Finally, a walk with God cannot be undertaken alone, but functions in a community setting.

The theo-philosophical foundations of Stevens' theory involve the interrelated concepts of Christlikeness, the sin nature, God's role in spiritual transformation, pneumatology, relationship, revelation, and biblical anthropology. Christlikeness is a goal of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation, but it also stands as a foundational theological concept of a walk with God. The achievement of Christlikeness is a prevalent theme of the NT (Jn 1:12; 2 Pet 1:4a; Rom 8:17; Heb 2:10-11), and Stevens sees it as the end goal of salvation. A formative walk with God rests upon the theological foundation of Christlikeness. The sin nature is perhaps the theological flipside of Christlikeness. In order to understand the process of spiritual formation, the believer must understand the nature of the object of transformation. The human being is naturally sinful in his or her ontological state. Genuine spiritual formation must address the sin nature if any genuine change is to occur. Further, the sin nature is unable to change itself. This theological principle forms the heart of Stevens' view that Christian transformation only occurs by the hand of God, through Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. This, in turn, fuels the recognition of the next major theological truth in the theory, which is God's role in transformation. Human effort will never result in genuine spiritual change. The believer who pursues spiritual formation must keep this foremost in his or her mind. Pneumatologically, the Holy Spirit is integral to spiritual formation, for He is intimately involved in the process of becoming a new creation (Gal 3:3, 6:14-15). This direct connection between the Holy Spirit and a walk with God is seen more directly in the Pauline concept of walking by the Spirit (Gal 5:25). Stevens' theological foundation of relationship in a walk with God is further found in a Trinitarian grounding— that is, the believer pursues and maintains interconnected but distinct relationships with Father, Son, and Spirit. This relationality is pervasive in Stevens' theory, as the believer is spiritually impotent toward transformation and is therefore dependent upon the Trinity in the achievement of any genuine change. The foremost theological principle which drives this relationship is revelation. Stevens sees revelation as available and necessary in the present. Revelation arises from Scripture and will always find confirmation in the Bible, but its receipt by the believer is not constrained to the holy text. Revelation is an internal reception of the Word of God which naturally results in change. It is therefore a tool of relationship and of formation simultaneously. Finally, Stevens' theory cannot be understood outside of biblical anthropology. Stevens emphasizes the difference between soul and spirit, stating that the spirit is the aspect of the human which is able to connect with God.

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The believer must therefore be aware of his or her spirit as the faculty by which the transformational relationship with God is pursued. These theo-philosophical foundations together place scriptural and theological truths as the basis of a walk with God.

The primary activities in Stevens' theory are true to its relational centering: authenticity, intensity, awareness and focus, God's dealings, transference, the Word, repentance, and waiting on the Lord. Some of these activities are not conventionally identified as spiritually formative actions. Rather, they are internal attitudes or focuses which must be intentionally undertaken by the believer. Authenticity is an attitude of honesty and openness which allows God access to the object of transformation—that is, the internal being of the believer. Intensity is another attitude which is required in a walk with God, for the believer must be driven and passionate to connect with God and follow Christ in obedience. Passivity will incapacitate any attempt to walk with God. The twin concepts of awareness and focus are similar attitudes which are required in a maintained relationship with God. The believer must be spiritually aware of the leading of the Holy Spirit, aware of the salvation and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and find immediate realization of the presence of God through awareness. Further, the walk with God requires consistent focus upon God and His Word. God's dealings are not necessarily an activity pursued by the believer—however, the believer is in control of his or her responses to God's dealings. Only a proper response of seeking God and receiving His purposes in the dealings will ensure a result of transformation for the believer. This is related to the principle of transference, which Stevens identifies as a primary mechanism of spiritual formation. Salvation itself functions through transference, as the sins of man are transferred to Christ on the cross, and the righteousness of Christ is transferred to humanity. This principle of transference overlies the remaining three activities of interacting with the Word of God, repentance, and waiting on the Lord. In the study and receipt of the Word, God's attributes are able to be internalized by the believer. In the act of repentance, the believer seeks to see Christ remove his or her sin nature and receive an impartation of Christlikeness. In waiting on the Lord, the believer quiets all other concerns in the endeavor to connect relationally with God. In such connections, the believer creates opportunities for transformation through exposure to the source of all genuine transformation. The activities in Stevens' theory once again display the fundamental relationality of his theory.

This study revealed that Stevens' writings on a walk with God do represent a holistic and relational approach to spiritual formation. All elements of his theory function together as a whole, centered upon the spiritually formative efficacy of an ongoing relationship with God

in Christ. Perhaps the two conspicuous examples of holism along the four axes are found in the formulation of the goal and the activities. While the relationship with God is clearly the means of growth in Stevens' theory, the walk with God also maintains the relationship as a primary goal. This move highlights two aspects of the theory. First that it is holistically relational, for the relationship with God is truly pervasive and connective throughout the theory. Second, Stevens' theory of spiritual formation is consistently focused on God rather than the individual. This is further reflective of the theological foundation of the impotency of the sin nature regarding transformation. The axis of activities also reveals the holistic nature of the theory, for the activities are primarily geared toward facilitating the relationship with God. Because of this, most activities recommended in the theory could be seen as choices which foster the internal attitudes necessary for an ongoing walk with God. The holism of the theory therefore primarily rests upon its relationality.

6.2.4 Summary of Chapter 4

The fourth chapter initiated the assessment, analysis, and critique of John Robert Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. The assessment began with an overview of the weaknesses of Stevens' writings. This assessment identified four main problems: the lack of definitions of his terminology, the missing detail in his presentation of certain exegetical work, the general avoidance of addressing opposing viewpoints, and the lack of systematization. A fifth problem was also identified as a result of the limitations of chapter 3, which addressed the narrow view of Stevens' teachings only as they relate to a walk with God as a delimitation. For this reason, chapter 3 should be seen as only being representative of Stevens' views of each topic within the scope of a walk with God, and not always representative of his overall theological viewpoint. These weaknesses comprise the primary issues addressed in the exegetical critique of chapter 4 and the theological critique of chapter 5.

Chapter 4 continued with a brief overview of Stevens' hermeneutics, which may be summarized according to three main principles: the view of Bible as the Word of God, the concept of concealed revelation, and the interpretational necessity of a relationship with God. Stevens differentiates between the text of the Bible and the Word of God itself. The Bible contains the Word of God, but does not constrain the Word of God. True interpretation of the Bible will focus on the Word of God. The importance of this concept is further seen in Stevens' characterization of the Scriptures as concealed revelation. The process of revelation inspired the Scriptures, and the process of revelation must interpret

them. Finally, the Word of God is embodied in Jesus Christ, and therefore an interpretation of the Scriptures cannot be properly engaged without a relationship with the Word made flesh, as well as the Author of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit. Stevens sees the Bible as the perfect, inspired Word of God, but its purpose is not to contain the entirety of a contemporary relationship with God, but rather it is meant to facilitate a relationship with God, in Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. While this hermeneutical position is helpful to keep in mind in order to properly understand Stevens' overall theological stance, it does pose problems for contemporary scholarship focused on an exercise of pure rationality in the interpretation of the Bible, particularly in the context of this dissertation. However, this conflict is resolved by recognizing the twin expressions of Stevens' prioritization of confirmation in his hermeneutical approach. Firstly, genuine revelational interpretation will always be confirmed by the text of Scripture as a whole. This pole of confirmation is pursued in chapter 4, which relies primarily on systematic exegetical work toward the critique of two of Stevens' theological views. Secondly, any revelational interpretation will also be confirmed by other believers. This pole of confirmation is pursued in chapter 5, which focuses on theological critique through the engagement with contemporary scholarship.

Chapter 4 continued with an exegetical analysis and critique of two core theological positions taken by Stevens. It first investigated the scriptural evidence regarding the terminology of "a walk with God". This was done in order to assess the scriptural accuracy of Stevens' use of the term, as well as its commensurability with Christian spiritual formation. First, a review of the uses of the word הלך in the OT was conducted in its various relevant formulations, such as "walking with God", "walking before God", "walking after God", and "walking in God's commandments". In this review, it was discovered that the biblical data suggests that the metaphorical concept of "walking" in the OT maintains ethical, behavioral, relational, and covenantal overtones. "Walking" in its OT use is therefore an appropriate term to use as a paradigmatic concept of Christian spiritual formation. The study proceeded to do a similar review of the term in its use in the intertestamental literature, which expressed concepts of a covenantal relationship and journey. In addition, a study of the Greek terms for "walk" and its semantic domain—although primarily focused on the word περιπατέω—in the NT was conducted. This found that the metaphor of "walking" retains a strong sense of maintaining proper religioethical conduct, often refers to the ontological state of the human being, as well as a recurring general sense of lifestyle or behavior. This investigation confirmed again the

commensurability of the terminology of "a walk with God" with Christian spiritual formation. The analysis of the biblical data largely supported a positive critique of Stevens' views. However, Stevens' use goes beyond the narrow meanings of such terminology, particularly in his emphases on the Lordship of Christ, spiritual hunger, God's dealings, and personal authenticity. While these principles may not be found directly in the biblical use of "walk" as a metaphor for an obedient relationship with God, they are not incompatible. Further, it seems they arise from Stevens' study of the figures in the Bible who walked with God. However, the one missing aspect which featured prominently in the biblical record but not in Stevens' usage is the close association between a walk with God and covenantal relationship with God. Characterizing the walk with God as a covenantal relationship is a critical missing piece in Stevens' theory which adds greater Scripturality to his paradigmatic concept.

The second major exegetical investigation of chapter 4 focused on Stevens' trichotomist anthropology. This was chosen for exegetical critique for two main reasons. First, Stevens' theory maintains that a relationship with God must be undertaken in a spiritual manner. Stevens often emphasizes the difference between soul and spirit, stating that the human spirit is the faculty by which transformational communing with God is possible. Second, it seems the dichotomist position is more in favor in contemporary scholarship, so the scriptural support of trichotomy must be examined in order to critically address Stevens' anthropological enumeration. Particularly in the context of spiritual formation, which is directly concerned with the ontological growth of the human believer, a biblical understanding of the nature of human individuals must be properly established. This analysis of Scripture analyzed Hebrew and Greek anthropological terms—primarily terms for "soul" and "spirit"—and their usage throughout the Bible. The study discovered that while there is a broad overlap between the usages of soul and spirit, they cannot be said to be exactly interchangeable as the dichotomist position would suggest. These terms overlap in their consistent use in contexts of expressed emotion, as well as their association with relationship. However, soul is primarily an anthropological term, while spirit is used in reference to human, divine, and supernatural entities. Soul is more often used in reference to negative emotion and ontology, while spirit is more often used in reference to righteousness and the qualities of God. The analysis suggested that a proper scriptural anthropology would recognize the similarities and the differences in these terms. The dichotomist position emphasizes their similarities, while the trichotomist position emphasizes their differences. Neither position seems commensurate to the scriptural

record. However, it was suggested that a holistic view of anthropology may supply the necessary nuance with which to remedy this problem. Similar to the organs of the body, perhaps the non-corporeal aspects of the human mentioned in Scripture—including soul, spirit, heart, self, and inner man—may be seen as describing various functionalities of the human being. Certainly, the spirit is a better terminological descriptor of the aspect of the human being which connects with God, if only because God is overwhelmingly identified with spirit (cf. Jn 4:24). A holistic view of anthropology would recognize the various facets of the human being mentioned in Scripture as interconnected faculties or operations which allow the human to perform emotional, mental, or spiritual acts. Further, a holistic position would recognize the importance of soul and spirit, without denigrating one (as the trichotomist position may do to the soul) or erasing the other entirely (as the dichotomist position seems to do with the spirit). In the critique of Stevens' anthropology, it was suggested that his trichotomist position should be abandoned as it does not accurately reflect the biblical usages of spirit and soul. Further, the holistic view of anthropology would be a better fit for his theory which is already strongly holistic in nature.

6.2.5 Summary of Chapter 5

The fifth chapter conducted a theological analysis and critique of a number of major components of Stevens' theory for more rigorous assessment, greater verification, or supplemental clarification. The subjects covered in this chapter were subjectivity, relationship, ontology, ethics, the Lordship of Christ, pneumatology, revelation, the Kingdom, the nature of sin, and transference. The discussions of subjectivity, relationship, ontology, and ethics each began with a return to Kierkegaardian thought. Kierkegaard's existentialist approach to these four topics helped to establish missing theo-philosophical foundations required in Stevens' theory. Stevens' concept of a walk with God is based primarily upon a seemingly subjective generator of change—that is, the believer's relationship with God. However, Kierkegaard embraces subjectivity in the process of becoming, maintaining that truth must be apprehended personally and internally for it to cause genuine change. Further, if Christ is ontologically the truth (Jn 14:16), then the fruit of a relationship with Him will necessarily be objectively true. Further, Kierkegaard's distinction between the subjective and the abstract were beneficial in adding nuance to Stevens' emphasis on the internalized Word of God. An abstract knowledge of God is not transformative, but a relationship in which God's truth is internalized is transformative. This leads to the identification of ontology as another necessary foundation left unaddressed by

Stevens. In the context of Stevens' goal of Christlikeness, the Kierkegaardian concept of a subject-subject relationship places a missing foundational aspect which accounts for the believer's union with Christ. In this manner, the relational connection with Christ is ontological in nature, and is therefore suited to causing ontological change. While Stevens' nearly absent discussion of the ethical is a weakness of his theory, Kierkegaard provides a possible clarification of the problem in that he states that a focus on ethical behavior does not lead to change. The transformational relationship with God is a prerequisite to the genuinely ethical life, for the human being must be fundamentally changed if he or she is to behave ethically.

The remaining topics of chapter 5—the Lordship of Christ, pneumatology, revelation, the Kingdom, the nature of sin, and transference—included discussions of Kierkegaard, but relied more often on the spiritual formation literature in the analysis and critique of Stevens. In examining the theology of the Lordship of Christ, it was found to be a highly scriptural concept which directly enumerates the nature of the formative relationship—that is, one of submission to his status as Lord. Stevens' pneumatology was critiqued as being prevalent but largely invisible in Stevens' theory. The Holy Spirit and His role are discussed often by Stevens, but he does not provide a proper accounting of pneumatology as a whole. The interaction with Christian scholars regarding this topic clarified and supplemented Stevens' views in that he sees the Holy Spirit as a person available in a distinct relationship to the believer among the Members of the Trinity, and that the engagement with the Holy Spirit is the prerequisite for being spiritual, that the Spirit is a purveyor of God's Word toward Christlikeness.

This chapter then moved on to review the role of revelation in Stevens' theory of spiritual formation. This section clarified Stevens' views that revelation is possible outside of the text of the Bible, but that true revelation will always be confirmed by the Scriptures and that special revelation will never supersede the Scriptures in importance nor authoritativeness. The cessationist opposition to the bestowal of special revelation by the Holy Spirit in contemporary Christianity was reviewed, as well as Pentecostal/Charismatic scholars' continuationist response. While this discussion could not bring a satisfactory conclusion to this ongoing theological disagreement, at the very least it presented a case for why the continuationist position is biblical and plausible, thereby allowing Stevens to include revelation as an available experience in a relationship with God. The interaction with academic models of revelation provided another substantially missing theo-philosophical foundation, elucidating Stevens' model as being a "Word-relationship" model in which

revelation is predicated on the Word as embodied in Jesus Christ, and conveyed in a relationship with God, primarily by the Holy Spirit. Further, the spiritually formative nature of revelation was identified as it conveys an ontological reality of Christ which causes transformation upon its receipt.

Chapter 5 continued with a critique of Stevens' inclusion of the Kingdom in his theory of spiritual formation. His inclusion of the Kingdom functions on three levels: its motivational character toward righteousness (seek first the Kingdom), its ontological encapsulation of maturity (the internalized Kingdom), and its eschatological dimension as an established reality by mature believers. It was determined that the first two levels were appropriate theological inclusions in a theory of spiritual formation, but that the third dealt primarily with the fruit of completed spiritual formation and did not necessarily belong as a direct component of spiritual formation. The chapter progressed into a discussion of Stevens' characterization of the nature of sin as primarily an ontological matter. This was supported by spiritual formation literature which suggested that actions of sin are best addressed by the transformation of the nature which gives rise to such actions. Further, sin is seen in a relational manner in Stevens' theory, in both negative and positive ways. Sin reflects an estrangement from God. However, the relationship with Christ is the answer to sin, for He provides the opportunity to escape the sin nature through salvation and sanctification. This chapter brought the analysis and critique of Stevens' theory to a close with a discussion of impartation. The concept of impartation was clarified by Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication, by which he proposes that existential matters are best communicated indirectly. This is a relational view of teaching and is applicable in a theory of spiritual formation which sees the relationship with God as the means by which ontological transformation occurs. Impartation is a spiritual bestowal of a characteristic of God, often by the Holy Spirit, which causes permanent change or addition to the believer. Impartation is therefore a spiritual mechanism of relational formation.

While chapter 5 identified weaknesses, gaps, and unarticulated foundations in Stevens theory of spiritual formation, these problems were not found to be deleterious to the theory as a whole, for Stevens' views were largely compatible with the spiritual formation literature and with Kierkegaard's existentialist concepts. Therefore, necessary theological supplementation was achievable. Aside from Stevens' absent discussion of the ethical aspect of spiritual formation, all major problems with his positions were able to be resolved through the reconciliation of his views with the greater body of Christian scholarly work.

6.3 Reflections on Key Findings

This dissertation began with the hypothesis that John Robert Stevens utilizes the scriptural concept of a walk with God as a paradigmatic concept of a holistic theory of spiritual formation. This general hypothesis was proven to be true through the processes of identification, exegetical analyses, synthesis, and systematization of Stevens' writings. The dissertation further hypothesized that Kierkegaard's views on identity and growth were relevant and potentially helpful in clarifying Stevens' views on spiritual formation. This was also found to be true through the comparison, contrast, and reconciliation between the two authors. This point of comparison between the two also highlighted a major critique of Stevens. While Stevens' concept of a walk with God is existential in nature, he does not provide a strong theo-philosophical foundation for the required underlying existential concepts, such as authenticity, subjectivism, relationship, and ontology. For this reason, the inclusion of Kierkegaard in the investigation into Stevens' concept of a walk with God was critical in the process of description, analysis, critique, and amendment. It was further suggested in the introduction that Stevens' theory of spiritual formation was unique in two ways. Firstly, it is holistic in that all parts of the theory relate to all other parts, and that it only works as a complete whole. Secondly, the theory is centered on a relationship with God. These two points proved to be true in the course of this project, although Stevens' relationality was not as unique as initially hypothesized.

Stevens' concept of a walk with God cannot be understood except as a holistic view of the Christian life which leads to the growth of the believer. It is holistic in two ways: as a self-consistent whole along the four axes of spiritual formation in which all aspects function cohesively together, and in its holistic view of spiritual formation as an endeavor found throughout the Christian life.

The holism of Stevens' theory as analyzed along the four axes of formation may be summarized in this way. The paradigm of a walk with God encapsulates the goal, theology, and activities of the theory in a scriptural image which denotes spiritual movement with directional progress. The goal of spiritual formation is primarily summarized by the twin concepts of Christlikeness and the Kingdom. The walk with God is characterized as a relational connection of obedience which results in a cooperative movement toward these goals. Stevens' theology is highly scriptural and relationally Trinitarian. It is therefore supportive of both paradigmatic concept and goal, for he prioritizes an interactive relationship with God according to the Lordship of Christ within a pervasive

pneumatological framework. This theological position describes the nature of a walk with God as primarily one of relationship with an emphasis on the will of God. Finally, the activities of formation highlighted by Stevens align with the other three axes in that they are primarily ontological in formulation, relationally focused in the exercising of the disciplines, and guided by obedience to God.

Stevens' theory of spiritual formation is also holistic in that growth occurs in the context of the bigger picture of the Christian life. In Stevens' view, the maturity of the Christian believer is not a pursuit separate from the Christian lifestyle, but rather the result of an ongoing commitment to Christ and His Lordship. The goal of Christlikeness is intertwined with the establishment of the Kingdom and the enacting of individual purpose in obedience to God. The paradigmatic concept of a walk with God is founded primarily upon a relationship with God in Christ, but this relationship functions as the sum of interrelated principles, including submission, dedication, love, authenticity, spiritual hunger, and what Stevens calls the dealings of God. This relationship is reflective of the scriptural concept of covenant in that it is founded on God's Word and must display integrity and commitment in turning to God in every context of life. Further, the walk with God not only furthers the spiritual maturity of the believer, but also furthers God's will on the earth. In fact, the growth of the believer is seen as secondary to the accomplishment of God's will. Spiritual formation in this context is therefore the result of a genuine engagement with the Christian life. Further, all aspects of a walk with God are founded on both individualistic and communal levels, both of which must function in tandem for genuine spiritual growth to occur. The theological foundations of Stevens' theory involve the holistic connections between the principles of Christlikeness, the sin nature, revelation, and anthropology, particularly as they function upon a Trinitarian foundation in which all three persons are necessary and spiritually available. The activities of a walk with God are founded in authenticity, and enacted with intensity. The believer must cultivate an awareness of God's presence and leading in all aspects of a walk with Him, for a relationship cannot be maintained without it. However, God Himself leads the believer toward transformation in His dealings as He shapes His followers through difficulties and suffering. God further causes transformation through transference, which can be conveyed by the Holy Spirit through the Word. The receptivity to change may also be maintained through repentance and waiting on the Lord. This is a holistic view of spiritual formation in the general walk of life.

However, all these parts of the holistic theory fit into an overarching prioritization of a

relationship with God as embodied in the concept of a walk with God. This relationship with God stands as a contextualizing force by which all aspects of spiritual formation are to be described and enacted. In fact, the relationship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the strongest force of holism in the theory. The believer's relationship with God centers all other principles. The Holy Spirit is present and active in all aspects of Stevens' theory of a walk with God. He acts as a guide and teacher, as well as the purveyor of the fruit of spiritual formation. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ, who is the model of the *telos* of spiritual formation. Christ is ontologically representative of the end point of Christian spiritual formation: the unification of the divine and human. Union with Christ is a powerful model which encapsulates the relational transformation espoused by Stevens. Further, this relationship with Jesus is characterized by His Lordship, in that the believer does not merely seek a process of transformation, but also seeks His Kingdom. Christ further reveals God the Father, and His sacrifice enables a relationship with God the Father. The Father is the originator of all and He governs the process of transformation. A relationship with God is the ontological state embodied in the concept of a walk with God. A communing relationship with the Father is the overarching focus of the Christian walk, and transformation emerges organically from this maintained focus. Further, the Father's will is the focus of a walk with God, not the maturation of the believer. The concepts of holism and relationship here converge in the Trinity. The three are one and they are understood both as individuals and as a whole. A walk with God therefore must involve a holistic relationship with the Trinity. Stevens posits that no true spiritual formation occurs except by the hand of God. The solution to this is to rely on a lifestyle of relationship. This is what is described by the terminology of "a walk with God".

The relational component of Stevens' theory is found in all four axes of spiritual formation, which further emphasizes its role in establishing holism in the theory. The goal of spiritual formation is not just transformation for its own sake, but a maturity which allows for the enacting of God's will. An obedient relationship with God is not only the means of transformation, but also the goal of transformation. The paradigmatic concept of a walk with God is itself an embodiment of a relationship with God. This relationship is directional, purposeful, intentional, intimate, and loving. It is a covenant relationship in which God is placed at the center of the believer's life. The theo-philosophical foundations are relational in that the component principles are viewed in Stevens' theory through a relational lens. The approach to Christology, pneumatology, and theology proper is one in which the believer's potential relationship with the members of the Trinity is always in view, and is a

central concern in their enumeration. In a similar way, the biblical anthropology is viewed through a relational lens, focusing on identifying the proper ontological aspect of the human being by which a connection with God is formed and maintained. Finally, the formational activities of the theory are all relational in nature. The disciplines are primarily seen as one step removed from foundational relational attitudes which should inform the disciplines. Such attitudes include obedience, dedication, spiritual hunger, awareness. Further, the recognition of God's pivotal role in transformation leads to a view of God's dealings as a necessary topic of formative activity, for it explores God's side of relational formation. Therefore, along all four axes, the prioritization of relationship is a unifying principle which generates holism from the center of the theory.

The study not only found great compatibility between the approaches to formation by Kierkegaard and Stevens, but also found that Kierkegaard's existentialist concepts aided in providing missing theo-philosophical foundations of Stevens' theory. Particularly in the issues of subjectivity, relationship, ontology, and ethics, Kierkegaardian concepts provided much-needed explanatory support for the existential aspects of Stevens' theory. The subjective elements of Stevens' approach are embraced when viewed from a Kierkegaardian perspective, turning a potential negative into a positive strength of the theory. The formative power of a relationship with God was further explored in Kierkegaardian terms, particularly in the recognition that transformation is impossible outside of the divine relationship. Putting these two ideas together produces the concept of the subject-subject relationship, which describes the God-human relationship and expresses philosophically how the divine relationship leads to formation. Further, the concept that one is changed by the truth is a Kierkegaardian idea which conveys the ontologically transformative aspects of the Word of God. Finally, Stevens' avoidance of the topic of ethics is explained by Kierkegaard's spheres of life, in which the attempt to live an ethical life necessarily leads to failure because it lends itself to the pursuit of goodness independent from God. Instead, the ethical life can only be genuinely undertaken after a relationship with God has been established and at least initial transformation has taken place. Stevens' theory of spiritual formation as "a walk with God" then, is evidently holistic and at the same time coherently relational.

6.4 Concluding Summary Propositions

The summary propositions developed in chapter 3 will now be revised in light of the analysis and critique performed in chapters 4 and 5 in order to present conclusive

propositions which reflect proposed changes or supplied theological principles in response to gaps in Stevens' theory. The summary propositions along the four axes will be presented first:

The goal of spiritual formation is an internalized Christlikeness on both an individual and corporate level which emerges from a maintained ontological state of relationship with Christ, by the Holy Spirit, toward the establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth.

The paradigm of a walk with God encapsulates spiritual formation in the context of an active, authentic, covenantal relationship with God, centered on the Lordship of Jesus Christ, expressed in love, hunger, dedication, and submission, and enacted directionally, on both an individual and communal level.

The theological basis of spiritual formation reflects the complete salvific power of Christ manifested in a relational pursuit of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit engaged through a holistic anthropology, which results in the removal of the change-resistant sin nature and imparts Christlikeness through a process of spiritual transference.

Activities which promote spiritual formation are foundationally relational, including attitudes such as authenticity, spiritual hunger, and awareness, include the believer's proper response of accepting God's formative dealings, as well as devotional actions of spiritual connectivity such as the engagement with the Word of God, repentance, and waiting on the Lord.

These concluding summary propositions reflect the nature of this dissertation's investigation, for while they have been altered since their original formulation, their core aspects are largely intact. However, the analysis and critique of Stevens' systematized theory produced a far more textured synthesis which includes theological views from the spiritual formation literature. The following is the concluding summary proposition which encapsulates the holistic work of this dissertation:

Christian spiritual formation is a relational endeavor in which ontological maturity toward Christlikeness is realized via an interactive, obedient, and holistic relationship with three persons of the Trinity in an ongoing walk with God, who is the only source of true spiritual transformation.

6.5 Significance and Implications for Future Research

The most obvious significance of the study is its applicability for the individual. Presented here is a complete theory of the process of Christian maturity. While this study identifies many facets of spiritual formation, it is only effective if it is put into practice. In this way, this study may be successful on a theoretical level, but it would only be shown to be an effective model of spiritual formation if it were to be the subject of a qualitative assessment. Future qualitative or evaluative research on this theory of spiritual formation—as well as all theories of spiritual formation—should be undertaken.

The study is further significant in its contribution to a greater understanding of relational and holistic models of spiritual formation. Stevens' theory examined in this dissertation is an example of an approach to spiritual formation which is wholly dependent upon the relationship with God for any transformation. Further, the holistic character of Stevens' theory of spiritual formation is a strong element toward cohesiveness and therefore comprehensibility. The theory is self-consistent and complete, making it internally holistic. It is also holistic in its accounting of spiritual formation in the larger context of the Christian life. In both respects, such holism seems to be significant indicators of efficacy. However, its holism and relationality is also connected to its primary weakness, which the difficulty of putting it in action in an objective manner. Its interconnectedness and its ultimate reliance upon God may contribute to its intelligibility and its efficacy, but these elements may also very well be a strong barrier to entry.

Another success of this dissertation is the identification of the four axes of spiritual formation, as well as their application. In the literature review, the current state of the literature was reviewed along these four axes, showing the wide range of potential definitions for the goal, paradigmatic concept, theo-philosophical foundations, and activities. Further, these four axes were used in the systematization of Stevens' writings on a walk with God, as well as Kierkegaard's philosophical views on spiritual formation. In the use of these four axes, they are found to be a helpful tool by which spiritual formation theories may be systematized and assessed.

The enumeration and critique of Stevens' concept of a walk with God is also significant in its contribution to the study of Pentecostal and Charismatic theology. Stevens' views were shaped by a Pentecostal background, but his ministry primarily emerged in the age of the Charismatic renewal. The comparison between Stevens and more modern

Pentecostal/Charismatic theologians in this dissertation supports the idea that John Robert Stevens was a strong voice in this movement in his time. That his theological approach finds extensive confirmation in the contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic landscape also reveals his teachings to be exemplars of this theological branch. This dissertation therefore provides a contribution to the study of Pentecostal/Charismatic theology, particularly in the field of spiritual formation.

The use of Kierkegaard's existentialist voice to critique and sharpen Steven's theory points to the significant finding that Kierkegaard is ripe for use in the study of spiritual formation. This is an area which certainly invites further study. While this dissertation focused primarily on Kierkegaard's writings as they related to Stevens', Kierkegaard would be a strong candidate as an author whose works should be mined for their relevance in furthering the academic discussion on Christian spiritual formation. Relatedly, the study of other existentialist works in the context of spiritual formation has a strong potential to be a profitable endeavor.

Finally, this dissertation is significant in that it is a very early attempt at a rigorous study of John Robert Stevens. This project shows that Stevens is worth studying, and that he has a unique theological voice. This particular effort should aid believers who still read his works, both in clarifying his views and in highlighting areas of weakness. This study should also help the churches founded by Stevens in its attempt to distill his teachings on a walk with God into a condensed summary. Further, the identification of Stevens' alignment with voices in contemporary scholarship concludes that Stevens' teachings find confirmation in the wider Christian arena.

This serious study of John Robert Stevens finds particular importance because in the time since the research and writing for this dissertation was begun, The Living Word Fellowship of churches, founded by Stevens, began the process of dissolution, beginning in November 2018. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss or analyze the reasons for this. However, it is important to note that the churches founded by Stevens are now completely distinct and independent. In this light, it is very possible that Stevens' teachings alone will stand as the testament to his ministry. While his contribution to Christian theology has not gone unnoticed, his continuing impact is yet to be seen.

6.6 Conclusion

Spiritual formation is not a tangential topic in Christianity. It is a foremost concern in following Christ. Believers should not pay lip service to righteous behavior, but rather exhibit genuine Christlikeness. Stevens' concept of a walk with God recognizes this inextricable need for spiritual maturity among Christians who wish to genuinely live out the faith. A walk with God inculcates the pursuit of spiritual growth into an obedient relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Its greatest strength is in its integration of the relationship with God as both the goal and the means of spiritual formation. This conveys the proper Christian attitude which prioritizes God's will. Spiritual formation might easily fall into a selfish mode in which the believer's focus is inward in an attempt toward greater maturity and growth through self-effort. However, such an attitude would be counterproductive in the Christian context, which emphasizes human frailty and Christ's victory. Spiritual transformation is the purview of God. The emphasis on the relationship with God is therefore a requirement in Christian spiritual formation. Stevens not only addresses it, but makes it the force of gravity around which all other considerations must find orbit. Stevens' writings on a walk with God contextualize spiritual formation in its proper place: as a product of the believer pursuing, establishing, maintaining, and growing a relationship with God toward his purposes.

The first mention of a walk with God in Genesis refers to Enoch. From this very first use of the term, we find in it an inspiring hope for a restored Edenic relationship with God. Further, the power of Enoch's walk with God defied the curse of death, offering dramatic proof that unique results are to be found by those who endeavor this lifestyle. This early example of Stevens' paradigmatic concept begins the conceptual connection between spiritual maturity and walking with God. This connection is further exhibited in the lives of Noah and Abraham, and continues through to the disciples of Christ who literally walked by His side. John Robert Stevens contends that these biblical examples should not be historically removed from the present-day believer. This is what is good: to walk humbly with the Heavenly Father, just as Jesus did (Mic 6:8; 1 Jn 2:6). A walk with God must occur in the present moment, always in this present moment. Stevens (1981b:226) writes, "Regardless of your circumstances, live every day with a faith in God and an awareness of the Lord. Each day walk with God, Who wants to meet you in the present."

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