

THE BOOK REPORT ON PERSONALITY GROWTH AND SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Referee: Dr. Benedict Kwok

Author: Tsang Yin Sim

1. Introduction

This book report is to consolidate and reflect about the ideas of personality growth and spiritual transformation from Charles Sherlock in *The Doctrine of Humanity*, Kenneth Boa in *Conformed to His Image*, Richard J. Foster in *Salvation is for Life*, Daniël Louw in *Mature Faith. Spiritual Direction and Anthropology in a Theology of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, David Bryant in *Imago Dei, Imagination, and Ecological Responsibility*.

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They are both answering the question about what is humanity and how we could have personality growth and spiritual transformation from the perspectives of theology, bible, psychology to anthropology. And they are trying to bridge the gap between the intellectual level to daily life context. In the following paragraphs, summarization from each book will be given respectively, comparisons and reflection will follow.

2. Summarization

2.1 Sherlock, Charles. The Doctrine of Humanity

The exegetical biblical perspective is applied to illustrate the relationship between humanity and Christ, how reconciliation is crucial to the image of God being magnified in human-being. Salvation and the future re-creation of humankind is essential to our spiritual growth. It offers the insight about spiritual growth.

2.1.1 Chapter 2 The image of God renewed in Christ

Exegetical Scripture

Implication on humanity

1 Corinthians 11:7

· New humanity in Christ glimpsed about God

1 Corinthians 15

· New humanity in Christ proclaimed about God

· we are finite, God is infinite; we are sinners

· We were made for relationship with God,

· The key to live a full life with God, the salvation

2 Corinthians 3-5

· New humanity in Christ reflected in reconciliation

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•	Present transformation exists among hum
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•	Personal response to the gospel is crucia
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Romans 5:12-21

New humanity in Christ and the old

1.	Sin entered the world
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2.	Solidarity is important as we are created t
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•	We are recreated and on the way to the g
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Ephesians and Colossians

•	New humanity in Christ made visible
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•	Reconciliation bridges the gap between s
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To conclude, gospel includes the restoration of our humanity in Christ. We were made to be holy but got corrupted by sins, salvation of Christ restores our nature through the reconciliation.

2.1.2 Chapter 3 The image of God in Christian thought

It is talking about the reflected image of God in terms of physical, spiritual, mind and heart, soul and grace, individual and corporate aspects.

2.1.2.1 Physical and spiritual

The purpose of creating humankind is to give dominion over the animals based on the Scriptures. It is pointing out the risks of projection of our earthly father upon God according to Freud, and the risks to deny the physical nature of humankind from God. Divinization was described as the goal of human life, which is the communion through Spirit in Christ, man could become the son of God through the salvation.

2.1.2.2 Mind and heart

Intellectualism was misunderstood as the renewal in knowledge and the spirit of our mind in current culture which is dominated by technology. We could only know the image of God more through the work of Christ and the grace of Holy Spirit than to know thyself according to Augustine, such as how we love and how we learn. Christians are growing in the knowledge of God, but it was criticized that humankind is more than memory, understanding and will. We could never totally understand the image of God intellectually.

2.1.2.3 Soul and grace

Irenaeus pointed out the gap between what we are created for and what we are now based on the exegesis of Genesis, all humankind is created according to the image of God including both of our body and soul, regardless of Christians. Because of grace, we, sinners, could experience hope, faith and love through memory, understanding and will.

It is believed that the image of God in us is positively related to our humanity, which will be lost if the image of God is lost. Yet the proportion of the image of God in humankind is different in the view of Luther and Calvin from practically lost to irreparably marred.

2.1.2.4 Individual and corporate

Since the influences of the work of Descartes, Kant Hegal and Marx, people no longer understood humanity through the image of God. Cultural anthropology and psychology offer other perspectives to understand about humanity. The image of God was assumed to be understood individually, and the image of God in women was different from men. Men were stressed as individual, women were communal.

2.2 □ Boa, Kenneth. Conformed to His Image

It is talking about the spirituality based on the framework of MBTI from Carl Jung and the Performax Personal Profile System (DISC). It is assumed that the primacy of the graces of God is over determined self-actualization. Those were perceived as the complementary approaches to the growth of spiritual life.

The spiritual life is mapped as four main aspects, which are societal regeneration and theological renewal in the category of mind to know God, the inner life, theological renewal in the category of heart to sense God. The aspect of societal regeneration and inner life is in the spectrum of apophatic which is the aspect of the mystery of God. The aspect of theological renewal is located at the spectrum of kataphatic which is the aspect of the revealed God.

And the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) from Carl G. Jung was adopted to define the spiritual orientation. It is believed to be healthy to provide the diversity in the unity of the body of Christ. This typology classified different kind of prayers, ways to experience God, the reaction to God according to different temperaments, James, Peter, John and Paul were quoted as the examples.

2.3 Foster, Richard J., “Salvation is for Life”

Foster emphasizes that salvation is the new order of life to overcome the dominion of sin in our daily lives. There are two types of life, physical life and spiritual life according to the Scripture. The desire to reflect more the glory and goodness of God and experience the deeper transformation of our inner personality should be the goal of the Christian life, and heaven is simply the destination of the salvation instead of being the goal of life, where the full realization of the perfect glorification of God will take place. Thus the ‘character-transforming life’ is supposed to be the center of the Christian life according to Foster, and we are the only one could prevent God from transforming us. The reunion with God could purify the heart, grace is the reason to have this reunion, Jesus will teach us how to live. And death is part of the transformation to the likeness of Christ. The transformation is to work with the Spirit through spiritual discipline and other means of grace, it is neither attributing it as the solely sovereign acts of God nor solely effort of humankind.

2.4 Louw, Daniël J., Mature Faith. Spiritual Direction and Anthropology in a Theology of Pastoral Care and Counseling

It is talking about the development of pastoral care, which has been shifting from the soul care to the faith care in the context of life. Pastoral care used to concern about the need of redemption to deal with the problem of sin in the perspective of theological reduction, and the need of self-realization to deal with the need of the blocked inner potentialities in the perspective of psychological reduction. It is argued that the spiritual direction of pastoral care should head to the kingdom of God, which is the transcendent dimension of the Christian faith and the hope of the destiny of creation. Counselling is the strategy to interpret the experiences in the perception of God, thus interpretation and assessment or diagnosis should be added to the traditional functions of pastoral care, they are healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciliation and nurturing in the framework of a hermeneutics of pastoral care.

Furthermore, the author tried to communicate between the theological contextual interpretation to pastoral care, so to supplement each other with the faith seeking ways of action.

The relational model is mentioned to restore the broken relationship. The idea of internalization the spiritual direction from Andriessen is mentioned afterwards, so to prevent from formalizing the experiences of God in cognitive categories.

There are three basic assumptions in the doctrine of human being, they are the identity and vocation of human, the human quest for meaning, significance and purposefulness, the interplay between God images, spirituality and self-esteem. The identity and vocation of human swings between affirmation to creaturehood so to resist evils and emphasizing the inferiority of human beings due to the doctrine of Fall in the past Reformed model. The core human need is assumed as intimacy. And the interaction is referring to the companionship, partnership and communion between God and human.

The Kerygmatic Model emphasizes the forgiveness of sins. The client-centered model emphasizes the inner human potential to trace for the wholeness. Both are examples of the pastoral approach. Gerkin argued that the risk that psychotherapy might shake the theological roots, so to raise up the new reorientation in pastoral theology. This reorientation is about the hermeneutical analysis of human stories with the faith and religious language and symbols. He argued that Carl Roger romantized human emotions and organisms at the level that human body could be the direct medium of revelation, the assumption of self-assertion and

self-actualization in psychology is treated as contradicting to the theological assumptions, because grace is the supplement to the image of God. And sin is diminished as the pathological phenomenon, the dysfunctional part in personality. Thus, salvation is overlooked due to the assumptions above when the empathetic communication is the main stimulus across the therapeutic process. Then soteriology is introduced to highlight how the reconciliation is functional and effective to transform people and change the relationship between people. But it is argued that the mediatory work of Christ is degraded when over-focusing on the effective change in psychic function. Then a pneumatology is suggested to play between anthropology and pastoral theology.

The dependence on God, the grace of new-being in Christ, the glory of the sovereignty of God over all destructive powers, salvation, faith to God, the ability and responsibility to respond to the love of God, the restoration of bad relationships, the already-but-not-yet eschatological tension should be addressed based on the biblical doctrine of human.

To conclude, the resurrection of Christ could define our humanity as the recreation gives us a new status in Christ, and we are justified by the redemption from sin and sanctified by the spiritual growth.

2.5 David Bryant, “Imago Dei, Imagination, and Ecological Responsibility”

He talked about the definition of the imago Dei in Genesis according to the practice to show the authority between the rulers and the people in the ancient Near East, it means human have the dominion over the rest of the creation. During the process of human dominion, we may understand the power and authority of God. The openness to nature is the core aspect of the

dominion which reflects the divine love of God for the world. From the love and service in the life of Jesus, we realize about the image of God. Bryant discussed whether exercising the divine power is contradicted to the love of God, he took Noah as the example. And he further elaborated that imago is about vocation, imagination is important to fulfill the vocation in respond to the authentic selves, connect the images from the past, culture, self, bible and the world.

He also argued that the fall of sin did not deny the ultimate origin of human being, it could reinforce the pursuit for the fundamental harmony from the image of God that is our authentic destiny. And the resurrection of Jesus is the sign that He could conquer the power of sin, and save us from death, so we could live a life of love. We exercise the power to realize justice and love so to be the representatives of God.

3. The comparison of those perspectives

3.1 Commonality

3.1.1 Christ is the only mean to the authentic self

Sherlock applied the biblical perspective, Boa applied the psychological perspective, Foster and Bryant applied the theological perspective, Louw applied the theological, counseling and anthropological perspective to illustrate the salvation from Christ is the only mean to the authentic self. Salvation is the bridge between our fallen self and the recreation self. Even though we could not transform to the whole image of God on earth, the salvation of Christ is the mean to transform us in daily life context. It is irreplaceable by the dominated psychological approach which is commented to emphasize self-actualization and degrade sin to pathology.

3.1.2 The relationship between Christ and human is crucial to the current transformation

They all emphasizes the reconciliation between God and human because of the salvation of Christ is crucial to our current spiritual transformation and personality growth, as it is the foundation to lead to the reconciliation among human relationship. It is assumed that the reconciliation between God and human is the only way to access to the authentic self so to unlock the inner potential which was created by God and contaminated by the fall, thus this reconciliation is the key to recover and restore the image of God in us so to react among human relationship.

Even though Boa applied the psychological perspective heavily that is different from other authors, the MBTI approach he applied is directing us to different means connecting to God in our daily lives. Thus the relationship between Christ and human is still the core in the spiritual transformation and personality growth.

3.1.3 The restoration of the image of God in us is happening on earth

They are all both sharing the common assumption that the image of God in us could be restored on earth via the salvation of Christ and maintaining the relationship with Jesus Christ. Our choice on accepting the salvation or not is the key and our responsibility to make it happen. It is believed the wholeness of the image of God in humankind could only be fully restored in heaven. It is the already-but-not-yet progress on earth. Based on this foundation, they are both discussing about the ideas that how humankind could pay effort on it in different perspectives, even in the secular perspective which is psychology.

3.1.4 God and human are working together in the process of personality growth and spiritual transformation

It has been mentioned before that the salvation of Christ and the relationship between Christ and human is crucial in the process. As grace is the only reason leading to the salvation, so people could choose to accept this salvation under the providence of God, but people could not earn this salvation and the complete restoration by our own effort. Holy spirit invites us to work together with Him to work on this progress. This cooperating relationship with God is important because Louw argued that the psychology and counseling might replace the contribution of God in this transformation process. They all shared this common ground about the cooperating relationship between God and human.

3.2 Differences

3.2.1 Different terminologies lead to different standards

Christianity is the common ground of the authors. Louw and Boa applied so many perspectives of psychology and counseling to discuss about the personality growth and spiritual transformation under this common ground. In fact, the terminology of psychology and counseling is different from theology, it is referring to different destinations even though we are referring to the same term. Based on the thorough exegesis of Genesis and Pauline letters of Sherlock, discussion of the theological and church history tradition of Louw, Foster and Bryant, the 'personality growth and spiritual transformation' is directing to the complete image of God that He created us to be. In accurately speaking, there is no 'personality growth' in bible. It is a concept from psychology. Yet, the concept of transformation could be found in the bible. Paul did encourage Christians to transform our life to be Christ-like.

In psychology, personality growth is never about God. It is simply about us. It is about a journey to understand about human being to search for the inner self. But this 'inner-self' is about the instinct, ego and super-ego according to Freud, it is different from the 'self' in the biblical and theological perspective. Therefore, the destination of the personality growth and transformation is directing people to searching the inner self at the conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious level. It is about searching for the bottom part of the ice-berg of human being. Self-actualization is the ultimate goal of human being according to the hierarchy of needs of Maslow, who is a well-known psychologist, his theory is the basic foundation of most of the counseling approaches.

As a result, when Louw and Boa employed the psychological perspective to discuss about the spiritual transformation, the direction is totally different from the discussion of Sherlock, Foster and Bryant. It is more about human needs in the psychological discussion, when it is more about what God wants and creates us to be in the theological and biblical discussion.

3.2.2 Different dimensions

Sherlock is talking more about the biblical exegesis discussion on the doctrine of human being, Boa is talking more about how to get closed with God in the psychological framework, Foster is talking more about the theological idea and the discussion about the providence of God and the effort of humankind on transformation, Louw is talking more about the application of pastoral counseling in a comparatively all-rounded perspectives which includes theology, bible, anthropology and psychology, Bryant is talking more about the history and definition of image in the perspectives of theology and church history. To conclude their focus, Sherlock and Bryant are discussing about what human is, Boa and Foster are discussing about how to live what human is, Louw is discussing about how pastors and church ministers help people to live what they really are.

4. Reflection

4.1 Always remember about the core

Even though the application of psychology and counseling in pastoral care is criticized, different people across the history have been trying very best to bridge the gap between bible and daily context. The possible contribution could not be totally denied. The discussions from all the authors are both emphasizes the core which is the relationship between Christ and humankind. It is easy to forget about the core when there are too many different ways and means to facilitate the personality growth and spiritual counseling. It is unavoidable to face this norm as psychology and counseling has been so dominated in helping people profession. The salvation of Christ is the significant difference between the secular helping people profession and serving

at church.

4.2 Always remember about the different terminologies

It is good that Louw offers an all-rounded comparison in terms of pastoral care approaches. It is not that fair to apply the secular approaches yet expecting the approaches to fit in the bible perfectly. For example, client-centered approach of Carl Roger was not designed to solve the problem of the origin of human being and tackling the relationship between God and people, it was designed as a counseling approach to help the counselor to build up the relationship between the counselor and clients, so to discover the inner strengths of the clients to solve the problems in daily life. Carl Roger did not design this approach to talk about what sin really is. Therefore, it is not fair to comment Carl Roger making sin pathological and upgrading human body as the direct medium of revelation. Yet, how people applied his approach is another discussion. Except falling into the either accept or reject the binary ways out, it is important to aware of the different terminologies, so to set the boundary that the secular approaches should be applied to what extent to facilitate the spiritual transformation of the brothers and sisters at church. After all, we have to admit the fact that we could only let go to Holy Spirit to work, lay our trust on God instead of the tangible secular workable approaches.

4.3 It is a collective action to facilitate the spiritual transformation

Since the reconciliation between God and human is essential to our fundamental need of intimacy, we could not fulfill this need alone, as intimacy could not be existed without the interaction among creatures. The authors above emphasize the interaction between God and people more than the interaction among people, as it is the core of the spiritual transformation. Except the teaching in the Pauline letters, we understand about the image of God from the bible stories, the interaction between God to people, the interaction between Jesus Christ to people. Most likely we evaluate the ways of people interacting with each other as some of the explicit indicators that whether the people could live Christ-like. Therefore, the effort how we spent on loving people as well as how Jesus Christ did to us is also important to facilitate the personality growth and spiritual transformation. In this case, Bryant mentions about the dominion of human over the creatures which is relatively more about the collective action on transformation. The interaction and dominion among creatures could experience the love of God which is related to the image of God in us.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, Sherlock, Boa, Foster, Louw and Bryant discussed about what human is and how human could transform spiritually to Christ like on the common ground that Christ is the only mean to the authentic self, the relationship between Christ and people is crucial, God and human are working together in the process of spiritual transformation. They shared different terminologies and dimensions. It is important to always remember the core of the spiritual

transformation, to be aware of the differences between the secular perspectives and biblical perspectives and spiritual transformation is a collective action.

[1] Because the page numbers are required and shown in the course outline already, the consolidation and analysis is based on the required content, thus the exact page numbers will not be shown in the report.