Carolyn McCrary*

Interdependence As A Normative Value In Pastoral Counseling With African Americans

In West Africa, the Yoruba have a proverb which says: *"Omo omode ko to pepe, t' abalagba ko wo keregbe."* It means, "The small hand of the child cannot reach the high shelf. The large hand of the adult cannot enter the narrow neck of the gourd." Ogunbowale interprets this proverb to mean that ". . . Adults and children need each other. None can exist without the other, and each must respect the other. . .[1] In essence, this is the type of Interdependence in human relationships that concerns me in this paper. A Womanist kind of Interdependence. "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am,"[2] speaks poignantly and ontologically of our inter-relatedness. The African proverb just cited graphically reminds us of the vulnerableness and the concreteness, often precarious in nature, of our dependency; our blatant need for one another, young and old, large and small, female and male.

In Western Culture dependency is viewed as a pathological state, (i.e. hysterical behavior, substance abusers, partners in abuse/co-dependents, etc.). Independence and the illusion of self-sufficiency is held in the highest regard.[3]

I contend that when we who work in the field of Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counseling push Independence as a goal rather than as a transitional state of being to be achieved on the road to Interdependence, we are like those who tell our students/ children to get a good education so that they will be able to get

* Carolyn McCrary is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling at the I.T.C. She was Copher Lecturer in March 1992.

a good job, rather than advising them to get a good education in order to be in a better position to help others and themselves.

In this paper I present some of the main theological and psychological tenets which undergird the African American value of Interdependence. As such I do not see myself as introducing a new concept or norm, but as presenting an essential quality of African American culture that should be appreciated, relished and utilized—particularly in the discipline of Pastoral Counseling.

My understanding of Interdependence as a normative value in Pastoral Counseling is heavily influenced by the theology of Community in the writings of the late Howard Thurman. I also utilize the Object Relations theory of W. R. D. Fairbairn to articulate some of the psychological intricacies of the processes of internalization. In order to share with you how I conceptualize and use the normative value of Interdependence in Pastoral Counseling I will discuss selected tenets from Howard Thurman's theology of Community and selected concepts from W. R. D. Fairbairn's psychology of Object Relations. I will follow this discussion with a specific case, and then a brief analysis of the case. I will conclude with ramifications of my model that are applicable in the ministry of Pastoral Counseling with African Americans.

There are three major reasons why Howard Thurman's theology of Community was chosen to articulate the theological dimensions of Interdependence. First, because Thurman has struggled to articulate the complexities of Community and the tendency toward "whole-making".[4] In Thurman's struggle to help us understand Community, with special attention to the plight of African Americans, he has masterfully held in tension the needs and possibilities of the individual as persons with the needs and possibilities of the group as a whole—the Community.

Social transformation is also a goal of Thurman's work.

He emphasizes, however, the transformation of the individual as a necessary priority for any meaningful and lasting transformation or liberation of a people, and particularly of African Americans.[5]   Secondly, for Thurman, the development of a proper identity is crucial for each person.[6] Although this cannot be accomplished developmentally without the nurture of primary and secondary units, or positive input from the larger society as a whole, Thurman adds insistently that it is the religious experience of *each individual*, her/his personal encounter with God, the mystical union of creature and creator, that gives ultimate meaning, direction, and identity to each person.[7] Two ramifications of the "personal religious experience" are important for pastoral counseling: (a) The conscious awareness of the pastoral counselor's own ultimate gift of love, identity, interdependency and the need to share those appropriately with others; and (b) considering the state of crisis, suffering and anxiety with which the counselee usually comes to counseling, the counselor, through the quality of the pastoral relationship that is offered, can enhance the counselee's movement toward, or ultimate interpretation of such a meaningful occurrence in her or his life. Thirdly, a crucial dimension of Thurman's concept of Community is reconciliation, which has reference to the rejoining of self to God, of self to others, and of self to self.[8] This attention to the fragmentation that can and does exist in the lives of persons is particularly important for the present discussion involving the fractured egos and the sense of alienation experienced by African Americans. It is also important for us to note here that though African Americans do suffer psychologically as well as in other ways, because of racism and sexism in the United States, such oppression is not the only catalyst for psychological fragmentation and feelings of alienation in the African American personality; nor would the removal of such oppression be the only "balm" that would "heal the sin-sick soul."[9] And, although being

reconciled and loving of one's enemies—White persons included—is not in the purview of most liberation theologies that are grounded in the African American experience, Thurman does advocate passionately that loving one's enemies is a necessity for each person, not for the sake of the enemy, but for the sake of the self.

> Yet you must find a way to love your enemy, if you want to be whole; not if you want to redeem your enemy, but because you want to be whole. A part of you is caught in the deed which he has done and you must get you out of it to restore wholeness to yourself.[10]

Of the four tenets of Howard Thurman's theology of Community: Unity, Actualization of Potential, Love, and Reconciliation, the first two, Unity and Actualization of Potential, will be highlighted here.

Unity: The Belief That The Contradictions in Life Are Not Final or Ultimate

A good sense of what Thurman means by Community can be found in the following statement about the religious person in the midst of the contradictions of experience.

> Ultimately, all the dualisms of his experience as a creature must exhaust themselves in a corroborating unity fundamental to life and not merely dependent upon that which transcends life by whatever name he seeks to patronize it.[11]

This "corroborating unity" is the basic tenet of Thurman's

concept of Community (and therefore of his theology) and he has this to say about it: "the literal fact of the underlying unity of life seems to be established beyond doubt."[12] Thurman takes great pains in *The Search for Common Ground* to point out the tendency toward Community or the penchant toward harmonious unity in all life by looking at the creation myths of various cultures, the life sciences, the philosophy behind utopias, and the social psychology of change in America.

As for the forces of evil, destruction, and division, Thurman acknowledges them, but only as against life, not supported by life and as "not aligned with the ultimate intent of life."[13] Ultimate for Thurman is a milieu of oneness where each person, by the grace of God, is permitted to develop and fulfill her or his meaning and purpose/potential in life. For Thurman, "the contradictions of life are not final or ultimate," especially in light of the indomitable human/divine spirit.[14]

Interestingly enough, Thurman's concept of unity bears much resemblance to the Bantu-Rwandaise Philosophy of Being. Thurman's emphasis upon Unity as the all-embracing essence of creation grounds us meaningfully in our African tradition at the point of attempting to define the very nature of relationships. The African scholar, Alexis Kagame, in his work, *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de L'etre* (1956)[15] highlights for us the concept of NTU. NTU is the common denominator, the common ground—so to say— of the four categories of Bantu-Rwandaise (African) Philosophy.

The Four Categories of Being and their Qualifications In Bantu-Rwandaise Philosophy

I.   Muntu= 'human being' (plural: Bantu);
II. Kintu= 'thing (plural: Bintu);
III. Hantu= 'place and time';

IV. Kuntu= 'modality'.
      According to Janheinz Jahn:

> All being, all essence, in whatever form it is con-
> ceived, can be subsumed under one of these catego-
> ries. Nothing can be conceived outside
> them...Everything there is must necessarily belong to
> one of these four categories and must be conceived of
> not as substance but as force. Man is a force, all things
> are force...NTU IS THE UNIVERSAL FORCE AS
> SUCH, WHICH, HOWEVER, NEVER OCCURS
> APART FROM ITS MANIFESTATION: Muntu,
> Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu. NTU is Being itself, the
> cosmic universal force, which only modern rational-
> izing thought can abstract from its manifestations.
> NTU is that force in which Being and beings coa-
> lesce...[16]

Two aspects of NTU are important for us in this discus-
sion: (1) that it is the unifying force which bespeaks the
connecting essence of all that is; and (2) that at the fundamental
core, there is an interconnectedness and an Interdependence of
being of everyone and everything, trees, rocks, rivers, air, water,
animals, birds, insects, time, place and form, etc. One cannot,
therefore, relegate someone or something outside one's realm of
care and concern. For since we are all inextricably joined to
everyone else and everything else—at the point of NTU—then
whatever we do to another being, is done at the fundamental
level of our own being. Thus, Bantu philosophy is different from
most Western philosophies at this foundational level. In West-
ern philosophy, not everyone and everything is valued in terms
of being significantly related and inextricably intertwined with
one's being as a human being. Renee Descartes postulates,

"*Cogito Ergo Sum,*" or "*Je pense donc Je suis,*": "I think therefore
I am."[17] Thinking, in this view, becomes the essential criterion
of worthwhile being. This mind set is a direct antecedent to the
behavior of discriminating, plundering, and raping people and
nature, both of which are considered outside of or not belonging
to one's realm of being, and, therefore, outside of the scope of
one's ultimate and intimate care and concern.

Another dimension of NTU important for us today is
that when we speak of the category of MUNTU, "etre qui a
l'intelligence,"[18] we are not just talking about the living breath-
ing human being, but about the dead as well. "For the concepts
MUNTU AND HUMAN BEINGS are not coterminous, since
MUNTU includes the living and the dead, orishas, and loas."
Muntu includes the ancestors, especially those who have re-
cently died, the "living dead." The *bazima* are the living and the
bazimu are the dead.[19] Kagame reminds us that in his language
life and existence are not identical. The dead are not alive, but
they do exist.[20] And it is by way of the Magara system—the Life
Force which can strengthen or weaken the other—that the
living and the dead are able to influence and help each other.[21]

The Magara system is, therefore, an important concept
for pastoral counselors, in that it helps us to assume the posture
of traditional African elders by being fully aware of, as well as
users of the power of familial and communal influences, living
and dead, conscious and unconscious. Moreover, the Magara
system can give us a way to articulate in other than object
relations terminology. It provides us with a method to help
reconcile and bless persons wrecked by alienation and isolation.

By and large the Bantu-Rwandaise system of NTU sup-
ports this writer's strong belief in the interrelatedness and
interdependence of human beings and nature. Thurman believes
that in life and death humans are always involved in the cycle
of life intertwined with nature, and to perceive differently is but

". . . one of the deceptive aspects of mind" in human beings.[22]

Thurman also believes ardently that we should not and cannot divorce ourselves from our dependency and our relatedness to nature. Our participation in the illusion of being distinct from nature causes us to "exploit, plunder and rape. . ." nature and to "foul our own physical nest." Thurman contends that this kind of participation and abuse contributes to "the phenomenal increase in mental and emotional disturbances in modern life. . ." and to our "deep sense of isolation, of being rootless and a vagabond. He states that, "The collective psyche shrieks with the agony that it feels as a part of the death cry of a pillaged nature."[23]

The second tenet of Howard Thurman's theology that supports our value of Interdependence is Actualization of Potential, which is integral to his understanding of the principle of Unity. The presence of Unity is made manifest in its ability to allow each life form to actualize its potential.

"Actualization of Potential," expressive of its fundamental unity, involves several dimensions. We shall highlight only two, (1) "A Proper Sense of Self" and (2) "A Communal Family."

Thurman's discussion of the Actualization of Potential is grounded in his belief that the human being is a "creature grounded in creatureliness." This notion ties every person to every other person, creature, life process, entity, and creation as well as to itself as a mind and a body. For Thurman, it is fruitless to talk of wholeness, or the "whole-making tendency" of the mind, without serious inclusion of the physical body. It is with proper recognition of the body (its potentials and limitations) that one develops an adequate sense of self.[24] Thurman sees the sense of self that is rooted in the experience of the person's body as his or her own, as rooting one into the "urgency" of all living things to actualize their potential as a body. It is upon this

philosophical-corporeal base that Thurman places his crucial building blocks for the Actualization of Potential: a person's need to be loved, to be understood, to be cared for, to have a proper sense of self.[25]

A. A Proper Sense of Self

In determining the precise nature of Thurman's concept of the "sense of self," Luther Smith's work, *Howard Thurman: The Mystic as Prophet*, is helpful. Smith identifies three dimensions: the self-fact, the self-image, and self-love.[26] Concerning the self-fact and the self-image, Smith explains two important affirmations. "First, since a person's 'fact,' one's inherent worth, is of ultimate value, it is important that one's self image conforms to one's self-fact." Thurman is persistent in his passionate cry that we are all God's children, regardless of race, creed, color, gender, economic, social, or physical standing. Each one of us is of God and God is in each one of us. For Thurman, this is the center of religion and the starting point for theology. In an article entitled "What Can We Believe In ?" Thurman's first response is "not only can I believe in myself, but I "must" believe in myself."[27]

B. A Loving and Communal Family

The task comes in the recognition of our divine value. Smith tells us that, "... though one's fact is inherent, the nurture of this fact toward a healthy self-image is a social function."[28] The family is usually the primary context for this occurrence.

In the first place, one's personal stability depends on his relationships with others. For in order to answer the question, "Who am I?" the individual must go on to ask, "To whom, to what do I belong?" This primary sense of belonging, of counting, of participating in situations, of sharing with the group, is the basis of all personal stability. And from it is derived the true SENSE OF SELF.[29]

It is important to note the priority that Thurman places on relationships, particularly familial ones. This primary group has the opportunity to interact with the developing child so as to influence and reflect the child's own unique makeup, which Thurman calls PERSONA.[30]

Finally, a necessary "building block" identified by Thurman is Self-Love. This love does not really originate with or belong to the individual; rather, it is a divine inheritance which, if properly shared, undergirds the individual, the community, and more importantly, their relationship. Thurman writes:

> Self-love is the kind of activity having as its purpose the maintenance and furtherance of one's own life at its highest level. All love grows basically out of a qualitative self-regard and is in essence the exercise of that which is spiritual. If we accept the basic proposition that all life is one, arising out of a common center—God, all expressions of love are acts of God.[31]

It is the interdependent nature of Thurman's self-love that makes for its uniquely dynamic power of interrelating. As Smith indicates, "...self-love, while affirming the individual life, is also the source which points the individual away from a narcissistic self-centeredness."[32]   Self-love enables one to be open enough to think of and consider others as well as to reflect earnestly about oneself.[33]   Thurman is also quite adept in his description of the consequences of personal development when there is, in the family, no pivotal point around which positive self-awareness emerges.   According to Thurman, the rejected child becomes the rejecting child, enraged, withdrawn, and alienated, mainly because the child is assaulted by an insensitive environment before she or he has the necessary tools with which to cope.[34]

Accordingly, the two major tenets of Howard Thurman's theology of Community, Unity, and the Actualization of Potential have grounded us and creation ontologically as one—as a whole. Yet Thurman also narrows the focus and speaks to us of the necessary "Building Blocks" that each of us needs in order to become whole; self-fact, self-image, self-love, proper nurturing, and parental guidance, all shaped around and related to the personal religious experience.

Let us now turn to W. R. D. Fairbairn who, by way of his Object Relations theory of the personality, gives us a language and method for discussing the psychological process of internalization that comes as a result of acceptance, love, nurture, rejection, and deprivation.

W. R. D. Fairbairn and Object Relations Theory of the Personality

The concept of "Object Relations" has its psychological origin in the work of Sigmund Freud who used it in respect to the internalization of a person's external world, particularly significant others such as parents, during the earliest years of life. Freud, however, did not develop a system which detailed the specific processes of internalization, nor an expanded theory of Object Relations.[35] W. R. D. Fairbairn, along with other writers of the British school of Object Relations such as Melanie Klein, D. W. Winnicott, and Edith Jacobsen, focused more on the pre-oedipal period of development (prior to age 4-5), the symbiotic relationship of mother and child, and the internalization of significant persons technically referred to as "objects."

Two particular dimensions of Fairbairn's object relations theory concern us here. They are: (1) his rejection of the drive/structure model of personality development as he opts for a relational/structure model;[36] and (2) the choice of dependency as

the essential quality by which relationships are distinguished. Fairbairn views all relationships to rest in some basic way upon a state of dependency and, therefore, does not reduce dependency to a negative status to be shunned after a brief interlude in early childhood. All of us remain dependent upon the continued interrelating of others all our lives, although it is the nature of dependency constantly to change. Dependency is no longer a bad word for mature relationships. In fact, mature dependency is the goal of development in Fairbairn's theory.

Such a posture has relevance for African Americans and other counselees in that the denotation and connotation of the "dependent person" has been broadened and enhanced toward the ideology that being intimately and consciously related in a needful way to someone all one's life is a natural thing to be grasped and not denied—the crucial factors being the changes in the nature, the degree, and the timing of those changes. This attitude and the concomitant values of reciprocity and sharing fit better, in a foundational way, into the African American world view and its value system which reflects Interdependence as a positive way of living. The attainment of a state of existence called independence is put in its proper perspective as an arrival at a transitional stage of development that reflects quasi-independence at most. For Fairbairn, the three stages of development are (1) Infantile Dependency, (2) The Transitional Stage of Quasi-Independence, and (3) Mature Dependency.

Fairbairn sees himself as not only in conflict with certain traditional psychoanalytic formulations, but as offering a theoretical interpretation of personhood that is not biologically based on instincts, but rather relationally based on the quality of the dependence between persons. In his article "Synopsis of an Object Relations Theory of Personality," Fairbairn challenges another pillar of classical psychoanalytic theory by stating that "An Ego is present at birth...[37] and, additionally, that it is

inherently dynamic and whole.

Fairbairn sees the psychic core of the human being as innate, dynamic, and whole. The central ego as psychic structure and psychic energy with libidinal aim is focused from the beginning on relating to the object for the sake of relationship. This Object Relations theory of the personality counters the classical Freudian instinct theory of the person in a striking way. Fairbairn believes that the fundamental goal of recognition, preservation, and restoration of psychic wholeness is the goal of all mental health and, therefore, of psychotherapy.[38]

For Fairbairn psychopathology involves the internalization and the consequent splitting of the object—which actually means the object representation and the accompanying affect. The preambivalent, or mostly "unsatisfying object" is internalized (unconsciously) by the infant/young child as a way to control or coerce it. The "unsatisfying object" is then split by the central ego into the "good object" and the "bad object." The "bad object" is further split into the "rejecting object" and the "exciting object." While the "good object" remains catheted to the central ego and partially conscious as the "ideal object", the "rejecting object" and the "exciting object" are repressed by the corresponding dimensions of the now split ego. The libidinal ego represses the exciting object and the anti-libidinal ego represses the rejecting and the exciting objects. Consequently, the picture of the endopsychic structure is of a split object and a divided ego. Herein lies the problem for the client and a task for the Pastoral Counselor. There must be a reconciliation of these dimensions of the psyche for health and wholeness to occur.

Now that we have an idea about internalization of Object Relations and the consequent endopsychic structuring, I offer the following definition of Interdependence:

Interdependence refers to that state of communal existence wherein each person is appropriately recognized for her/his uniqueness and ultimate worth, encouraged in her/his need to be significantly related to others, enabled in the fulfillment of her/his potential of worth and purpose, and supported in her/his responsibility for the survival, the physical well being, and positive mental, psychological, economic, and spiritual development of the group as a whole.

Let us now look briefly at a case that we will then analyze from our community Object Relations perspective of Interdependence.

Case Study

Susan is a twenty-nine year old light-skinned African American woman who is single and a full time undergraduate student. Susan came to counseling expressing feelings of loneliness, depression, isolation, and thoughts about suicide. She says, "Nothing seems to go right, so why am I here...I'm not like a lot of people, like everybody else...I feel different...I have no friends." She is the daughter of a prominent professional couple who separated when she was ten years old. Susan felt torn by the separation and has subsequently spent time living with each parent. Susan has two brothers and two sisters, and though she doesn't feel particularly close to any of them, she does share some things with her younger sister.

Susan always attended church regularly, as did the rest of the family, and they all worked with various groups and activities sponsored by the church. Now Susan says that these kind of activities "just keep me busy at running away from myself.. I don't even know if I'm on speaking terms with God

anymore, especially since God isn't answering any of my questions."

She characterizes her relationship with her mother as "better than it used to be", adding that "we used to fight (verbally) all the time...she thought me crazy, odd and different." She says that her mother is overly protective of her, especially since her earlier bout with depression. Susan says that though her mother had it hard, having grown up with only one parent, her mother still doesn't really seem to understand her.

Of her relationship with her father, she says, "He used to be closer to me...now it seems that he doesn't have the time, especially since his promotion several years ago." Susan says that her father's work always came first in his life. However, she remembers her early childhood years as being rather happy as she tagged along with her father, even at work   sometimes. She also speaks warmly and affectionately about her relationship with her paternal great-grandmother, whom she says was her "buddy," who thought she was special. Susan felt pressured in her immediate family as a result of being the oldest girl, as if "I had to be special and do certain things..." She feels as if she had disappointed her family in some regard, but even more herself. Susan longs to be involved in a significant relationship, preferably marriage, and to have a child.

Susan reflects that she never really had friends growing up. Most of her socializing was with the family. She laments the fact that they always attended integrated schools where African American people were always in the minority. She feels that her association with men has been limited as well. She sees herself as having been restricted in her association with men, and when she did start relating to men she found herself being used, abused, or misused by them. The one significant relationship that she does talk about ended abruptly when she thought that she was pregnant. "He broke off the relationship because he didn't want

to consider any   kind of commitment." Susan sees sexual
intimacy as a "chore ... a way of punishing myself."

Susan's recurring theme is her lack of significant positive
relationships, male or female. She sees herself as the   problem.
She wants to know if and/or how she can change so that her life
will be less lonely and more meaningful. Her most recent and
painfully faced question is: "How do I cope if nothing's going
to change?"

Clinically, Susan is depressed, isolated, and is experienc-
ing an emerging anger relative to her disappointment with non-
gratifying internal and external object-relationships. Her depres-
sion is reflected in her low self-esteem, her sense of hopelessness
about her life, and her repressed affect which until recently
served to cloak her anger at not being significantly related.
Susan is frustrated that her "good girl" role has not resulted in
rewarding and gratifying relationships, particularly with her
mother. She has, until recently, successfully repressed this anger
for fear that she might destroy what little power and control she
feels with her internalized bad—particularly rejecting—objects.

The turmoil between Susan's parents and their subse-
quent divorce created deep feelings of instability in Susan and
negatively affected her oedipal development. In later childhood,
Susan experienced with her father overprotection and arbitrary
censorship of extra-familial, especially male, relationships. The
relatively closed system in which Susan grew up inhibited free
and open-ended experiencing and, thereby, reinforced the re-
treat to the internalized, split, and repressed world of bad object
relationships. The one sanctioned exception to the closed system
in Susan's life was the family church whose values and traditions
transmitted by the "mothers and elders" served to counteract
some of the negativity in her life and represented a place of
refuge for contact with real object relationships.

Community and Mature Dependence:
Differentiation Toward Interdependence

In Fairbairn's view differentiation is a process of individu-
ating as a person in the context of a nurturing and facilitating
environment. The intense anxiety manifested in the oscillation
and the vacillation between symbiosis and separation[39] testifies
to the conflicting urges involved in the struggle to move from
identification to individuality. For Thurman and Fairbairn, in
the movement toward both community and mature dependence,
the "give and take" dynamics involved in interpersonal relating
is key. In this light, I discuss (1) the recognition of the nature
of self, (2) surrendering of self, (3) response, and (4) the
mourning process: surrendering of object representations.

Consider the following encounters with Susan which
occurred in the early phases of our counseling relationship.

Susan: I can remember even as a little girl saying "I want
a job and a husband and a little chocolate-colored baby boy,
with jet black curly hair...so I could raise him right...not to be
trifling, lazy... and know how to treat a woman right...I've always
wanted to have a baby...to be a mother...but that's just par for
the course too. My dreams never seem to come true.

Counselor: You wanted and still want to take care of
someone and love someone special.

Susan: Yeah. But It seems that all I've ever done is
taken care of people...even my daddy and brothers and sisters...but
it's never been my turn...they all seem to think I don't need
like they do...

Counselor: Now that has you pretty upset.

Susan: Shoot yeah! I do and do for everybody and don't get nothing back. But I just don't seem to be able to even to know what to do for me. I don't know how to do for me. In fact I'm scared to do for me. It might not turn out right...me doing for me, might turn out like me...not right.

Counselor: Yes Susan, you do sound like you're scared to stretch out there.

Susan: I just wonder what I'm going to do about myself...if I'm going to be able to do anything...or is it just too late for me...(She cries. I hand her a tissue and I touch her hand).

1. Recognition of the Nature of Self

From Thurman's perspective one would say that Susan is having problems with her sense of self in terms of the "nature of the self." Discovering the true nature of the self has to do with the proper cultivation of the relationship between the self-fact and the self-image; the cultivation of the "inner life." To put it bluntly, the inner life of Susan was in shambles and in need of a personal encounter with God. An encounter with self not predicated on an encounter and recognition of one's unique gift of transcendence, results in meaningless and powerless thought and behavior.[40] Susan apparently had tried to deal with feelings of alienation in various ways but without relief. Though she was having definite problems with her self-image, she seemed to have had an inkling that there was more to herself than what she was interpreting in her own behavior, as well as in the behavior and attitudes of other people towards her.

Susan had plenty of questions about herself, especially about her worth, her meaning to others, and her purpose for living. Her busy schedule, her work in trying to help other

people, still did not fill the void or give her ultimate meaning. Susan's anger at God was an indication that her questions about the "nature of self" was of ultimate concern.

2. Surrender: Openness/Response to The Divine

According to Thurman a primary response to transcendent encounter in a personal religious experience involves "a central surrender of the self to God." This surrender, which he likens in essence to commitment, and in difficulty to a child's achievement of selfhood, is "rugged, tempestuous, and ruthless." In Thurman's view surrender can be accomplished in two different ways. The first ". . . may be a self-conscious yielding of the very center of one's being to God—the yielding of that of which the ego itself is but the shell, the facade, the protection, really."[41] This is a change that one is not capable of effecting on one's own, but which is an inner revolution of the innermost self effected by God.

The other way by which the surrender is accomplished is in terms of particular situations or events. Even over a long period of time the person may make little surrenders, apparently insignificant surrenders, morally indecisive surrenders, but always holding back the ultimate, the final surrender. Nevertheless, deep within oneself one knows that it is impossible to hold out indefinitely against the ultimate demand. Whether a one time self-conscious decision, or a long, arduous and protracted surrender of the central nerve of one's innermost being, the ramifications of surrender to God are profound and extensive.[42]

Of particular importance to Susan are the ramifications of wholeness, power, and freedom. Susan was feeling the continual alienation in her being as if it were an impending doom. This she felt powerless to halt, let alone to change. Susan's sense of loneliness, isolation, and lack of love are exemplified in her intense desire for a baby, "every since she was a little girl;" someone she could love deeply and profoundly and

who would love her back, she thought, with the same intensity. Her sense of alienation and helplessness was further compounded by the ramifications of racism and discrimination that impacted the family value system regarding color and beauty. She felt that her own color was "holding her back" and/or "keeping people from experiencing the real me". She said, "A lot of times, I could just tell that all that the Black guys would see would be my long straight hair and my light skin. They never wanted me for me." Susan seems to have thought that a "chocolate colored baby with jet black hair" would give her a sense of belonging and, all in all, make her a whole person.

Susan's sense of alienation and internal fragmentation, which were negatively affecting her motivation and leaving her feeling powerless, was reflected in what she called her "love-hate relationship" with herself. Obviously Susan was having a running battle with her mother over her selfhood. Susan seemed to be fighting desperately to affirm her self-fact, that indeed she was full of worth and value, but her mother's image of her as "crazy and odd", which was slowly eating away at Susan's own estimation of herself, was gaining ground. Having to fight so hard, thus far in her life, for every bit of affirmation that she received, and often overestimating herself in such achievements, made surrender, in the Thurmanian sense of the process, a very arduous task.

3. Response

Were surrender to occur for Susan, Thurman advocates that she could find motivation in "an integrated basis for action . . . a core of purpose" ... "for her life and for living." Adjacent to this new found purpose is "the releasing in the individual of new and great powers." Thurman's discussion of the origin and potency of these powers brings to mind the plight and possibilities of Susan. He writes:

> From where comes these powers? They are inherent in the individual, at least in part. Before surrender the

individual spends enormous energies in scattered ef-
forts, activities, and functions of various kinds. He
is unable to bring to bear the resources of his life upon
any single end. But when he surrenders and has now
a new center which takes the form of a central
demand, then his powers are pooled, are focused, and
may be directed to achieve impossible ends.[43]

When one surrenders the central nerve of one's inner-
most being to God and as commitment is made, "A different
kind of value is placed on physical existence" and even death of
the body is no ultimate threat. Relative to the issue of surrender
Susan's question also has to do with loyalty to God, or to parents.
"A soul-shaking conflict of loyalty" may be experienced by the
person, in response to which a decision must be made. . . ."[44]

Susan expresses the turmoil. "These feelings of trying to
stretch out there on my own stuff seems to be getting me in big
trouble." In a letter written and read to me by Susan, after about
a year in counseling, she expresses the fear, anxiety, and trepi-
dation of trying to realize and be her God-given self. She writes:

This newly awakened independence is okay, but it
seems like I'm just as alone now as I was before.
Through all of these sessions I've become more aware
to pinpoint, to feel, rationalize, really learn more
about me, what to accept, what to throw out, what to
redo. I feel like I've only covered a cornerstone and
I still have a milestone to go. But I feel like however
I go, I'm damned if I do, damned if I don't.
The jist of what you said is I'm alright as me and
I don't have to give, or as I would say, create situations
like I used to. And possibly I can't radiate fully
because I don't know my own secret. If that's true

then why am I still in the situation that I'm in and alone. And I said I didn't want to discuss this issue anymore. I feel like I'm trapped in a world that isn't mine.

I've had these really crazy mini-dreams which always show me falling apart. Why haven't I written them down? To be frank, I just wanted to forget them...

The scary part is not wanting to wind up the way folk and the way I conditioned myself, but not knowing how to change.

Thurman would say that Susan is in the process of losing her life, so that she can find it in surrender to God, which is a religious experience where "there is no loss of being but rather an irradiation of the self that makes it alive with 'Godness' in various ways." Of those ways mentioned by Thurman, a sense of wholeness and a feeling of integration would be beneficial for Susan.

4. The Mourning Process

Fairbairn would say that Susan was in the midst of a process of mourning. Fairbairn, following in the psychoanalytic tradition, emphasizes the need of persons to expel and to mourn past self and object images in order for the process of differentiation to occur. In addition to achieving greater object constancy (a kind of homeostatic balance in the face of frustrating internal and/or external object), mourning aids in the integration of the rejecting object, the exciting object, and the ideal object.[45] Here I believe that Fairbairn's description of the mourning process—the struggle to be free of inner conflict and bad internalized object—is related to the religious concept of salvation. He puts it this way:

On the one hand, it (salvation) presents itself as a
need to be saved from inner conflicts, corresponding
to the religious need for the forgiveness of sins; and,
on the other hand, it presents itself as a need to be
saved from the power of internalized bad objects,
corresponding to the religious need for the casting out
of devils.[46]

Whereas Thurman spoke of surrendering the "nerve
center of consent," Fairbairn has in mind the surrendering of
unconscious self and object images that influence attitude and
behavior.   An important fact that Thurman, Fairbairn, and
Susan would have us to note is the intense difficulty in the
surrendering, releasing and mourning of intimate relationships
that affect one's world view, one's attitude, and one's behavior
in profound ways. The resistance to such a process has been duly
noted above in Susan's very descriptive letter. And just as Susan
intimated in that letter, the opportunity for both counselor and
counselee to deal with these repressed images and their corre-
sponding impulses and memories will present itself (in transfer-
ence, dreams, behavior, and in other ways) time and time again,
despite the conscious and unconscious efforts on the part of the
counselee to flee them or the counselor's "pressing" the counselee
to confront and "release" them. This time of surrendering and
mourning is also a time when more mature ways of coping are
developed in the personality. Primary and infantile mechanisms
such as projection, splitting, and identification, are gradually
replaced by repression, sublimation, and displacement. These
secondary and more mature ways of coping with internal and
external relationships reflect more openness and versatility and
less hostile identification with past significant others. The
surrendering and mourning of the oppressive and divisive inter-
nalized relationships permit more integrated behaviors and de-

fense mechanisms.

A further look at the case material of Susan will help to explicate the actual working through of the surrendering and mourning processes.

One of the issues in my therapy with Susan was to allow her to release some of her hostile feelings about her mother, and also to begin to take a look at how a large part of her behavior was in retaliation and reaction to her mother's treatment of her. Susan needed to examine what choices in life were really hers and what choices were made from the pressures of internal and external relationships. We focused on a psychological separation of Susan and her mother. In addition to the therapeutic relationship, Susan now has one female friend and a church mother as participants in her support system, in her process of mourning. The result is that she no longer has to fear isolation and abandonment if and when she chooses to separate from her mother. Susan may never completely heal from the hurts caused by her relationship to her mother. But there were some indications that repressions were being lifted. Susan was still able to see realistically the persecutory, judgmental, and verbally abusive behavior of her mother (the rejecting object); while yet feeling a bond and need for her mother reflected in her desire to be accepted by and acceptable to her mother (the exciting object). She even began to see some things that she actually admired about her mother, such as the "wheeling and dealing that she did in order to raise five children almost by herself. . . and how she could always find very good bargains to keep us in style and looking nice" (the ideal object).

Conclusion

We have seen by way of theological and psychological theories and case material that dependency, with its attendant ramifications, is not necessarily a bad or detrimental state of being. On the contrary, in terms of relationships dependency is crucially necessary at appropriate times and in appropriate degrees. Independence is at best a transitory state. It is, rather, Interdependency that reflects appropriate timing and responses of ever reoccurring dependency needs, along with reciprocity, mutuality, giving, receiving, reliance, and responsibility, as well as the simultaneous experience of finitude and limitlessness.

With Interdependence as a normative value in pastoral counseling, one is able to meet persons, especially African American clients, at the points of their needs and strengths, while valuing both as part of the process of creation, and especially of the human condition. The pastoral counselor while affirming the ultimate worth and value of persons, recognizes the deep-seated internal pain of fragmentation, splitting, and alienation, and is able to "stand at the foot of the cross" patiently waiting and working with persons as they externalize, express, expel, and re-internalize or gather together dimensions of themselves that heal toward wholeness.

NOTES

[1]P.O. Ogunbowale, *The Essentials of the Yoruba Language* (London: University of London Press, L.T.D., 1970), p. 139.

[2]John S.Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books), 1970, p. 141. See also Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); and Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1983).

[3]In his brief overview of the "Overly Dependent Person" and the "Overly Independent Person" in the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, R. S. Sullender states that, "Compared to the "dependent personality," modern psychology has devoted relatively little attention to the problems of the excessively independent person. This is due, in part, to a strong cultural bias in America that defines independence and even excessive independence as desirable. Western culture admires the "rugged individualist." Robert Bellah and other writers in *Habits of the Heart* document this penchant in the United States culture toward "rugged individualism" and alleged independence. See Pamela Coulture, *Blessed Are The Poor? Women's Poverty, Family Policy, and Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991}.

[4]Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground: An Inquiry into the Basis of Man's Experience of Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

[5]Howard Thurman, *Creative Encounter: An Interpretation of Religion and the Social Witness* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), and *The Luminous Darkness: A Personal Interpretation of the Anatomy of Segregation and the Ground of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

[6]Howard Thurman, *Deep is the Hunger* (New York: Harper &

Brothers, 1951), p. 63.

[7]Thurman, *Disinherited* and Thurman, *Hunger*.

[8]Howard Thurman, *Disciplines of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 105. See also Carolyn McCrary, "Interdependence As A Norm For An Interdisciplinary Model of Pastoral Counseling," S.T.D. dissertation, Interdenominational Theological Center, 1989), p. 86-94.

[9]Edward P. Wimberly and Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Liberation and Human Wholeness: The Conversion Experiences of Black People in Slavery and Freedom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986).

[10]Howard Thurman, *The Growing Edge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), p. 10.

[11]Thurman, *Search*, p. xiv.

[12]Thurman, *Disciplines*, p. 104

[13]Luther Smith, *Howard Thurman: The Mystic as Prophet* (New York: University Press of America, 1981), p. 46.

[14]Thurman, *Search*, p. 6.

[15]Alexis Kagame, *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de L'etre* (Brussels, 1956), pp. 71-120.

[16]Janheinz Jahn, *Muntu: The New African Culture* 4th ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1958), pp. 100-101.

[17]Norman Geisler & Paul Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990) p. 92; cf. Renee Descartes, *Meditations On First Philosophy*, *Meditations, II*.

[18]Kagame, *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de L'etre*, p. 209.

[19]Jahn, *Muntu*, pp. 107-108.

[20]Kagame, *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de L' etre*, pp. 128-136.

[21]Jahn, *Muntu*, pp. 101-111.

[22]Thurman, *Search*, p. 83.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 83-84.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 80.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 8.

[26]Smith, *Mystic*, p. 49.

[27]Cf. Howard Thurman, "What Can We Believe In?" *The Journal of Religion and Health* 12 (April 1973): 111-119.

[28]Smith, *Mystic*, p. 50.

[29]Thurman, *Hunger*, p. 63.

[30]*Ibid*.

[31]Thurman, *Hunger*, p. 109.

[32]Smith, *Mystic*, p. 50.

[33]Howard Thurman, *The Inward Journey* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961). p. 40.

[34]Thurman, *Search*, p. 82.

[35]In Sigmund Freud's last book, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, the title of the last unfinished chapter is "The Internal World," which can be interepreted as a reference to the processes of internalization and object relations theory. See also Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, Standard Edition, 19 (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), pp. 13-66; and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, James Strachey, ed., (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1959), esp. p. 41.

[36]Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 151-187.

[37]W. R. D. Fairbairn, "Synopsis of an Object Relations Theory of the Personality," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 44 (1963): 224.

[38]Henry Guntrip, *Psychoanalytic Theory and the Self* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), p. 93.

[39]Howard Thurman, *The Creative Encounter: An Interpretation of Religion and the Social Witness* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 32.

[40]*Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

[41]*Ibid.*, pp. 70-72. Surrender in the Thurmanian sense is not

necessarily oppressive and can be very liberating. From a Womanist perspective, however, commitment seems to be a better term.

[42]*Ibid.*, p. 74.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 82.

[44]Fairbairn, "On the Nature and Aims of PsychoAnalytical Treatment," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 39 (1958): 376.

[45]Fairbairn, "Freud, The Psycho-Analytical Method and Mental Health," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 30 (1957): 61.