

**THE CONSEQUENCES OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIVINE,
AND THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH,
IN THE MAKING OF SELF-IDENTITY.**

ADDENDUM TO THE THESIS

**EXPLORING THE CONSEQUENCES OF PERCEPTIONS OF
THE DIVINE, AND THE CHURCH, IN THE MAKING OF
SELF-IDENTITY; A CASE STUDY OF CONGREGANTS FROM ROMAN
CATHOLIC AND CHARISMATIC COMMUNITIES
IN EAST LONDON, SOUTH AFRICA.**

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INTRODUCTION

The thesis "Exploring the Consequences of Perceptions of The Divine, and The Church, in the making of Self-Identity; a Case Study of Congregants from Roman Catholic and Charismatic Communities in East London, South Africa" has explored the impact of The Divine and the teaching of the church in the context of the churches involved in the research project. However, analysis and findings with regard to the development of personal self-identity are ultimately based on personal experience and personal interpretation of that experience. With this in mind the analysis of the data collected is presented in this addendum in the context of the individual participant.

The individual analysis of each participant begins with a brief profile of the agent, omitting detail which could lead to his or her identification. In seeking to establish the un/acknowledged impact of The Divine in the life of the individual their perceptions of The Divine and understanding of *imago Dei* are then presented. This is followed by observations with regard to the role of patriarchy in their lives - and their experience of patriarchy.

The impact of the church - as an institution – in providing a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust is then explored, after which the implications of church membership on creative expression and the element of free choice are explored; the power of the church in the life of the individual under girding these observations.

The self-perceptions of each individual are then given, followed by the analysis of the experience of each participant, evaluation based on Giddens' criteria for self-identity. The impact of perceptions of The Divine concludes the assessment for the individual agent.

Terms that are specific to the disciplines of Theology and Sociology, as well as those which are particular to the context of religion - and specifically the Christian faith and the two denominations involved in the study – are explained as footnotes.

While this addendum should be read as a companion to the above mentioned thesis, the analysis as presented can be understood in its autonomy. However, it must be remembered that the conclusions, as presented in this addendum, need to be understood in the light of the theory underlying the research project.

Participant One of Twelve: Sue.

Personal Profile

Sue was thirty nine years old, married, and had three young children. She had been a stay-at-home parent since the birth of her first child. She grew up in Zimbabwe, one of four children, in a very happy and secure home environment - but not what she would have called a "Christian home". She regularly attended a number of different churches during her childhood. As a teenager her previously close relationship with her mother fragmented, and although she believed The Divine had enabled her to forgive and had healed her emotionally, the relationship had never been quite the same. She qualified as a nursing sister, but once qualified realised that her choice was not as fulfilling as anticipated. She then registered for a degree in music - which was her hearts desire - and taught music until the birth of her first child.

Sue felt she had always had a "spiritual sensitivity", and could sense the presence of The Divine – even in the "dry Anglican Church" she regularly attended when young. She said her confirmation (at twelve) was in her head and not her heart. However, when the bishop prayed for her she did feel "the most incredible joy and [a] warmth just flooded [her] body". She saw this as "a hook in her heart" and was later "baptised in the Holy Spirit¹ and spoke in tongues² ... ". She said she "never doubted her salvation after that".

She had been a member of the Lighthouse Community Church for over ten years, was very involved in church activities, and attended church regularly. She was of the opinion that her understanding of the doctrine and teaching of the Lighthouse Community Church was "very good".

Perceptions of The Divine (and Mary)

Sue's perception of The Divine had changed over the years. Had she been asked as a young child to draw The Divine, her picture would have been based on the ornamental grandeur of the church she attended. At Sunday School she learnt to see

¹ Baptism in the Spirit: A prayer experience in which the believer asks the Holy Spirit to fill their life – often accompanied by a sign or a gift – usually the ability to pray or sing "in tongues" (or language of the Spirit).

² Tongues or Praying in the Spirit: The uttering of words and/or syllables that are often incoherent to human beings, but are believed to be "the language of the Spirit". Based on Acts 2:1-13 which records the early disciples/ followers of Jesus as speaking in foreign languages.

The Divine of the Old Testament as one to be feared, while the Jesus of the New Testament was a "soft looking man"; which was also a learnt perception.

Later her drawing would have been less anthropomorphic: "a sun or something – something bright and light– dispelling darkness and warming"; an image that was still most strong. As Sue experienced the Lighthouse Community Church tradition she said that she also perceived The Divine in "almost a shepherd³ image ... a sense of God guiding and leading ... a sense of dependence on Him ..." while not being "... clear cut ... [or as] black and white ... ". The Divine had become more of a mystery for her, while at the same time being One on whom she could depend.

Although she did not perceive The Divine as changeable she was of the opinion that the self-revelation of The Divine took on different aspects of the nature of The Divine, much as the wind: sometimes strong, sometimes gentle. Human qualities and characteristics associated with The Divine included love, patience, mercy, grace, justice (fairness) and righteousness.

Sue did sometimes feel that The Divine had let her down, and that there had been times "when God had felt far away". She nevertheless knew that "... [he was] still a loving God and heavenly father to [her]". She also experienced The Divine as "a personal God" although at the same time "awesome, great and beyond understanding".

Sue said that Mary had not played much of role in her life, and that in the Lighthouse Community Church Mary hardly got a mention. However, she had often thought what an amazing woman Mary must have been. When asked to describe Mary she related a number of traits, including gentleness, graciousness, kindness, sadness, self-giving, strength and wisdom. She also described Mary as mother, mother of Jesus and mother of God.

³ Shepherd: With reference to idea that Christians need to facilitate the spiritual growth of new converts; "shepherd" also being a term used to refer to Jesus – the great shepherd.

Imago Dei

As far as Sue was concerned human beings were created in the image of The Divine inasmuch as they had a spirit and the potential (if in a perfect state) to reflect the attributes of The Divine, including being "loving, slow to anger, abounding in love, full of mercy ... fair ... righteous ...".

Sue was of the opinion that she had seen attributes of The Divine grow in her life. These included a capacity to love, a compassion for those for whom she would not normally care and a more tolerant attitude, although she felt that she still had a long way to go in the latter area. Sue also saw the Divine as "a creative God", an aspect evidenced in her life in her musical talent and creativity.

Patriarchy and The Divine

At home, Sue experienced her role as pivotal; as a stabilising factor and as being the one who was "responsible for just shifting the things that are important into a bit more focus". Before the birth of her children she was "career focused and ... loved the academic side of life" but found that, through the teachings [of the church] she had been "re-prioritising" and had "much more sense that God had a purpose ...", this purpose bound to the raising of her children in a Christian environment. Although at times she felt she was not doing much she said: "I suppose I'm shaping these little lives ... which in a way is making a difference in the church".

In spite of this encompassing role she had in the family, that as far as she was concerned husbands and wives were "a team together in marriage", and that deciding family goals was a "team thing", Sue maintained that "the husband was the head of the home in that he had the ultimate ... authority ...", and that primary responsibility lay on him. She also considered him the "spiritual head of the home".

Her husband was the cell group leader⁴, while she was "sort of there with him" and had "quite a lot of input with the women". She noted that in her church women were not allowed to be Priests or Pastors, their role being a more supportive one, and their

⁴ Cell Group Leader: One who was responsible for the pastoral care and spiritual growth of a group of people who meet once a week in the home of one of the group members, normally the cell group leader.

ministry – if any -being "woman to woman". Although she personally felt that women could, and did have, a valid role to play as Pastors and priests, she accepted the views of her church in this area because it was "not something [she] particularly [felt] called to".

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

Belonging to the Lighthouse Community Church had been a positive experience for Sue. While it used to be a duty to go to church, it had become fun and she felt she had found a sense of purpose. The church had also become a place of hope and healing, facilitating a sense of community and trust in The Divine. Not only was there a caring through the people of the church, but also an awareness of being cared for by The Divine, and being "in relationship" with The Divine.

She said she had a "sense of his protection and a sense of his hand on [her] life ... and his guidance, [enabling her] to do things ... [she] would never ever [have been] able to do". She continued, "... I think as a believer you live beyond yourself". She felt that the time spent in church on a Sunday was not separate from the lifestyle of the family from Monday to Saturday, "it's actually all part of a lifestyle with us ... the church isn't just the building ... it's ... the relationships within the church and the caring for each other". This caring also found expression through the cell groups⁵ where she said the primary purpose was to "encourage each other and care for each other".

Freedom of choice and creative expression

Sue felt that both The Divine and her have had a part to play in the fact that she was a Christian. She could see the influence of The Divine on her life in giving her the Christian background she had had, but she added: "I always had the choice to respond and the choice to carry on walking in the way⁶ ...". While she thought it possible not to be in relationship with The Divine, or be part of the church, it was an option she "could not imagine – [she] would [have hated] it."

⁵ Cell Group: A fellowship group comprising of about 10 people and functions as a "mini church".

⁶ With reference to the words of Jesus "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by me" (John 14:6).

She did not experience the presence of The Divine as something which was inhibiting, controlling or judgemental, but rather a comfort. While she did not understand everything she supposed that "just through God's revelation of his love in [her] life ...[he was] still a loving God and heavenly father to [her]". She was aware that many issues were not "black and white" and that there were "many things [one didn't] have the answers to".

She said she had decided to devote all her time to raising her children, a role in line with her church's teaching.

The power of the church

A number of times during the interviews Sue referred to the integrated nature of her faith: her spiritual and religious orientation to life not being restricted to corporate worship. It was part of "who she was" and overflowed into personal, domestic and social areas of her life. She believed she was called to be like salt⁷ in a society where there was "such a lack of love and kindness and Godly morals"; to speak a "kindly word", to care and to put "God's love in a situation". She did not speak about people being either "saved" or "lost", only in need of the love of The Divine.

If Sue were to have been affected by a doctrine of her church with which she disagreed she said she would talk it over with her husband, and the leadership; but concluded: "at the end of the day you are not going to agree with every single thing". However, if it did not affect her, as for example her views on women in leadership, she would continue to hold her own views while retaining membership of the church.

Self-perception

Sue said that she was a shy child, but "not in an inadequate sort of sense". Later, in spite of having had a stable upbringing, she felt that she did not have "a high self-esteem", and felt "socially awkward". Although she was top of her class she felt that she was always in the shadow of her brother, "who was brilliant". When relationships failed she did not always have the tenacity to try again, but she said she thought that this was linked to her low self-esteem.

⁷ With reference to the words of Jesus "You are the salt of the world. And if salt becomes tasteless ... " (Matthew 5:13).

She saw herself as quite quiet and reserved, not much of a party person, and enjoyed smaller groups of people. She wished she could be more orderly in what she did so that she could feel she was a bit more "in control". While she could be very disciplined in some areas, she could be very un-disciplined in others.

She said that as she had gotten older she had grown to like herself; the knowledge that she was loved by The Divine having given her a sense of self-worth and changed her focus. While she loved the academic side of things she had become more aware "that God had a purpose" for her life. She added that the teaching of the Church had made her grow into more of what she was meant to be, becoming more certain of herself and stretching her beyond herself. She said that the biggest changes in her feelings of contentment, self-worth, significance, happiness and hope were related to her having joined the Lighthouse Community Church. She had also grown in her dependence of The Divine, empathy, ability to forgive, and friendliness. She considered herself less reserved, less afraid of The Divine, and better tempered. She also said that she "had seen characteristics of God grow in her life" and that she was often able to respond with a compassion which would not be according to her natural instinct. Being "just a mom", gave her an outlet for love and kindness, although she could be impatient at times. She could also be a bit selfish and was not always ready to meet needs outside the home. She wished she had a greater capacity to reach out.

She enjoyed her creativity with regard to music, which at that stage was on hold, and the fact that she had an ability to see things through, although she felt that with regard to her creativity, much was held back and she wished she could reach her full potential. She also said that she thought The Divine had not allowed her to be the typical moody creative musician-type person, and she was a happier person because of that.

When asked who she would choose to identify with in terms of a biblical character or saint she answered: "I've always enjoyed the feisty women in the Bible – Ruth and Abigail and Ester have always appealed to me ... maybe someone like Ester – she was stunning and she was beautiful ... she really made a huge change – I mean, she saved her nation". Sue acknowledged that Ester moved outside of what was considered the norm of her day.

Evaluation

Sue's perceptions of The Divine had changed from that of a remote Divine Being who was to be feared and was not easily accessed, to one who could not easily be described but who radiated both warmth and light, and was concerned for her. Qualities associated with The Divine included gentleness, patience, mercy, grace, compassion, fairness and creativity – all of which were, for her, associated with the feminine. Also associated with The Divine was the masculine stereotypical notion of The Divine as being one who protected. Further associations of strength and love, as traits of The Divine, were perceived by Sue as being both masculine and feminine in nature. Although not a member of the Roman Catholic Church, Mary had had an influence in Sue's faith experience. Sue associated the traits of gentleness, graciousness, sadness and self-giving with Mary, qualities which she perceived as feminine; while wisdom, also associated with Mary, was allied with both masculine and feminine stereotypes. Divine qualities which Sue had seen in her life included creativity, compassion, tolerance, and the capacity to love; traits which had become more apparent over the years, and were associated with the feminine (although love was also associated with the masculine).

Sue was easily able about to talk about herself and presented a strong awareness of self; a discursive awareness of the story of her life, her purpose and her role. She attributed an improved self-esteem to the awareness that she was loved by The Divine, and the teachings of the Lighthouse Community Church. Sue had become more self-confident and had a greater sense of self-worth and significance. Stronger feelings of happiness, hope, friendliness, patience and contentment had developed since she had been associated with the Lighthouse Community Church. Inasmuch as Sue experienced the church as being "the people belonging to the church", it had had a positive influence on her life, but was no more than a part, an aspect, - of her faith experience.

Sue's relationship with The Divine and with The Church did not preclude the possibility of responsibility or free choice. Although a member of a church community which demanded a relatively high standard of compliance, Sue evidenced independence and free thought - even with regard to the most fundamental views

taught by her church. Sue valued the quality of being able to make a difference and moved outside of pre-defined roles and expectations.

With reference to the factors affecting self-identity, as suggested by Giddens, one could conclude that Sue had a strong sense of identity, and that the church had had a degree of positive influence in her life. With regard to her perceptions of The Divine (more specifically her personal gender stereo-typical perceptions) there appeared to be a very strong feminine element associated with The Divine. This could have suggested that The Divine – as One evidencing many feminine qualities – had had a positive influence in the formation of Sue's self-identity as a woman. Her more ethereal understanding of The Divine may have strengthened the impact of these feminine perceptions since she did not have to "see through" a masculine anthropomorphic image. Given the fact that she spoke of Mary in largely gender stereotypical terms associated with the feminine one could conclude that Mary – as a person associated with The Divine - had also had a positive impact on her life.

It was unlikely that Sue would actively perpetuate patriarchal models and perceptions. However if she retained her passive stance in this regard she would unintentionally facilitate the maintenance of the status-quo.

Participant Two of Twelve: Carol.

Personal Profile

Carol, was a middle-aged part-time homemaker, part-time clerk, the oldest of two children, married and had teenage children. Both her parents had had an input in her upbringing, although she mentioned that she was close to her father. She considered herself to have been a generally happy child and to have had a "pretty un-traumatic" life. Apart from the expectation that she would marry and have a family, she was allowed freedom of choice with regard to decisions for her future.

As a child there was an awareness of The Divine in her home, in Carol's words: "God was always there because other people said so". Her first recalled personal experience of the existence of The Divine was when she prayed – at age twelve or thirteen – for her dog to be healed, "and it was". Her most significant experience of The Divine was when she was Baptised in the Spirit in her early twenties, this experience having opened the doors to a whole new realm of experience. Since then she had been aware of the ongoing involvement of The Divine in her life through having provided for her and having made a difference in the lives of people around her.

She was one of the founder members of the Lighthouse Community Church, having been a member for more than twenty years. As an employee and a deacon⁸, she was very involved in the day-to-day running of her church, and she felt that she played a pivotal role. She attended church at least three times a month and rated her understanding of her church's doctrine and teaching as excellent.

Perceptions of The Divine (and Mary)

Carol always knew about The Divine and as a child would have drawn what she had seen in pictures: a man with "... sort of long hair and white robe ...". However, at the time of the interviews she said that she didn't "have any perception of his face – just an incredible light – nothing – just a holiness"; a caring Being, but balanced by an "awesomeness".

⁸ Deacon: In the context of the church within which she worshipped this was a role involving very practical implementation of decisions taken by the eldership – and she was accountable to the eldership (comprising men only).

She described The Divine as one with authority; great and big, saying: "God is awesome and holy" and not one to be "messed with", but honoured and respected. With regard to her personal relationship with The Divine, Carol maintained: "To me God has always been incredibly faithful so I see him as a father – I think", then continued to describe her struggle to relate to The Divine as "Daddy" (or Abba) ⁹ - because of the ambivalence she experienced with regard to the holiness issue: The Divine was approachable yet could not be "casually" approached.

However, relationship remained important. The idea of interaction with The Divine was, for Carol, the reason for the creation of human beings. She believed: "God created us for fellowship with us ...". This sense of belonging to The Divine made her feel secure and unafraid.

Carol said that, as a protestant, Mary had played absolutely no role in her faith experience. She was the mother of Jesus and nothing else.

Imago Dei

Carol believed that *imago Dei* meant the potential for human beings to have something of the "nature" of The Divine. The significance of this lay in the actions of people and she said, "it would be an incredible thing if we were all functioning as "created in the image of God"". Inasmuch as Carol understood the nature of Divine to be revealed in the actions of human beings, she confirmed her own *imago Dei* to be expressed in her relationships with others. She said: "I would hope that other people would see it ... I don't actually know sometimes what's [Carol] and what's God ... times when the Lord had worked or said stuff through me ...".

Patriarchy and The Divine

Carol referred to The Divine in purely masculine terms and confirmed the extent to which her church presents The Divine in patriarchal parental terms when she said,

⁹ "Abba": being the Aramaic word for Father, but often taught (especially but not exclusively in Charismatic churches) as meaning "Daddy"; based on the teachings of Paul. (For example: Romans 8:15 "The spirit you have received was ... a spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry "Abba! Father!" ...").

God is easy for me to approach because I have a good relationship with my dad – but sometimes when we've done a call¹⁰ to relate to Father they've actually had to heal – go through inner healing¹¹ - with the person concerned in his own relationship with his dad and change his conception of a father before he could actually come to God the Father.

Her attitude to women in leadership also followed the dictates of her church. She saw her role in the church as encouraging and "looking after" people, sort of "mothering them". As far as women as priests and Pastors were concerned Carol said that she could have imagined women caring for other women, but that "she would have a problem with a woman being a head of the church". She would not have been able to "relate to that church"; having always been taught that leadership was "not really a woman's role ...".

With regard to the husband's role in the family she believed that her husband was the head of the home – and she had to submit to him. As she saw it, one did not submit to one's husband because "he was right in your estimation" but one submit[ed] to him "because it was biblical". She saw her husband's role as providing security, and for the financial needs of the family (although she was also employed in a half-day capacity). She looked to him for support and appreciated the "male response to things ... women [think and act] with their heart and men with their head". This meant that he often provided the "firmness" needed with teenagers, which in turn sometimes created conflict. She often found herself in the "peacemaker role" and said that she sometimes compromised, "if he allow[ed] it – which was sometimes ...". She also felt that women were to a large extent the pivotal point around which the family functioned, but saw this as "holding things together ... organising things so that the kids don't get in the way of dad and dad knows what the kids are doing ...".

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

As a founder member of the Lighthouse Community Church Carol shared accommodation with other members of the church. She discovered community living

¹⁰ Alter Call: With reference to a time during a worship service when the congregation are invited, by the person leading the service, to respond to a sermon and "enter into relationship" with The Divine.

¹¹ Inner healing: Believed to be a process (or experience) in which a Christian believer is – through prayer counselling – healed of a previous emotional hurt or negative experience.

was not an easy thing to do, and that they had to rely on the grace of The Divine to work things through. Although they were no longer sharing accommodation, the aspect of community was still very important to the church. If she were to leave the Lighthouse Community Church, something that she hoped would not happen, she would seek a church with a similar approach as regards the "community aspect".

According to Carol, belonging to the Lighthouse Community Church had been a positive experience because of the people: the "acceptance by people, love of people, relationships with people". She added: "If it wasn't for the church, who knows where I would have been"; the church had been "a family" for her, a place of support and counsel and because of her interaction with the church she felt that there was "never a sense of being on your own". She found "the community aspect ... very special".

In crisis, she said she would have called on others to pray for her, and "talk it out with a lot of folk". She felt that she came to the "community with an incredibly low self-image" and thought that "due to the ministry – through the lives of others and through the Holy Spirit, [she had] come to see [herself] as somebody of worth – which [she] never had before". While no longer in the same close community situation, she claimed that her sense of self-acceptance was now sustained just by "the knowledge that it's true ...".

Although Carol was not always aware of the presence of The Divine, she felt she knew it to be true and that this was both a "scary" and "comforting" thought. She believed that "God had the bigger picture", so when things seemed not to be working out, she could rely on The Divine to do what was best, and hoped that if the situation were really bad, that she would still have had the same perspective.

Freedom of choice and creative expression

With regard to the aspect of choice, the Church, and the will of The Divine, Carol felt that "the church [had] given [her] a purpose for living" and that she belonged to the church where she worshiped because The Divine had called her to the Lighthouse Community Church. She believed that God had chosen her, but that she had had an option with regard to a response. She remarked that being outside of relationship with The Divine would be "the most scary thing [she could] imagine". As seen with regard

to her attitude on submission, she had an unquestioning acceptance of her church's laws and doctrines.

The power of the church

If Carol were to have had a disagreement with the views of the Lighthouse Community Church, she said she would have talked it out, but ultimately submitted to the leadership; submission having been "drummed into" them in the beginning. It seemed there was no room for women and men to bring about change in the church, this being, according to Carol, the prerogative of The Divine. Any change was seen as The Divine moving the church forward, and not the result of human decision.

The teaching of the church also influenced Carol's role in the home and in society. At home she had to submit to her husband, in society she felt she had a responsibility to be positive and to make a difference; saying she ought not to be negative, unfriendly, or rude, but be Jesus in society whenever she could – if the opportunity arose.

Self-perception

Carol did not see herself as particularly outgoing or good in crowds, and sometimes felt threatened by others. She said that she was the "sort of person that live[d] a lot in her emotions" so found it difficult when others were suffering. She had always "had this thing of wanting to be useful and [was] happy ... to be helpful"; this being something which she thought was a result of the gratitude she felt toward The Divine for all that The Divine had given her. Her sense of belonging to The Divine made her feel secure and gave her a sense of purpose and a sense of belonging. Living within what she believed was The Divine's purpose for her life made her feel content and fulfilled, loved, significant and worthy. She was aware that she "hadn't arrived but was on a journey" – however the journey was a positive one, filled with hope. She enjoyed her sense of humour, and that she was there for her children. She liked the fact that she was able to relate to all ages, to care for, and encourage others.

As a Christian she believed she had a role in society "to be proactive for things that [were] right", although she felt she didn't manage to do as much as she would have liked. She was prepared to try new tasks and spent a lot of time in self-assessment. If she felt she had failed she was able to move on, but only after a few days of "acute

embarrassment ... self-denigration ... and a bit of confidence loss as well". She felt that sometimes she lacked perseverance; being "a great starter, but not a great finisher". She said she could be a bit abrupt and insensitive and did not enjoy interference in her areas of responsibility. She would have liked to be less judgemental and critical and more accepting of people.

Evaluation

Although Carol related a perception of The Divine which had become less anthropomorphic, her idea of being in relationship with The Divine had strong masculine overtones, especially that of a father. Masculine gender-stereotypical qualities associated with The Divine included authority, security, and protection. Although she associates no specifically feminine stereotypical traits with The Divine, faithfulness and caring were, in her understanding, both masculine and feminine attributes. Her understanding of *imago Dei* revolved around the potential for human beings to evidence the nature of The Divine; her own *imago Dei* being expressed in relationships.

It was only in living within what Carol believed to be will of God that she was able to find security. She was not able to see herself as an autonomous being; her sense of purpose being wholly associated to what she was able to offer to others at home, in the church and in society, these acts of service being the will of The Divine for her life. At home this meant submission to her husband in all things. The idea of the church as community was very important to Carol, her experience being that it provided a place of security within which she found acceptance and felt loved. She believed that the nature of this aspect of community had facilitated a process whereby she had developed a sense of being somebody of worth. However, the price she had paid for this was compliance with the doctrines of her church with regard to submission, and the lack of opportunity for free thinking and choice, although she seemed unaware of this sacrifice. This compliance influenced the personal, family, religious and social aspects of her life.

Her choice of a biblical character with whom she would have liked to have been associated was Ester, but for reasons opposite to that of Sue. Carol understood Ester to have complied with the expectations placed on her.

In the light of Giddens' criteria for the development of self-identity, one could conclude that Carol did not enjoy a strong sense of self-identity, in spite of her belief that she had a purpose in life, namely the giving of herself to others. It was possible that her church had contributed to this sense of purpose and to the degree that it promoted a sense of worth, it (the church) may have had a positive influence in her life. However, Carol's personal gender stereotypical perceptions of The Divine were predominantly masculine in nature, which would support the inference of a weaker sense of self-identity. These perceptions could be considered more relevant in the light of the "father - child" nature of her relationship with The Divine, in spite of her assertion that The Divine was more ethereal than anthropomorphic.

It would seem that no clear correlation between Carol's self-identity, the Church, and perceptions of The Divine can be concluded. Carol would most likely perpetuate – as an intended consequence of her beliefs and compliance with the doctrines of her church - the patriarchal nature of the church and understanding of The Divine.

Participant Three of Twelve: Pearl.

Personal Profile

Pearl was the older daughter born to a mother who worshiped in an Anglican Church and a father who was Roman Catholic. She had been raised in a Christian home and referred to herself as having been a "practicing Catholic" and "earnest about her religion". She considered herself to have been close to both her mother and her father, each having had an equal influence on her life, and recalled that she had been a happy child. She married late in life, was a widow, and had an adult son.

Her religious education was very severe – at age six or seven having to go to Mass¹² and sit quietly, without even a smile, a nun watching their every move. As was common in Roman Catholic teaching, she experienced The Divine as being present in the Blessed Sacrament¹³, and if she wanted to pray, she "went to visit Jesus in the church"¹⁴. She recalled an experience when, during her first year at school, the pupils were taken to the chapel attached to the convent, saying: "one day we went to the chapel – we waited – I was waiting for something to happen, but obviously we'd just gone there for a visit ... nothing happened". These feelings of disappointment and of expectations not met were to become a feature of her life, until she found what she referred to as "the more" of The Divine as offered by the charismatic movement.

She described her introduction to the charismatic movement as being when one of these "weirdo's" came to church and put his hands up, as part of free worship. She was initially very against the charismatic movement, but slowly became drawn into it. Words like "being born again" and "baptism of the spirit" were foreign to her; however she was to experience both these "events". She left the Roman Catholic Church because she wanted "more of Jesus"; and was the first of fifteen to twenty family and friends to discover this "more". At the time of the interviews she had been a member of the Lighthouse Community Church for twenty years, considered herself

¹² Mass: "A Roman Catholic name for the Eucharist" (Deist 1984:100), (Also referred to as Holy Communion, Communion or The Lord's table), and involves the consuming of bread (or a wafer) and wine (or grape juice in churches for whom temperance is an issue) as the experience of Divine Presence and/or as a reminder of the Last supper – or meal – which Jesus held with his disciples, *cf* Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:7-20.

¹³ Blessed Sacrament: Consecrated elements kept in a locked "safe" (Tabernacle) in the church – their presence indicated by a burning lamp.

¹⁴ This did not exclude private prayer.

to be an "involved" member and attended church at least three times per month. She was of the opinion that she had a good understanding of her churches doctrine and teaching.

For Pearl, Communion was another time when she felt that there was more, and said: "When I came back from Communion I would want to cry ... but no-one else cried so I couldn't". In spite of this, Mass and Communion were very important to her and it was something she missed - the Lighthouse Community Church seldom offering communion. However, she felt that the worship brought "the presence of Christ".

While still at school she was outspoken about her faith and often wrote to the Southern Cross¹⁵ on issues that concerned her. In her mid twenties she motor-cycled around the continent for three months (with her younger sister).

Perceptions of The Divine (and Mary)

As a former member of the Roman Catholic Church, Pearl had two identifiable perceptions of The Divine. While belonging to the Roman Catholic Church she feared The Divine who was, in her understanding, "mighty, awesome [and] sovereign"; and focused on the reverence and respect due to The Divine – "The Father out there ... with a big beard and sitting on a throne ...". In this sense it would seem Pearl had a very anthropomorphic picture of The Divine – but not accessible. However, while The Divine was out there somewhere, Mary was far more approachable, and she "... prayed to Mary rather than to The Father" since Mary was presented as the one who would understand human loss and human need. Pearl was also taught that if she wanted something of The Divine she should ask Mary to ask the Father on her behalf; "just as a child who wants something of their father asks "mommy to ask him".

Pearl said she would have described Mary as "kind, motherly, beautiful, soft, gentle, ... all the lovely feminine – a beautiful kind lady". She did however regret that in the Roman Catholic Church, "Mary [was] really pushed ... the Holy Spirit was being pushed out and Mary had been put in his place". However, Mary remained significant to Pearl with regard to her salvation experience. She said she recalls praying to Mary

¹⁵ Magazine of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa.

and stating in very strong terms her desire to "follow" and "love" Jesus, and that she wanted to be Mary, and Jesus', child.

Since her transfer to the charismatic movement Pearl's experience of her relationship with The Divine had undergone many changes. The Host¹⁶ had been indicative of her relationship and "oneness" with The Divine, but since having been a member of the Lighthouse Community Church she felt that the experience of worship had brought "the presence of Christ". The constant presence of The Divine (as taught by the Lighthouse Community: The Divine within), made her feel safe, wonderful and fantastic. Mary had been "replaced" by the Holy Spirit and she considered her exposure to the Holy Spirit (through Baptism of the Spirit) as having been the most exciting revelation in her Christian belief. Although she "missed" Mary she did think that "looking back with new eyes" the role of Mary "smack[ed] of ... idolatry and ... superstition". On the other hand Pearl said that it was "a shame" that in the Lighthouse Community Church Mary [was] almost ignored. Significantly, when I asked Pearl to brainstorm the word "Mother", "Mother Mary" was her first association, in spite of the fact that she had been outside of the Roman Catholic Church for twenty years, and at no point in the third interview had we discussed Mary at all.

Pearl also referred to The Divine in more personal terms, saying that she thought of The Divine as "Abba", one who "like a father, slows his footsteps down for his toddlers ...". In similar vein she said she perceived the relationship as one in which The Divine indulges humanity and said that "he uses us but at the same time ... he doesn't put the full burden on us ... we are very nicely trying to help daddy – but he takes the full responsibility on himself ... he sort of let's us think we're helping him".

According to Pearl, "everything springs from him [The Divine]" – without whom one has nothing but with whom one has absolutely everything. Jesus was "God with skin on" and the Holy Spirit was "very special ... right here ..." [Pointing to her heart]. It was difficult for Pearl to identify much about The Divine – apart from her understanding of both Jesus and Mary. "God the Father" – whom most believers

¹⁶ Host: The bread (or wafer) which is given by the Priest to the communicant during communion in a Roman Catholic Church; believed through consecration to be changed in substance to the real Body of Christ, although the "physical properties of the token" are not changed (Deist, 1984:177).

associate with "God" (or in terms of this thesis – The Divine] was mainly "out there somewhere", while Jesus and Mary were more real (maybe, she thought, because of the holy cards the nuns sold when she was in the convent). In this sense it would seem Pearl retained a very anthropomorphic understanding of The Divine.

Imago Dei

Pearl said that "God made us like himself – as a spirit"; but not as "clones"; human beings having a free will. Pearl associated her *imago Dei* with a responsibility to bring others into a relationship with The Divine; caring for them and sharing the message of Jesus.

Patriarchy and The Divine

Pearl held her own opinions with regard to the role of women and men – both in the home and the church. Although she identified men as being in authority, being decisive and having power there was no point at which she referred to men as being in control of any aspect of her own life, or of having to defer to them. Having married and given birth to her first child late in life she was insistent that her husband would be part of the caring for the child. She said she was not going to have him "reading the news paper and not involved ...".

In the church Pearl was of the opinion that it would be a "very good idea" for women to be ordained; in fact she thought they "could probably do better in some instances ... talking to women ... like the marriage set up". However, in using this example she was not limiting the influence of women to the realm of women. She felt it would also be an excellent idea for priests to be married – and could imagine a pope being married; with a laugh she said: "Mrs Pope – would keep him in line ...".

Pearl held these views in spite of her Roman Catholic upbringing which did not allow for the ordination of women and the marriage of priests, and her affiliation to a church which also denied women any leadership role.

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

Although Pearl's early experience of the church was one of ritual, formality, fear and often boredom, her sense of being a Roman Catholic was very strong. As a nursing

sister she used to take special care of her Roman Catholic patients and be aware of their specific needs with regard to Mass, *et cetera*. She also used to "look after" the young sisters who were under her tutorship – facilitating their attendance at Mass, *et cetera*. She experienced the international nature of the Roman Catholic Church on her visit to the Vatican and her commitment to Mass, even in foreign countries. During her visit to a number of churches overseas she was awestruck by photographs of Roman Catholics from all over the world, under the heading of Missions to the World.

Her entry into the Charismatic movement revolved around the relationships she had had with other local "born again believers" and who had been mentors to her. They spent a lot of time together and once she joined the Lighthouse Community Church she was integrated into their structures of community, where she felt very comfortable.

Freedom of choice and creative expression

Pearl felt that she had had no choice in being a Christian, having been born into a Roman Catholic home together with her conviction that The Divine had chosen her. She also wondered what degree of choice she would have had if – at age nine – she had said to the nun "I don't think I'll make my first holy communion – I think I'll wait to next year ...". She said she probably would have been told "you just behave yourself – do as you are told ...".

However, choice was at the centre of her understanding of *Imago Dei*. This sense of choice was exercised when she later chose to leave the Roman Catholic Church (in spite of what her family and friends may have said). She also maintained her own views with regard to women in the ministry, contrary to both the denominations in which she had worshipped.

On the other hand, this sense of choice did not extend to all aspects of her Christian life. Pearl was convinced that since The Divine had chosen her to be in this new relationship she had a tremendous responsibility to tell others of this option. But this was not a new thing in her life. Just as she felt compelled to convert everyone to the Lighthouse Community Church- to show people "this new way" and continue to "shepherd" them in this new way - there had been a time when she had felt compelled

to convert every one to the Roman Catholic Church since, at that time, she believed it to be the only way to salvation.

The power of the church

As had been seen, Pearl could not escape what she experienced as the undeniable need to draw others into the realm of her faith. While a member of the Roman Catholic Church her life revolved around confession, re-confession, feast days, Mass, rules and regulations. As an example of the power of these regulations she related the story of the need for Confession¹⁷ at Easter time, even while touring the Continent. Circumstances were making this difficult and she, and others were concerned – realising she was "on the edge of a mortal sin"¹⁸ ...".

She was taught that only Roman Catholics were going to heaven and while still at school she dialogued "hammer and tongs" with an aunt in an effort to get the aunt into the Roman Catholic faith and "saved". The strength of this conviction was to have such an impact on her that when, in her late middle age, she saw a couple who had left the Roman Catholic Church to join a charismatic church, she was not able to speak to them. She said: "I was devastated – I didn't know how to deal with it – because I could literally in my mind see flames around their ankles ... I didn't know what to say to them ... what do you say to someone who was going to hell ...". When the time came for her to leave the Roman Catholic Church she said that she had "one foot in the Roman Catholic Church – one in the Charismatic ... for a year before [she] let go".

Self-perception

As a child Pearl recalls being shy, stiff and formal, but "friendly with her friends". She said she had always been cheerful and that she "... didn't dislike [herself]". Pearl felt that she was someone who tried to toe the line and who usually got caught if she didn't. She associated this with being Roman Catholic saying: "the protestant ones were more relaxed – freer somehow".

¹⁷ Confession: An acknowledgement of personal sin; in this instance Auricular Confession: "Confessing one's sins anonymously to a priest or other office-bearer of the church" (Deist, 1984:15)

¹⁸ Mortal Sin: "Sin committed deliberately against the command of love and therefore deserving eternal damnation" (Deist, 1984:108).

She said she had become "lighter in spirit" and more outgoing. Although she described herself as quiet and did not see any leadership qualities in herself, she had often been the one to initiate the formation of a group or who had taken the initiative to do what she thought was best. She also said that her confidence was improving, implying that that was a recent development, but there was evidence of confidence earlier in her life.

She saw herself as very earnest about what she tackled and always aware of the responsibility that went with where she found herself in life. She described herself as empathetic and compassionate, intense, conservative yet open-minded, and emotional but also logical. She felt she was not very organised and wished she did not procrastinate as much as she did.

When asked if there was a Saint or biblical character with whom she would have liked to identify she replied: "Well Mother Theresa's rather marvellous", but Ruth and Ester also came to mind because of talks she had heard about women in the Bible.

Evaluation

As a former Roman Catholic Pearl had two distinctly different perceptions of The Divine, although both revolved around the concept of fatherhood and her understandings of Mary and Jesus. Masculine qualities associated with The Divine included awesomeness, sovereignty, might, reverence, respect and fatherhood, while feminine attributes included considerateness and creativity (life giver, "the source of all'). Mary was perceived to be approachable, kind motherly, beautiful, soft and gentle and a comforter; all, according to Pearl, feminine qualities. Traits associated with The Divine, which were, for Pearl, both masculine and feminine, included faithfulness, wisdom, "cleverness", and approachability. Pearl's understanding of *imago Dei* was that human beings were created like The Divine in that they had a Spirit, and the ability to choose. A degree of anthropomorphism is also evident.

Pearl was easily able to speak about herself and her life story, the latter pointing to a sense of purpose strongly rooted in her faith. The idea of the church as community had always been important for Pearl and as a child she experienced the power of the church as all-embracing but somewhat oppressive. Her affiliation with the Lighthouse

Community Church appeared as embracing, but as far as she was concerned, was tempered by grace. She held her own views with regard to Mariology, the celibacy of the priesthood and the ordination of women.

In the light of the factors affecting self-identity, according to Giddens, one could suggest that Pearl had a relatively strong sense of identity. Her affiliation with the church had had a marked impact on her life and appeared to have contributed to her identity development in a positive way. It seemed she had been able to rise above the potential oppression of many of the doctrines of both churches. With regard to Pearl's "personal gender-stereotypical" perceptions of The Divine (including Mary) it was noticeable that these were strongly feminine. Her anthropological perceptions of Mary and Jesus could have strengthened the influence of these perceptions. It could be said that The Divine (including Mary) had had a positive influence in Pearl's life and personal identity as a woman. Pearl was likely to contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchal perceptions of The Divine, and although not intentional, the patriarchal structures of the church.

Participant Four of Twelve: Bessie.

Personal Profile

Bessie was one of two daughters born to a mother who was Roman Catholic and a father who was protestant. She attended a convent boarding school from the age of five and said that in a sense she wasn't raised by her mom and dad, but by the nuns at the convent. Crucifixes¹⁹, pictures of the Sacred Heart²⁰, statues of Mary and other religious pictures were a part of her environment and she felt "comfortable" with them. However, as a teenager she "rebelled enormously about ... being brought up like that", although later renewed her interest after realising that she had been given "all this opportunity ... to really get to know God", and hadn't used it. She was given a degree of free choice with regard to what she wanted to do with her life once her schooling was complete.

She was divorced when her sons were in their early teens. They had since left home and she had not re-married. She considered herself very fortunate to have had the material comforts and possessions that she did and often thought about her responsibility to those who did not have what she enjoyed, but did not always manage to do anything about it.

She mentioned that she had a crucifix in her bedroom, as well as her "treasured possession", a statue of Mary. Her visit to Lourdes²¹ had been an essential part of her overseas trip. She had been a member of St Anne's for more than twenty years and attended church about three times a month, but was only marginally involved. She considered her understanding of church doctrine to be excellent.

Perceptions of The Divine (and Mary)

As a child Bessie experienced The Divine as a "father figure", someone who was gentle, but who had a lot of power and an "ageless wisdom". She said she had been influenced by the images which surrounded her – which could have been of "God the Father or God the Son'

¹⁹ Crucifix: "An artistic representation of Christ's crucifixion" / "Execution by hanging ... on a cross" (Deist, 1984:39).

²⁰ Sacred Heart: The depiction of Jesus with the focal point being an "exposed" heart.

²¹ Lourdes: A town/community in Southwest France, believed to be the site of apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes (in 1858 to Bernadette Soubirous) – often associated with physical healing.

For her, the reality of Jesus implied a more direct access to The Divine, as opposed to "going through Mary to God". The Divine was strongly related to her perception of Jesus: "more her equal", a companion and friend more than a father figure. She said The Divine had become "... right next to [her] all the time, ... [and she] could talk to him anytime". Although Bessie did not get everything she asked of The Divine she believed "he [was] definitely there ... and [could] always be depended on". In the context of her relative wealth and the reality of poverty she battled to understand The Divine as someone who was "fair"; although she said The Divine had been "fair to her".

Mary, on the other hand, was "more just gentleness – not a great power". While at school, Mary had been "like a second mother to her, [whom] she used to talk to her a lot ... pray to her a lot". Although no longer as important, Mary remained "like a mother" and if Bessie imagined herself in Mary's presence, she felt like a protected child.

Imago Dei

Bessie understood the concept of humanity created in the image of The Divine as referring to "all our good attributes like, kindness and sensitivity to others". She also felt that having been created in the image of The Divine referred to our potential; that "we [could] be like him ... we [could] have all those good qualities, we [could] can become ... thoughtful and kind and loving and all those things which [are] God".

She saw the *imago Dei* in herself inasmuch as she was very sensitive; and becoming more so, although she felt that she was not as caring as she could be. Bessie's faith was also linked to her perception of *imago Dei*, in saying that she had "quite a deep faith" and thought that "that must be an attribute of His, surely ...".

Patriarchy and The Divine

Bessie referred to The Divine in purely masculine terms and said that The Divine was "definitely male in [her] head", although the traits she associated with The Divine included feminine qualities.

She said that her view of the role of husbands and wives was the "pretty normal old fashioned view": husbands as "providers" and "guardians" and wives as "supporters". Asked how she saw her role in her marriage before her divorce she said, after a deep sigh: "Just a mother really". However, since the divorce she said she had been the leader, with all that went with it, and that although it had been a more difficult role, it had also been more fulfilling.

Bessie could not see women as priests, but could perceive them in the role of "pastoring"²². She said that "a pastor [was] someone who [would] sort of nurture", while "God" was the word she would have associated with priests.

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

Bessie said that the emphasis during her convent years had been on how one was "going to handle [one's] life with God", but she did not refer to any special relationships within the church that have provided comfort or guidance. When she spoke of the support she had had it was with reference to The Divine and a group of friends including a Christian Scientist and one "who ... believe[ed] in a higher power but [didn't] actually call it God". With regard to her divorce she said: "There's no ways I would have got through that without God and without those two friends who were so different".

She said that the Church was like having a "security thing", that there was something "watching" and "guiding" like a "guardian angel", and that she "couldn't have lived without" it. In spite of the importance of the church and the fact that Bessie attended church regularly she said she was not involved because of time commitments, although she did make an effort to support any venture that her church organised.

Freedom of choice and creative expression

During her years at convent Bessie had no choice with regard to her attendance at church, even during her period of rebellion. At seventeen a sudden awareness of what she may have been missing motivated her interest once again, and she became interested in anything "religious" and asked a lot of questions. She was open to

²² The role of pastoring – or caring for – as opposed to the function as leader of a church as would be the case in a charismatic context.

finding truth in all denominations and religions and had asked herself, in the "down" periods of her life, whether she should be looking for answers elsewhere. However, she had never changed from Christianity and Catholicism and felt that that "was actually the right place" for her. She considered herself fortunate to have been raised in the Christian faith, but did not believe that everyone should be converted.

The power of the church

Bessie said that she was inclined to "separate Jesus things and church things" and although the church had been important in providing security, it had not come at the cost of having to deny her own convictions. She "moved on" when she had something she disagreed with, being content to disagree while still feeling a part of the body of the church. Bessie felt that the church evolved like everything else did and that it should be leading. However, it seemed to be "dragging everybody behind it". Although she was grateful for the opportunity of being a Christian, she did not feel that everyone should be coerced into converting to her faith, and was therefore not comfortable with major evangelical outreach²³.

It was interesting to note that in spite of being exposed to what she referred to as "intense" religious instruction she had only recently understood the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as being different from the doctrine of the virgin conception of Jesus. She was also not sure exactly what "original sin" was, but felt that much of this was "clutter" that the Roman Catholic Church had added to Christianity.

Self-perception

Bessie said that she had been a happy child, although she had often felt quite lonely. She always wanted to be the leader, and at the time of the interviews still thought that she came across "quite bossy", although she said that in male company she was "much quieter". She felt that she was generally a "pretty happy person, a cheerful person" and that she didn't often find herself "moaning or worrying". When her husband left home she "put heart and soul" into raising her sons, and thought that she "managed that quite well".

²³ Missions to other countries with the purpose of introducing people of other faiths to the Christian faith.

She considered herself to be friendly, although it took her a "long time to make a good friend". She said she was loyal in terms of friendships and relationships, and could be very sensitive to the needs of others. Bessie considered herself to be honest - sometimes too honest - in that she tended to say what she thought. While this was a trait she enjoyed in others, she was not so sure that others enjoyed it in her. She was intolerant of those whom she perceived to be "putting on an act", insincere or condescending. She believed that she had a deep faith, but was "not always a great doer".

Evaluation

Bessie's only masculine perception of The Divine was of a father with a gentle power; power being masculine and gentleness associated with both the masculine and feminine, as were protection, kindness, love, and wisdom. Feminine traits of caring, friendship, companionship and dependableness were strong aspects of her understanding and relationship with The Divine and Mary. For Bessie, *imago Dei* referred to the positive and likable divine attributes that could be seen in humanity, and that could be developed through relationship with The Divine. It also implied that human beings had the potential to be like The Divine; to grow in the nature of The Divine.

Bessie was aware of, and able to communicate about, what she perceived to be her strong and weak points and was able to convey these without pride or shame. She had had a goal in that she put all she had into raising her sons and was satisfied with her efforts. She was content with her job and her uncomplicated, although busy, lifestyle. Inasmuch as Bessie was not solely dependent on the church for support and comfort, was comfortable with other faiths, and did not feel compelled to comply with all that the church said, one could conclude that the church did not hold all-embracing power in her life.

Within the context of Giddens' theories of identity development one could conclude that Bessie enjoyed a relatively strong sense of self-identity. Her strongly [personal] gender stereo-typical feminine awareness of The Divine would appear to have contributed to this, assisted by her relationship with Mary. However, one could conclude that, in spite of the influence of Mary, Bessie was unlikely to make any

difference to the status-quo of patriarchal control and oppression in the church. It was remotely possible that through her influence on the lives of her sons she may make a difference in society.

Participant Five of Twelve: Gill.

Personal Profile

Gill was raised by both her parents, her mother being "the wind beneath her wings"; her father a violent alcoholic. She said she was raised in a generally Christian home, but was not a happy child. She, and her two sisters, grew up in a Roman Catholic neighbourhood, but regularly attended charismatic protestant churches. She envied her Roman Catholic friends when they were confirmed and enjoyed the atmosphere of their church (tradition, incense, candles, etc.) and eventually joined the Roman Catholic Church fourteen years ago. Gill attended church at least three times a month and rated her understanding of church doctrine as "very good".

She was in her fifties, married to a "non violent" alcoholic and had three adult children. She considered herself a good mother; had "worked hard" to find wholeness²⁴ in her life and had a deep concern for children who may have been being abused.

Perceptions of The Divine

According to Gill her perception of The Divine, from the age of three, was that The Divine was One whom she could trust. This was in spite of having been given the impression that The Divine was "a man in the clouds ... who wrote everything down in a book ... [and gave] a black mark" when a person did something wrong. She recalled a picture in the passage of her grandmother's home which she described as "this horrible man looking down from the clouds with a big frown on his face". When being told that "he's watching you – that's God" she said she used to think: "Well that's not my God and I don't like him". In spite of being punished for saying so, she maintained that that "wasn't the God [she] knew". For her, The Divine was more like the genie in the story of Aladdin: almost magic, and "could come out of a bottle at any time" when she was in need. The Divine was now "too big ... just gotten bigger and bigger and bigger ... the universe, just stars and just everything that was beautiful". In spite of the vastness of her current perception she included the aspect of a Divine Being who knew her personally. She said that while watching the "little sparrows ... and thinking how important they were ... [she felt that] if he could love them he must

²⁴ Wholeness: A word, when used in a religious context, denotes the experience of emotional (and spiritual) "healing" and "balance".

love [her] ..."²⁵. Gill felt that The Divine was always there and that there was always a "lesson to be learnt and a new path to be found, one which became more spiritual each time." However the idea of The Divine as keeping a record of wrongs was not completely lost, Gill saying that "each time a wrong choice is made a "dirty splotch " stains our soul, and that is what we one day need to explain to The Divine.

She thought of The Divine as a father because "we say: Our Father ..." but because of her experience of her own father she found a contradiction in this area. On the one hand The Divine was not a "father figure", but somehow was "the father in [her] life ... more than [her] own father".

Gill voluntarily said that she didn't "ever think of God as mother ... [and didn't] really suppose he's male" but, "if somebody said [she] had to think of him as mother [she] wouldn't want to". She continued: "maybe that's why it's good to have Mary". Even before Gill belonged to the Roman Catholic Church she knew about Mary and always "liked" her. Although hesitant in her observations regarding Mary's relationship with The Divine, she said that Mary was not divine, but a "... very esteemed being", "God's right hand – or left hand".

She felt that Mary was a mother figure, especially for little girls. It was Gill's hope that if there were more emphasis on Mary, there may be "more respect for women ... for people who don't have the experience of mother she would [have been] a good thing – especially for men who haven't got a good experience with their moms". She would also have hoped that there would be less abuse of women

Gill was of the opinion that it was in the humanity of Mary that women could find one in whom they could confide and with whom they could identify. Gill referred to the profound experience of childbirth and to the human pain of Mary at the loss of her child – as depicted in the Pietà²⁶. She wondered what Mary must have been thinking, but presumed they were very human thoughts and that "surely her faith must have wavered like all of [ours does]". She also identified with what she perceived to be the

²⁵ With reference to Matthew 10:29: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet without your Fathers knowledge not one of them can fall to the ground ... so don't be afraid; you are worth more than any number of sparrows".

²⁶ Pietà: "An image of the Virgin Mary with the dead body of Christ on her lap" (Deist, 1984:130).

helplessness of Mary in that situation in that she could do nothing, and Gill thought that that's how we sometimes felt on earth as well, "helpless because we can't see God". Mary was also a comfort in that there were times when Gill felt that something was too "shameful" to take to The Divine and that Mary was then someone she'd rather have spoken to and asked "... could you do this ...[or] ... help me to do this". At times like this she saw Mary as "her a mother and mother of God and ... on [her] side ...".

Imago Dei

Gill felt that human beings were created in the image of The Divine in that the human soul was like God and that humans were "inherently good ...a little perfect God", and had a free will. She believed that "our humanity" was created as a consequence of wrong choice, and the hurts of life which separated individuals from The Divine. However, human beings were given the power to perfect their souls and become "God like" in the attributes they displayed and their "ability to make the world a happy place.'

Aspects associated with *imago Dei* included the personal "inner beauty" of each individual, kindness, compassion, human intellect and the desire to do what The Divine requires. Gill saw the *imago Dei* in herself inasmuch as she had a caring commitment to the children she taught, and that she believed that she was doing what The Divine wanted her to do.

Patriarchy and The Divine

At home Gill fulfilled the role of a loyal wife, in spite of her husband's alcoholism. She said that when she married him she knew that he was rebellious and "rejected by society", but she felt that she could "make his world better". She was raised to believe that she needed a man in her life and was "always being lectured" that she "had to do everything for men". At the time of the interviews, Gill felt that the role of husbands and wives was to "support each other ... do things together ... [and] through everything ... stay together". Gill's husband was in opposition to Gill belonging to the Roman Catholic Church and had forbidden anything "Roman Catholic" in the home.

In spite of this, Gill had a picture of the Madonna²⁷ in the lounge. She had raised her own daughter to be feisty, independent, and have her own career - so that she would not experience life as Gill had.

At church Gill believed that she needed to "give back to God by doing his work". She felt that Mary had a "very important [role], especially with the paternalistic society we've always lived in ...". In her catechism teaching she introduces the children, especially the little girls, to Mary as a mother to whom it was easy to talk. She continued "sometimes you've perhaps been a little bit bad and you don't really feel like you want to [tell] Jesus – even though he knows – so you ask Mother Mary just to ask Jesus ...". Although Gill was of the opinion that both men and women should be allowed into the priesthood, she did believe they should remain celibate.

In society Gill believed that she was making a difference in children's lives, through her teaching both at school and catechism. She was also very aware of the possibility of abuse of children and will stop at nothing to prevent it.

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

Gill found herself very dependent on The Divine and the Church. She said that the church was very important in her life and that only her family enjoyed a higher priority. She considered the Roman Catholic Church to be her church and said that the church – the people – were her life. While nursing her mother through cancer the church was the place she found support, both spiritual and practical. When Gill went to church she felt that she had no worries, that nothing could hurt her, that she was safe and that she could just sit there forever. She admitted that this could be escapism, but on the other hand said that her spirituality gave her the strength to cope with her husband. She trusted The Divine and felt that she knew that if "God [was] involved it [would] pan out". She thought that if she had not had this hope, she probably would have committed suicide.

²⁷ Madonna: " "My Lady" (a statue or picture of) the Virgin Mary" (Deist, 1984 98).

Freedom of choice and creative expression

Gill believed that the difficult conditions in which she found herself were "only because God [had put her] there". However, she had had the ability to choose her response. She had not developed a "victim" mentality, but had tackled difficult situations through making positive choices.

She believed that she could make a difference in the world through doing her best in the "little things" in life. She had made choices contrary to popular expectation and found herself ostracised – and arrested²⁸ - as a result. She attended courses and retreats to facilitate personal growth and had recently resumed studies to better equip herself for teaching.

Although Gill's mother eventually had the courage to leave Gill's alcoholic father, it had been Gill's conviction that she had "always thought it ... right to stay with [her] husband". She had vowed before God to do so, although she now realises that she was mistaken.

The power of the church

As a child Gill's experienced the negative power of the church. She vividly recalled a protestant Sunday school lesson during which the Hebrew Scripture text dealing with "the sins of the father"²⁹ was being studied. The teacher had turned to her and with a pointed finger said, "you'll get punished my girl – because your father drinks so much". When nuns later corrected her in a humiliating manner she accepted it as good for her. Although she believed that without the input from the church she would have been an absolutely "horrible – terrible person ..." she had not accepted the voice of the church as perfect.

It was her opinion that the pope was not infallible, that there were "a lot of fat old Italian men running the church ..." and that with regard to some of the dogma "God was laughing up his sleeve and saying – good gracious me, was this that important".

²⁸ Gill had started a multi-racial preschool in a local church hall. During the apartheid era in South Africa this was against the law (Group Areas Act and Bantu Education Policy) and because she refused to close the school she says she was arrested by the Bureau of State Security.

²⁹ With reference to Exodus 20:5: "For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" and Exodus 34:7 "... but without acquitting the guilty, one who punishes children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation for the iniquity of their fathers ...".

She perceived the church as being out of touch with reality in some aspects, for example the need for contraception in poor countries, that the process of the annulment of marriage (and the cost involved) was unnecessary, that women should have been allowed into the Priesthood, and that although the church could evolve through the influence of its adherents, the Roman Catholic Church was being "stifled by Rome".

Self-perception

Gill perceived herself as open and honest, and although she hated it, was aware that she had had to lie at times in order to protect herself and her children from her husband. Her basic motto in life was to "love your neighbour as you love yourself" and to this end she was compassionate, sensitive to the needs of others, soft hearted and willing to give if it was going to help people. She did not want to be a "people pleaser" and was often lonely. She also saw herself as impulsive and adaptable, and wanted to be a perfectionist.

She was aware that she may only be able to make a small difference in a small way, but was encouraged by St Theresa of The Little Flower, whose life story comprised of "little bits of little things for God". When she became "headline news" with regard to the multi-racial pre-school she could not conceive of the idea that she could cause such a stir. She felt ashamed at the significance given to her and would rather have had attention directed to the school, because she had no intention of drawing attention to herself. She was however proud of the fact that she "loved God".

Evaluation

Gill's perceptions of The Divine as a haven and place of protection appeared to have no gender connotation. Although Gill referred to The Divine in exclusively masculine terms, she had no gender stereo-typical masculine perceptions of The Divine. Traits of love, kindness, caring and compassion were associated with the feminine; with the qualities of trust and comfort associated predominantly with Mary, of whom she was acutely aware.

Her understanding of *imago Dei* was that humans were created in the perfect "spiritual" image of The Divine, and with free choice, and it was wrong choices that

marred this image. She saw the *imago Dei* in her own life in her caring and commitment to those in her custody, as well as her attempt to live a life of correct choice.

Gill was able to speak unreservedly with reference to herself, both her areas of success and shortfall. Her desire to make a difference in the lives of children motivated her purpose in life and defined her role. She appeared to have, for the most part, risen above the possible consequences of her childhood. The church – as comprising of its individual members, had had a significant influence in her life in terms of providing support and a safe place. In spite of this significance and dependence, Gill was not bound by doctrine or blind to what she perceived to be shortfalls in the Roman Catholic Church.

Based on Giddens' observations with regard to identity formation it is suggested that Gill had an unexpectedly strong sense of self. Almost all her perceptions of The Divine, and Mary, were gender stereo-typically feminine – suggesting that a feminine perspective of The Divine, and Mary, had had a positive influence on her life. This may have been strengthened by her understanding of *imago Dei* in that she was able to relate to aspects of this in her own life. Given her awareness of the harm done by her father and her husband, and her identification with Mary, it was unlikely that Gill would perpetuate the tradition of patriarchal power. Rather, she had actively instilled in her daughter a mind-set of independence and boldness.

Participant Six of Twelve: Yvonne.

Personal Profile

Yvonne was one of six children. Her father had died when she was 19 and her mother had been a strong (almost manipulative) force in her life. She had left home in her early twenties, trained as a teacher and was married with three children.

She said she was raised in a deeply spiritual, typical Roman Catholic home. When Yvonne was five, her mother joined the Schoenstatt movement– a Roman Catholic organisation which was very Marian in orientation. Family life revolved around morning and evening prayers, feast days and the church's liturgical calendar; Schoenstatt becoming their "second home". After marriage her involvement in the Schoenstatt movement waned, and with that her intense focus on Mary.

At age six her first communion was a "special commitment" to The Divine. She was earnest in her faith; her religious commitment influencing all areas of her life. In her teen years Yvonne was exposed to the mainly Protestant movements of Scripture Union and Student Christian Association³⁰. This precipitated what she called a huge crisis, an "incredible dilemma" in her life. Although her first Communion had been a moment of special commitment, these movements advocated a "born again" dedication, which led her to question her salvation: Was it possible to be saved without having "knelt down ...and said – "Lord, come into my heart"? She was later exposed to the Charismatic movement through the Roman Catholic Church and after having done a "Life in the Spirit Seminar" was "baptised in The Spirit", and received the gift of "singing in tongues".

Perceptions of The Divine (and Mary)

Yvonne's understanding of The Divine was developed in the context of the Schoenstatt movement of the Roman Catholic Church, and a deeply religious home environment. The Divine was one who was a "father – loving, kind, merciful ... caring", and "a God who could be trusted". She visualised The Divine as "an old man" with "a flowing robe and long white beard", while "Jesus was the man seen in Bible

³⁰ Scripture Union and Student Christian Association: evangelically orientated para-church organisations involved in schools in South Africa at the time.

pictures and the Holy Spirit would [of course have been] a dove". However, she said that The Divine had become, for her, "a being, a spirit and ... not confined to a body".

Yvonne explained that Mary had been very significant and was "almost there with Christ ... on a par in a sense ... leading [her] to Christ". Mary had been her mother and her role model, Mary having helped her to "grow up into being this model girl ...". Mary personified the virtues of modesty, selflessness, purity, gentleness, sanctification, and "total unity with Christ".

When asked if there was anything in nature that she would have associated with The Divine, Yvonne replied without hesitation that she would say "the Lilly, the St Joseph's Lilly ...the symbol of Mary", although when asked if she perceived Mary as being part of The Divine, she replied that Mary was "very much a woman – like I am a woman". She associated the word "father" with her "dad and God the Father" while the word "mother" invoked thoughts of "Mother Mary and [her] mother".

Imago Dei

Yvonne understood the concept of *imago Dei* as The Divine having "breathed his spirit into us", humanity having "God within ... his qualities and his presence". She described these qualities as "radiance, brightness and joy – peace, love, kindness – absolutely accepting people where they were at, forgiveness, mercy, gratitude ... faithfulness, ever-present ... understanding". These qualities were there for humanity to manifest, if The Divine were allowed an influence in the life of the agent. However, she noted that The Divine did have qualities which human beings have not had, for example omnipotence, having "no beginning and no end" as well as the power to heal.

Patriarchy and The Divine

Yvonne felt that the family was the "nucleus of society" and that the example of love between husbands and wives needed to be reflected in society. She felt that they "should be accepting of each other", recognising each other's changing needs and trying to meet those needs. While wives and husbands needed "to form a unity", and have shared interests, there also needed to be time for each to do what interested them. At no time did Yvonne refer to any hierarchy between men and women and she rejected any form of chauvinism.

Yvonne did not hold strong views on the issue of women as priests, and said she would not have judged churches which did ordain women. However, she was "happy with the idea of men being priests", her reasons being that Christ was a man and chose men as disciples. She would not have been opposed to priests being allowed to get married since some of the disciples were married, and marriage would have given priests a wider perspective on life. Yvonne felt that women had a role as nuns and sisters: "that being a beautiful role ...".

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

As a child the Schoenstatt community was Yvonne's second home. She still experienced the church as her family and said, "I love being a Catholic – its like my family ... I can't turn my back on the Catholic church ... to leave the Catholic church would be like turning my back on my family". She had never missed her "blood family" but had missed church communities when she had had to move.

Yvonne had dreams of becoming a nun, or even a saint, and kept a prayer journal with this aim in mind. Marriage was considered second best. She resolved that if she had to marry, her husband had to be a practicing catholic in order for her to remain part of the Roman Catholic Church with his full support. Church services, prayer meetings, fellowship groups and Bible studies had always been a source of joy for her. She also found the Roman Catholic Church tradition of Confession very therapeutic.

In her thirties, Yvonne developed cancer. At times she had felt "totally deserted by God", but experienced her suffering as a point of identification with Christ. During this time her faith in God and the support of friends at church sustained her. Although she related a journey marked by alternating trust and doubt she once again really believed that "there [was] a God and that Jesus [was] my saviour and Mary [was] my mother ...". This awareness of the constant presence of The Divine made her feel fantastic because he was always there and she could always talk to him, something she had experienced as wonderful.

Freedom of choice and creative expression

As a child Yvonne's involvement in the Schoenstatt movement had controlled every aspect of her life. She had had an "earnest faith", a "commitment" beyond her years,

was very serious, hardly ever smiled, and concentrated on self-sacrifice, self-denial and self-sanctification. She had committed herself to the Covenant of love with Mary, and later the Youth Dedication in which she had, on a daily basis, devoted herself to Mary, asking Mary to be her "special mother" and to lead her to Christ.

Yvonne did not enjoy making decisions and did little without being open to doing the will of The Divine and looking for signs that may indicate direction from The Divine, wanting to please The Divine in all she did. However, Yvonne felt that she could not blame The Divine for suffering, since we lived in a world which was not perfect, suffering often being the consequence of the choices exercised by human beings and made possible by "the whole thing of free will".

Around age twenty Yvonne left home and moved to Johannesburg. This was much to the consternation of her mother who was against the idea because she did not want to be left alone. Yvonne's mother had made it abundantly clear that Yvonne was destroying her mother's life by leaving and stopped at nothing to persuade and manipulate her to stay. In spite of this, Yvonne left and for many years the relationship was strained.

The power of the church

As a child and teenager the church had imposed many restrictions on Yvonne's life. She felt she had had to lead everyone to commitment to Mary and to Christ, and she made a second "born again" commitment to The Divine, fearing that her initial commitment may have been lacking.

Although the church was a key influence in Yvonne life as a child, remained important, and was the source of much that was positive in her life, Yvonne no longer experienced the church as a place of self-sacrifice, devoid of joy and happiness and the only way to a relationship with The Divine. She remained a Roman Catholic because of the reconciliation she experienced through Confession, the belief that the Sacrament was the true presence of Christ, and the comfort she received from this sacrament.

Yvonne recognised the shortfalls of the Roman Catholic Church and its priests, and felt that the Vatican had too much power and was not comfortable with the hierarchy and rules. She had moved beyond "dogma" and while she had never had open conflict with the church she held personal opinions and followed her own mind on certain issues, for example, contraception, the issue of celibacy and alternative forms of healing³¹. She had participated in the sacrament of communion in churches other than the Roman Catholic Church and had refused to choose between the Roman Catholic Church and the protestant para-church organisations.

As a mother Yvonne was aware of her responsibility to lead her children in the Christian walk. However, she would not have opposed her children exploring their faith in other denominations and avoided insisting on the rigid prayer regimes she was exposed to as a child. There were, however, some aspects of Roman Catholicism which she still actively encouraged in her children.

Self-perception

As a child Yvonne was shy, very serious, earnest and intense, and was always striving to be better and to show the fruits of the Spirit³². She was "incredibly self-less" and although not an unhappy child, she hardly smiled or laughed, was highly sensitive to the fact that she wasn't joyful enough and felt that she "didn't relate socially that well".

It was only once she had made the choice to leave home that she felt free to be herself "confident, in control, worthy and content". Encouraged by her husband and "free of her mothers clutches" her self esteem improved, she became more confident, outgoing, and chatty; "... very peaceful, very content, very happy, [and] very thrilled with life".

As an adult she described herself as gentle, loyal, a good listener, diligent, and a hard worker. She preferred following to leading but "[knew] her own mind" and was not

³¹ Alternative forms of healing: Acupuncture, homeopathy etc – methods which were often rejected by the Christian church.

³² Fruit of the Spirit: "But the harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control." (Galatians 5:22,23).

easily swayed. She was generally happy with herself, happy with the way she looked and carried no guilt for past actions (especially leaving her mother in Cape Town).

Evaluation

Yvonne's perception of the nature of The Divine (including Mary) was gender stereotypically both masculine and feminine. Masculine traits include love and trustworthiness, while mercy, care, selflessness and purity were perceived as feminine. Kindness and gentleness were considered both masculine and feminine traits. Yvonne's identification with Mary – as a woman and a role model – had impacted on her life.

For Yvonne, being created in the image of The Divine could imply that human beings could know the presence of The Divine and possess qualities associated with The Divine. In her own life she identified the feminine gender stereotypical traits of faithfulness, loyalty and understanding.

Yvonne related the story of her life with ease and openness. Although her understanding with regard to her purpose in life had changed, her pursuit of both her former and present goals had been, and remained, single-minded and enthusiastic. While the imprint of both the Schoenstatt movement and the Roman Catholic Church was indubitable Yvonne, had moved beyond the oppressive control and influence of the church to a place of discernment and independence. Although she still chose to approach The Divine for guidance, she was aware that she had the liberty of free choice.

One could conclude - according to Giddens' writing on self-identity - that Yvonne enjoyed a strong sense of identity and that the church, Mary and The Divine have all had an integral influence on her life. Predominantly feminine perceptions of The Divine, coupled with her view of Mary as a role model, appear to have had a positive impact. It is unlikely that Yvonne would consciously promote a patriarchally orientated society, but inasmuch as she was not fully aware of the impact of patriarchy, it could become an unintended consequence of her actions. However, she was fully aware of the potentially oppressive nature of the church and actively

endeavored to overcome this influence in her children, while still holding to what she perceived to be the positive values of the Roman Catholic Church.

Participant Seven of Twelve: Paul.

Personal Profile

Paul was born in Ireland, the eldest of seven children. His parents were Roman Catholic and he was educated by the Christian Brothers³³. Although they were a poor family they "accepted their lot" and he did not recall any "moans or groans about the situation". He did however determine to have a good education, and worked hard in order to receive the bursaries which facilitated his studies.

He was allowed free choice with regard to his future and entered studies for the Roman Catholic priesthood at age sixteen. He recalled one of the emphasises of his catechism being that it was "easy to say I love God ..." but what was implied was that one needed to express this love for The Divine by "doing things for God – in other words the servant angle"; this having been his motivation for going into the ministry, "to help Him [The Divine] through kind of trying to help others".

After having served as a priest for a number of years he met his wife, and married after having received dispensation from the priesthood. He had six adult children and was retired from secular employment. He had been a member of his current church for over twenty years, attended church regularly and was very involved. He rated his understanding of church doctrine as "very good". He said that his two most significant experiences of The Divine revolved around his call into, and out of, the priesthood.

Perceptions of The Divine (and Mary)

Paul's perception of The Divine went back to his childhood and saying prayers with his parents, for whom "God was a very real person to whom you spoke". He had a largely anthropomorphic view of The Divine, someone who "looked like my father, and somehow my mother with him ... ", often dependent upon who had been good to him. Paul said he had never had a picture of "the old chap with the beard ... who could be a bit crotchety sometimes ...". By the time of his confirmation at age ten, The Divine was not only One who existed, but One who also had influence in his life, with whom he could have a relationship, and One who needed to be served. Love for The Divine was expressed by doing things for The Divine.

³³ Christian Brothers: A band of lay Roman Catholic men, the initial focus of whose ministry was the education of disadvantaged youth.

As an adult, he became more and more consciously aware of The Divine, The Divine being "love personified". His understanding and perception of The Divine continued to revolve around the reality of his relationship with The Divine and the practical implications and expression of that relationship, for example, The Divine's forgiveness of human beings, the meeting of financial needs and The Divine's dealing with him on a "one-to-one basis", in spite of being so "vast ... enormous and almighty". He attributed the practical nature of his understanding to his logical, practical and mathematical mind.

For Paul, The Divine had become a "jolly old chap [with a] tremendous amount of loving forgiveness in his eyes". Although there were still rules to be obeyed, Paul came to perceive The Divine as much more understanding – almost indulgent of humanity's inability to live according to the rules – and who only wanted the best thing for humanity. Although sometimes mystified and a little afraid of the greatness, majesty and power of The Divine, he remained conscious of the one-on-one love and relationship between himself and The Divine.

Mary's role in Paul's life revolved around her humanness in that she would "always see things from the human angle". She was held in very high esteem and in his opinion had "tremendous influence", recent apparitions³⁴ of Mary having "more meaning to us as humans" than if Christ had appeared.

Imago Dei

Paul understood human beings as being created in the image and likeness of The Divine to mean that they had the capacity to love and to learn to love fully. He said that "God was love and therefore the image of God – the human image of God – [was] a person capable of, and created to, love". It also implied that "one had intellectual ability", that human beings were able to analyse a situation and come to certain conclusions. A further implication of intellectual ability was that as human beings "at the top of God's creation ... we [were] spiritual and we [were] free", that was, humans were agents who had the freedom to choose.

³⁴ For example: 1983: San Nicolas, ARG; 1981: Kibeho, Rwanda; and others (Messages from Heaven – The Apparitions of the Virgin Mary: <http://members.aol.com/bjw1106/marian12.htm>).

Patriarchy and The Divine

Paul understood the family as being "the basic fundamental unit in society ...", the specific vocation of husbands and wives being to perfect each other and the children. He maintained that husbands and wives "definitely complement[ed] each other" and that he and his wife had equal respect for each other's opinions. Since his family was his immediate neighbour³⁵ he also had a responsibility to care for them. He had no regard for traditional roles within the home and took care of household chores since he was retired and his wife was still in formal employment.

However, with regard to the church Paul was less amenable to the equal roles of men and women. He didn't "see women having any place in the church as priests". However, they could complement men in certain roles. Because of the empathy he saw in women he felt their role was caring for, and ministering to those who were ill, and to women in need. He felt that men did better in other roles because he saw men as "forthright, with no tendency to beat around the bush".

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

Paul clearly felt himself very much "at home" in the context of the church. It had been an integral part of his life since he was very young and had been significant at many stages of his life; his awareness of belonging to The Divine making him feel "totally grateful and thankful".

The church was both a place to facilitate worship of The Divine, and the community through which he "[dealt] with God". He had come to an understanding that although his relationship with The Divine was on a one-to-one basis, most of his "day-to-day, hour-to-hour dealings with the Lord ... " were through other people. He believed it was as a result of his journey with The Divine that he was able to give more of himself, in terms of commitment and care, than he could as a younger adult, and that "belief in God and the things of God – the church, *et cetera*" gave meaning to his existence.

³⁵ With reference to the repeated scriptural injunction to love one's neighbour as one loves oneself, for example: Matthew 19:19, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27.

While Vatican II had introduced change in the Church, he felt it was the aspect of "community" that brought real change. He said, "you see, in my mind, when you talk about church you're talking about people ... people of God as a living community and all living things progress". Although change was slow, it was, in his opinion, essential and inevitable.

Freedom of choice and creative expression

From a very early age Paul was aware of the existence of The Divine as "just part of the environment". He was of the opinion that the purpose of a human being's journey through life was to enable the development "of a relationship with God the Father"; the awareness of this "presence of God in one's life being something that one [became] more conscious of as the years pass[ed]". He believed that although The Divine offered love to humanity this was not imposed on individuals. Neither did The Divine seek to control the person who responded to this love.

As Paul had grown older he was more aware that although rules were needed, he believed that The Divine (as the one who made the rules) had an understanding of the frailty of humanity (those needing to keep the rules) and that things were therefore not "black and white". There were "grey areas" that came in as "part of the equation". He understood the commandments not as negative "Thou shalt not ..." commands, but as positive ways of showing one's love for The Divine. Paul believed that The Divine helped individuals understand that what was offered was best for the individual, but it was up to the individual to decide "yes or no ... and maybe say: no – not yet – [and] that's OK".

The power of the church

As a child the feeling was engendered in Paul that he "owed a debt of gratitude to God ... for everything God had done" and continued to do; along with the idea that The Divine had certain rules which were expected to be obeyed. Inasmuch as the emphases of his catechism had been to serve The Divine, and he had entered the priesthood with this in mind, namely "to help Him [The Divine] through kind of trying to help others", Paul later came to believe that The Divine did not impose anything on an individual, but offered love to humanity, to be accepted or rejected. He also saw the church as a community of people, and not an instrument through which

The Divine sought to control the individual. He recognised that the church could attempt to do this and that at times the church had been wrong, but felt that these things would change in time.

Self-perception

Paul considered himself to be very intense and analytical, objective and a "cut and dried ... thinking machine". He said everything started in his head and eventually got to his heart. The practicality of his approach to life could be seen in his understanding that thought and action went together; any significant relationship was one of love, which inevitably led to service. However he felt that one of his major shortcomings was his "personal ability to love". He said he was far too cold-blooded and analytical; there being some kind of "breaking mechanism" to "total commitment", total commitment being service to others "totally and at all times, without any consideration for oneself". He had, however, become more able to give.

He said he got on well with people and that he could be described as a "cheerful bloke who [didn't] loose his rag, usually careful at what he did". Although he sometimes jumped to negative conclusions he saw himself as having become "more tolerant" and willing to accept things as they were, it being his "conviction that one develops ... [and] because you come closer to God ... you actually see things from His angle". He said that from being "very forthright" about issues as a young person, he had, as he had "gotton older" developed a tendency to look for solutions to problems, rather than to merely state them. He was also less rule bound, more tolerant, and more accepting of "things as they were".

Evaluation

Paul perceived The Divine as one who was powerful, and who loved, cared and forgave; these traits having been associated with both the masculine and feminine. Paul also experienced The Divine as one who was compassionate, afforded security and was the source of material provision, these traits being perceived as predominantly masculine gender stereo-types. The masculine image of The Divine as "a jolly old chap" cannot be ignored, given his emphasis on the reality of the "person" of The Divine, and his perception of himself as a "cheerful bloke who doesn't loose his rag". Mary's possible influence and contribution to the development of Paul's self-

identity could have been in her humanness, given his emphasis on the practical implications of his perception of The Divine. For Paul, the capacity to love fully, to reach reasoned conclusions and to make choices was central to his concept of *imago Dei*.

Paul was aware of his strong and weak points and was able to freely communicate with regard to these areas. He was committed to his goal of serving others as an expression of his love for The Divine and for humanity, this being a practical expression of an emotional devotion to The Divine. This emphasis on service, although having its genesis during his childhood, also appears to be linked to the practical nature of his outlook on life. The church, and The Divine, have always been very important in Paul's life and although he devoted his life to the service of the church in the role of a Priest, he was able to leave when he felt it imperative to do so.

Given Giddens' criteria for self-identity development one could conclude that Paul had a strong sense of identity. His perceptions of The Divine were mainly masculine in character and would appear to have had a positive influence on his life, however there were strong indications of influence beyond gender stereotypes. Without being aware of it, Paul espouses Giddens' view that change happens as the agent introduces new concepts and ways of thinking. He was aware of change in his own life and although he was not likely to impact on the patriarchal nature of the church, he would appear to be doing so in regard to the patriarchal nature of the family.

Participant Eight of Twelve: Rod.

Personal Profile

Rod was one of three children and, although raised in a protestant family, was educated by Christian Brothers in a Roman Catholic boarding school. The nature of Rod's father's work meant that he was seldom around. His mother was, therefore, the primary influence in his life, as well as the disciplinarian. During university Rod became agnostic³⁶, but joined the Roman Catholic Church when he met his wife since he felt that unity in the area of faith was important for their marriage. Rod said his faith had grown steadily stronger, as had his "realisation that God was there", this mainly through personal reading of books on spirituality. He had adult children and was involved in the medical profession.

Rod's most significant experience of the reality of The Divine was during a business lunch while listening to missionary and author Jackie Pullinger. He recalled that during her talk she seemed to disappear and he became aware of a yellow golden light. He continued, "I came back to the girls at the office and I said – I've seen God". A second significant experience revolved around the reality of the spiritual realm and the power of forgiveness.

During his time as a member of Roman Catholic Church he had served as Grand Knight of the local council of the Knights of De Gama³⁷, and had chaired the parish council. At the time of the interviews he was not involved in church activities. He had been a member of his current church for more than twenty years, attended church at least three times a month and rated his understanding of church doctrine as "good".

Perceptions of The Divine

Although Rod attended a Roman Catholic boarding school, he said he had no early awareness of the reality of The Divine. Mass was said in Latin while the "hourly Hail Mary" and the two-o'clock "Litany of Our Lady" were prayers which at the time had no significance, although in retrospect he saw them as valuable.

³⁶ Agnostic, (Agnosticism): The convictions that the existence of a first cause, and therefore of God, cannot be either proved or disproved, since the evidence was deemed inconclusive (Deist, 1984:4).

³⁷ Knights of De Gama : A movement within the Roman Catholic Church, specifically for men.

As an adult, Rod's perception of The Divine had been largely influenced through his reading of Christian literature. He described The Divine as follows: "[a] kindly father ... mother – I don't know if one puts a mother to it? – God was a he, but although he was not – he and she - ... God had a female aspect ... I still look on God as a father ... but yes, someone who was ... very kindly, gracious ...", caring and always there. He perceived The Divine as present in moments of quietness and reflection, rather than the "big thunder flash". He said his awareness of the feminine came from Christian author Henri Nouwen's³⁸ interpretation of Rembrandt's painting depicting the parable of the prodigal son. Nowen noted that, looking at the hands of the father, one saw that the right hand was a feminine hand and the left hand was a strong (or masculine) hand.

Although Rod was never given the impression of The Divine as one who punishes, he said that The Divine did put "a few stumbling blocks in front of you ... to wake you up - to his presence ...". He felt that "suffering was a necessary part of life ... sometimes uncomfortable ... but it served as a growing point ... to open [one to the] awareness of God ..." and was intended to make believers aware of their absolute dependence on The Divine. The Divine was One who wanted to be first in the life of the agent, could be depended on and who would never forget someone who was suffering. Rod also saw The Divine as one who suffered both with humanity, but also more than humanity, as a parent who looked at an erring child and, seeing their pain, patiently waited, longing for the child to see reason.

When asked about Mary, Rod's voice changed; speaking in a soft and fond tone. He said that Mary - The Mother of Jesus - was becoming more important to him. He saw her as one who could reveal God to us, specifically through her apparitions, for example; Lourdes, Fátima and Medjugorje, the latter a lesser known but relatively recent claim of Mary's appearance to six school children a village in Bosnia / Herzegovina. He felt it was Mary's humanness that facilitated this communication. He was also of the opinion that a greater respect for Mary would lead to a reduction in the temptation to be lured into "looking at all these sexual things on TV and this sort of thing".

³⁸ A reflection on the Rembrandt painting depicting the parable of the prodigal son – with reference to the parable of Jesus found in Luke 15:11-32 (Image 1 Appendix 6).

Imago Dei

Because of the doctrine of the incarnation of The Divine in a human form, namely Jesus, Rod's understanding of *imago Dei* was both human and spiritual in nature. Thinking aloud he mused, "Well initially ... from a humanoid form – but if everyone is created in the image of God – how on earth do you picture God ... physically we were all so totally different that it's impossible to describe God, yet then when you go back and re-analyse that our body is really but a shell – so we were still spirit beings in a human shell so God created us in his own image which was a spirit [but] what that spirit looks like I don't know because we all imagine a spirit to look like your body". Although he said God's image was indefinable from a physical point of view, he also believed, with reference to Mahatma Ghandi, that unless one saw The Divine in the next person, one needn't go to the trouble of looking for The Divine. This understanding of *imago Dei* was integrated through the concept of The Divine as incarnate within each human individual, implying that everyone had the capacity to evidence divine attributes, and all people need to be respected as vessels of the Divine image.

Patriarchy and The Divine

It would seem that Rod supported the patriarchal nature of society as being proper. He saw his role in the family as that of "the head and the leader", and although God created "man and woman equal ... man was the head of the household". He linked the role of the husband as head of the household to the role of men as priests in the church. When asked his view on women as priests or Pastors he again referred to the man's role in the home, adding, "... it doesn't sort of gel [to have a] woman priest ...". Although women could do a tremendous amount of good as carers and role models, and may bring a feminine touch to the priesthood, "a man should be doing the job, not a woman [because of] the order to things; man was the head of the household and woman was there – you know it comes under that".

He also suggested that women could be manipulative in their trying to gain power, but he thought that although women would like to make decisions, they ultimately wanted men to take the responsibility for the decisions made. He maintained that there were so many women in power "because men haven't stood up and done their job properly".

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

Rod attended church regularly and became a Roman Catholic so that there was a point of unity in the area of faith. He said that belonging to the Roman Catholic Church bolstered his "foundation in faith and religious observance, [he became] comfortable and used to it and it was nice". His belonging to the Knights of de Gama led to a degree of frustration because he felt that they were too insular in the practice of their faith.

If he were to leave the church he would miss the availability of Mass and the sense of comfort "receiving God in the communion". He would also miss the "Marion approach to Mary", and Confession; but not the community aspect of church, saying: "We've had a few get-togethers but it hasn't really impacted". He remains a Roman Catholic because of the "sheer desire to stay there [and] because of the value of the wholeness of the church". He said that "if he had no connection with the church he was sure that his faith would be very very weak".

Freedom of choice and creative expression

Rod had always been aware that he had had free choice. He recalled an occasion when, as a university student, he attended a church service with his mother and to her "horror" he refused to participate in communion. He believed that The Divine had given humanity a free choice and that "God [would] never take [one's] freedom of choice away". With regard to church dogma he was content to live with issues that he disagreed with since they were, in his opinion, only someone's interpretation of a policy. He remained a member of the church because "of the value of the wholeness of the church", and would not have wanted to change.

The power of the church

Throughout the three interviews there was no indication that the church had any power over Rod. During university he became agnostic, and returned to the church only when he met his wife. Although he said his faith would be weak if he had no connection with the church, he was also largely reliant on personal reading of books on spirituality. At no time did Rod refer to the Church, or belief in The Divine, as necessary for salvation.

Self-perception

Rod described himself as a loner, one who was quite conservative, philosophical and had a degree of wisdom and insight, trying to "look and understand". He got on well with most people and felt that he had something to contribute to the family, the church and society. As a medical professional he believed he needed to be an example of one who holds good values and moral principles, and someone who could be turned to for advice and counselling. He was self-confident and content, and felt that he had made a success of his life.

He had perfectionist tendencies and used to be quite demanding as a husband. He said he was dependable, responsible and loyal. He felt he had the capacity to love, to understand and to feel empathy; qualities which have always been present but which have become more apparent. He wished he could have had more insight and wisdom from an earlier age, and "came down hard" on himself if he felt that he had failed.

He said that as a child he could be quite quick tempered – although this had been "gradually hammered out". While he could be patient, loving and kind, he could also be "impatient ... belligerent, silent and moody ..."

Evaluation

Rod's perceptions of The Divine were gender-stereotypically masculine in as much as he attributed the human traits of strength, consistency, dependability and fatherhood to The Divine. Qualities of kindness, gentleness and involvement with the pain of humanity were associated with both the masculine and the feminine while the traits of motherhood, graciousness, caring and patience were perceived as feminine gender stereotypes. During the interviews The Divine was spoken of in mainly masculine terms although the possibility of feminine aspects of The Divine was alluded to. Mary seemed important to Rod's spirituality.

Rod's perception of The Divine as one who expects to be supreme (in the best interest of the human agent) - and who sometimes causes suffering to facilitate this – could not easily be associated with the masculine or feminine. Due to the nature of his profession as a physician Rod encountered suffering on a daily basis, making this aspect of The Divine very relevant. His understanding of *imago Dei* as associated

with both the physical and spiritual natures of humanity would also appear to be relevant, but this relevance is not straightforward.

Rod was uninhibited when speaking about himself, his nature and his expectations of himself and others. He related a clear goal and purpose in life, and conveyed a sense of contentment with his choice of career. While the church offered a vehicle for relationship with The Divine, it did not seem important with regard to human relationships. The church did not appear to have inhibited his freedom of choice in any way, and seemed to have no hold over him.

When evaluated according to Giddens' theories of identity, Rod appeared to enjoy a strong sense of self-identity and a positive self-esteem. Rod's personal gender stereotypical perceptions of The Divine were neither strongly masculine or feminine. It was therefore not possible to draw any tentative conclusions with regard to the role of gender perceptions of The Divine in Rod's life. In spite of his awareness of Mary, and his (most likely) hidden gender-stereotypical feminine attributes of The Divine, Rod was unlikely to make any significant changes to the patriarchal nature of either the church or society.

Participant Nine of Twelve: Bill.

Personal Profile

Bill has died since the interviews from which the following information has been drawn, however I will not refer to Bill as "the late ...".

Bill was the older of two children. His father was away for the duration of the Second World War and only returned when Bill was seven, his parents divorcing shortly after his father's return. He was educated in private Roman Catholic Schools, the first of which encouraged him to excel. Bill embraced life and as a teenager/young adult had a full social calendar and was very involved in sport.

Although he was raised as a Roman Catholic in a home "fully aware of God's presence" his first "real and personal" experience of the presence of The Divine was during his first communion when he experienced the awareness of The Divine as One with a personal interest in himself. During his first two years after school he rebelled against religion but returned because he "felt he was missing out".

He had since become very involved in his church – having been a member for more than twenty years, the Parish Council Chairperson and trained as a "communion giver"³⁹. He attended Mass at least three times a month and rated his understanding of church doctrine as "good". He, together with his wife, had led and been regional lay directors of the marriage enrichment course "Marriage Encounter"– a liberal programme based on Scripture and relationship with The Divine.

Perceptions of The Divine

As a child Bill associated The Divine with Jesus, a man with long hair, a halo and probably a "happy face". The Divine was later seen as "sitting on a throne or floating on a cloud ... arms out, giving succour to everyone", a humanitarian God of mercy and love. During Bill's time of rebellion he felt that The Divine was cruel and he could never understand why The Divine permitted war and suffering.

³⁹ A lay person who takes the consecrated elements and distributes them to those too frail or ill to attend Mass.

At the time of the interviews Bill perceived The Divine as a "kind of patriarch - surrounded by millions of people"; no longer on a throne but as one of the crowd, although significant within the crowd. In his mind's eye The Divine was wearing a "floating white vestment" and, with surprise in his voice, noted that The Divine was "clean shaven"; as opposed to Jesus who was almost always depicted with a long beard. The Divine was One who could be trusted and "somebody who [was] especially close ... who [was] real ... [and whose] eyes [reflected] serenity, promise of goodwill, welcome, succour ... pity, help and guidance". Jesus was a selfless-lawgiver, a preacher, God the Son, a friend and someone to whom one could "unburden" oneself. The Holy Spirit was symbolised by a dove and was a dispenser of faith-giving tenets, a help when one stumbled, and the third person of the Trinity

Mary was a "huge part" of his faith experience, Bill espousing "tremendous devotion to Our Lady". Confirming this dedication he noted that whenever he turned to prayer the first person he prayed to was "Our Lady, and then maybe to her son Jesus and then maybe to God ...". He perceived Mary to be an intercessory, a listener; loving, caring and compassionate, and one who suffered during the crucifixion of her son.

Imago Dei

Bill's immediate response to the concept of humanity created in the image of The Divine engendered in him a sense of awe and humility, together with an "enormous pride", based on the idea "that we were built in God's image". In his own life Bill felt that he had reflected this Divine image when he had done "good things" and recalled times when he had impacted positively on the lives of other people. He felt that "doing God's work in God's name" had been an extension of the Image of The Divine. It was Bill's opinion that humanity also reflected this image of The Divine in devotion and "total trust in God"; both in their personal spirituality and in their courage in confronting injustice and oppression.

Patriarchy and The Divine

Bill's understanding of his role in the home was as the father figure, not in an exalted sense but as part of the family. He considered the roles of husbands and wives to include procreation, support and companionship. Although husbands tended to be

breadwinners and wives raised the children, Bill felt it important to be involved in his children's lives; a goal he felt he achieved.

With regard to the church, Bill believed that the Roman Catholic Church would never change its views on contraception, condoms, women as priests or the celibate priesthood. Although women do now take a greater part in the liturgy than they used to, it was his opinion that they would not ever become priests because the church was "bound to the perception of Christ as the single man, the first priest [and] historically the role of a priest in the Roman Catholic Church has been a single man". He supported this view saying he didn't have any problem that women were excluded from the priesthood since he thought that this was "a very special role ... walking in Christ's footsteps" and was a role reserved for men. If women were to be ordained he would have missed "the maleness of the priestly life [believing that it had] nothing to do with male chauvinism at all" but because he had traditionally seen a man in that role because of the maleness of Christ.

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

Bills view was that in spite of having been raised in the Roman Catholic Church he preferred to think of himself "first and foremost as a Christian who happens to belong to a segment of the church called the Roman Catholic Church ... ". While acknowledging that he was grateful that the Roman Catholic Church no longer considered itself an elitist faith he had always been "quietly proud to be a Roman Catholic Christian or a Christian Roman Catholic – whichever way you prefer". He enjoyed the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. Since his retirement he had become more involved in the church and wider Roman Catholic community in his area, taking communion to the sick and those unable to attend Mass.

His experience of the community aspect of the church also revolved around the practice of his faith within his wife's home environment, and later within his own home, both households fully aware of God's presence. Saying the Rosary together every night and grace before meals were practical expressions of this devotion and sense of community. It was also important to him that his children should be involved.

Freedom of choice and creative expression

Bill noted that he had always wrestled a lot with the problem of free will, predestination "and all this type of thing ... [and had not] solved them but come to terms with them". He had felt that he had come to accept that humans do have the ability to choose between good and evil but that it was up to humanity to exercise that free will. He felt that some things might be predestined, like for example when and how he was to die, but he said he no longer wrestled with them as he used to. He just had "a feeling of quiet acceptance".

On the other hand he did express a perplexing attitude to free choice with regard to his later school years (when he rebelled against study, etc.) in that he said that he felt that The Divine "should have shown [him] ... perhaps a better road in terms of knuckling down to studies instead of bunking out every afternoon and going surfing". Even in his more recent past he said that "even now and then [if he] went off the rails... perhaps had too many toots and [lost his temper he would] get angry with God that God [had] let [him] loose his temper".

The power of the church

Bill used to have a "very narrow minded vision of churches, only Catholics could get to heaven ... [which] came from the misguided nuns at kindergarten level", but his concept of church had changed. At the time of the interviews he believed that anyone who believed "in God, whether ... a Muslim, a Hindu a Christian, a Methodist, a Presbyterian ..." all could get to heaven. His concept of the church was that it was "just a way of keeping in touch with God". Although he valued a spiritual zeal, he would not have wanted to "sound like a proselytising evangelic fervour kind of guy, you know, giving praise to God, that type of thing; because [he felt he was] not that sort of person".

His attitude to Vatican II suggested that many of his beliefs changed in line with the proclamations which came out of Vatican II. He did not know the then current stance of the Roman Catholic Church on issues such as purgatory and indulgences, but felt that they should be done away with. If there was a doctrine he was unsure of, and which was important to him, he used to explore it with his priest until he was satisfied. He also attended a Bible Study Class in order to discuss and understand

issues. He did not fear the idea of the constant presence of The Divine since it made him feel protected and sheltered.

Self-perception

Bill perceived himself as a charming, confident, humorous and fairly gregarious sort of guy, who got on well with others and had a good relationship with his peers. On the other hand he could be "extremely ratty [and] belligerent ", inclined to make mountains out of molehills and although he forgave easily was not always able to apologise easily. He could be caring, sensitive and loving, but equally insensitive, although he always tried to be loving and understanding; something which he felt he achieved with his family. He was confident, determined and achieved anything he "put his mind to"; but inclined to procrastinate. He gave attention to detail in all he did.

Evaluation

Bill perceived The Divine as a patriarchal Being, a serene, loving, faithful, trustworthy and loyal Divine Being who dwelt among the people. In Bill's experience, these characteristics were predominantly masculine gender-stereotypes, with faithfulness, friendship, love and involvement being both masculine and feminine. The Divine also had feminine gender-stereotypical traits of compassion, as one who cared and who provided succor to all.

His understanding of *Imago Dei* revolved around aspects of good character, righteous deeds and justice - "in God's name". Although his 'picture' of The Divine was anthropomorphic, this was not reflected in his view on *Imago Dei*.

He spoke freely of himself and was conscious of what he saw to be both his strong and weak points. He worked hard to achieve the goals and live the roles set for himself early in his life. He felt he had a sense of purpose in life and was content with it. Although the church was not an overarching source of power over Bill, his ideas on the role of The Divine in his life reflected an ambivalent tendency toward holding The Divine accountable for his (Bill's) wrong decisions, while knowing that he himself had the ability to choose.

According to Giddens' criteria for a strong sense of self-identity it would appear that Bill has a positive view of himself. This was also apparent throughout the interviews. Although many of the traits associated with The Divine were both masculine and feminine gender-stereotypes, it was clear that he had a very anthropomorphic picture of The Divine in his mind's eye, this picture being strongly masculine. It was therefore possible that his predominantly masculine understanding of The Divine had contributed to positive self-identity. Bill's views on the patriarchal nature of the priesthood and many of the catholic opinions on the role women indicated that it was not likely that he would have contributed to any significant changes for women, especially in the church.

Participant Ten of Twelve: Len.

Personal Profile

Len was born one of six children and believed that he had had a good relationship with his parents, and that they were good parents. His mother had had more influence in his life until the age of about 10, at which time his father also became involved. He said that he was fairly obedient as a child and although his parents were strict, there had been no real problems with regard to discipline. His early years were very happy, while his teenage years were slightly less so. He was allowed a great deal of free choice with regard to decisions relating to his future. Len was married and the father of adult children.

He considered his upbringing to have been marginally Christian in orientation. His first recalled experience of The Divine occurred at about age ten when, during a Sunday School class, he indicated his desire to meet Jesus. Although not a permanent commitment, it had had an impact and was later followed by a further dedication of his life during an evangelical rally. About two years later he experienced a Baptism in The Spirit, and had since experienced the power of The Divine in that he believed he had been physically healed, as had a number of other people after he had prayed for them. At the time of his Baptism in The Spirit he was in his first year in full-time ministry in a mainline denomination, a ministry he later left because of doctrinal differences specifically the issue of women as ministers, and to a lesser degree, Baptism in the Spirit.

Len had been a member of the Lighthouse Community Church for nearly 20 years, and was a cell group leader. He attended church at least three or more times per month and said that he was very involved in the life of his church. He rated his understanding of the doctrine and teaching of his church as "excellent".

Perceptions of The Divine (and Mary)

As a child Len had a very strong anthropomorphic view of The Divine and grew up with an image of The Divine as "a man sitting on a throne with a crown on his head and a sceptre in his hand". The Divine was one to be feared. However, at the time of his response to The Divine he realised that it was all about grace and not about trying to live a good life. The Divine Being was one who sought to bless and give fullness of

life and who really did love and care. He added that he no longer saw The Divine in concrete terms, but related "to him on a spirit level". However, he still saw The Divine as "majestic", "sovereign", "omnipotent", "on a throne" and as "ruler"; these ideas remaining consistent with his earlier image of the throne, crown and sceptre. These concepts were, for Len, masculine in nature. Although his first association with the word "God" was that of father, he did not at any time refer to himself as a child in relationship with The Divine.

For Len there was a distinction between the omnipresence of The Divine and the manifest presence of The Divine. For him the latter was the awareness that people have of the presence of The Divine. Len's sense of belonging to The Divine, and awareness of The Divine, made him feel "secure and confident ... able to cope with various situations knowing [that he had God's] power and ... wisdom...". While he was not always aware of the presence of The Divine he wished he could be more aware more of the time since this awareness made him feel very good.

Mary had not played a role in Len's faith experience; he had "just seen her as the mother of Jesus – nothing more, nothing less than that ...".

Imago Dei

Len understood human beings as having been created in the image of The Divine inasmuch as they had the "characteristics of God ... to love, to care, to be responsible ... creative". However, he said these characteristics were often only manifest when an individual was in relationship with The Divine. Len perceived in himself some of the image of The Divine and believed that this likeness had become evident as he had "allowed the Lord to take control" of his life.

Patriarchy and The Divine

With regard to his role in the family, Len stated that he was "the head of [his] household and therefore [had] spiritual authority ...". For him, this meant that he had to take responsibility for his family, meet their needs and care for them. He was reluctant to admit to times when he may have needed them, but did concede that although it was not often necessary, he had received support from his wife.

Since leaving the mainline church in which he was training to become an ordained minister, he said he had heard women preach, and his views on women as Pastors or priests were in the process of change. However, in spite of what he had seen in terms of women's competency (which had often – in his opinion - been superior to that of men), he was of the opinion that "if a woman [was] in a Pastoral role then she [needed] to be in a place of submission to men nevertheless, and not try to be on her own – because she [was] too vulnerable." It was his experience that women could be too emotional and not objective enough, and that aberrations of the truth have crept in when women had been alone in leadership. Although he admitted that some men could also be "pretty weak leaders" he claimed he had found that "women [tended] to go that way ...".

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

The church had always been an aspect of Len's life. He said his whole life had been "moulded by [his] relationships within the body ...". He rejected what he called "tradition" and said that "structures [of the church] were hampering ... the life of the church". He maintained that people were happy just to have "ritual" whereas as far as he was concerned "Christianity ... [was] a relationship not a religion". He continued, saying that what was important was that the church act "as a body" and that members see their "relationship, one to the other, as a covenant relationship ... [seeking] to serve one another and care for one another ...". As far as Len was concerned this covenant relationship extended to one's relationship with The Divine: no-one "joined the church", but became a "member through re-birth". Len felt that he was integrated into this community.

As a former clergy person and a lay-leader in the Lighthouse Community Church Len's predominant relationship with the members of his church was one of counsel and pastoral care to the members of his cell group, and "growing people to maturity in Christ". He maintained that in their church there was no hierarchy, saying that an elder⁴⁰ was no different from other members – except "in function".

⁴⁰ Elder: The leadership structure of the Lighthouse Community Church comprising of Governing elders, leaders and deacons. The latter may include women, but deacons have to report to the elders (all of whom have to be male).

Freedom of choice and creative expression

Although the church had always had a major influence in Len's life – and he felt integrated and accepted – he nevertheless held his own opinions, saying that he had never been one to "go with the flow". He disagreed with the mainline church in which he was a full time minister in that they were accepting women for ordination. He expressed his views, was not prepared to compromise and eventually left the church. Since then he had reviewed his opinion and felt that women could be ordained, although this was not consistent with the views of the Lighthouse Community Church. He had however retained the notion of overall masculine authority; the latter being a very strong aspect of the Lighthouse Community's teaching. He also showed no indication of any need to challenge the Lighthouse Community Church leaders with regard to the role of women.

It was interesting that although Len spoke a lot about Divine revelation and the role of Scripture in the church, he did not specifically refer to himself as being under these limitations, except for the responsibility he had in his home as head of the home and upholding Christian standards. He did however refer to times when he had asked The Divine for wisdom in situations he had not known how to handle – rather than having taken the option of "The Bible said ...".

With regard to Len's personal relationship with The Divine he maintained that The Divine had chosen him, since he had nothing in himself that would have chosen to be in relationship with The Divine. However, human beings did have the capacity for choice, suffering often being the consequence of human decision.

The power of the church

The church had always been important in Len's life. However the degree of allegiance demonstrated had varied. He was far less critical of his current "denomination" and it would seem could not see some of the potential inconsistencies related to its theology. He said he did not see his church as a denomination because although there were a number of churches under the same umbrella, they did not have to conform to a specific way of doing things. On the other hand he said that all churches under this umbrella did have to submit to the leadership of the man who founded the umbrella organisation, as the apostolic figure, and the doctrine of these churches needed to be

based on Scripture. Should a church not have been able to do this, then "they wouldn't be able to continue in relationship"; i.e. they would have had to withdraw from the "umbrella" organisation.

According to Len it was the dynamic of relationship and revelation of The Divine which engendered change in the church, "... revelation coming by the spirit of God – new light coming and people responding to that light ...". He believed that if he had not experienced the teaching of the church he would have been totally lost; as he saw it: there was no salvation outside of the church. For Len there were two categories of human beings: "those who love God and those who don't know him".

Self-perception

Len described himself as having been a quiet and reserved child, probably shy in some ways. In spite of not enjoying being "up front" he had overcome this and managed as head-boy of his school and later as a minister of religion. He was able to take the lead, particularly in the Lighthouse Community Church situation. He was involved in the hospitality industry, a role which necessitated his interaction with strangers. He said he was content with his own company and could become preoccupied in his own interests.

He considered himself to be loyal, and would not bend to external pressure. Len could also be decisive, something which he said his wife enjoyed about him. Although he liked things to be organised and could be a perfectionist he was able to make allowances for those around him who had had different standards. He did not "suffer fools gladly" but had learnt not to show his irritation. He had also learnt to control and overcome a violent temper, which according to him was the influence of The Divine working in his life.

If he could change something in himself he would have wanted to be even more caring, patient and understanding, and to have been able to deal graciously with differences. If he could have chosen a Saint or a Biblical character with whom to identify it would have been the Apostle John "because he was a man filled with the love of God".

Evaluation

In gender-stereotypical terms as understood by Len, The Divine was strongly perceived in the masculine role of ruler and as having masculine traits of responsibility and [unlimited] authority and power. The idea of The Divine as father featured, but was not his principal perception. These perceptions have been consistent throughout his life. The Divine was also compassionate, a trait that he associated with both the masculine and the feminine. Love and care were feminine attributes which he associated with The Divine. Mary was only "the mother of Jesus". Len believed that human beings were created in the *imago Dei* inasmuch as they had the characteristics of The Divine.

Although not a man of many words, Len was easily able to talk about himself and had a strong sense of self-awareness and purpose in life. He was well integrated into the church community – most of his goals in life having been orientated toward service within the church and caring for, and teaching, the members of the church. He had submitted to the authority of the church and had become more accommodating with regard to doctrinal issues. For Len, humans had a free choice in all matters.

With reference to the factors affecting self-identity (as suggested by Giddens) one could deduce that Len had a strong sense of self-identity and that the church had been significant in the making of this identity. According to his personal understanding of gender stereotypes, The Divine was perceived in principally masculine terms, many of which he identified within himself and his role in the home and the church. It would seem that Len had benefited from his mostly masculine gender perceptions of The Divine. This could have been enhanced by his early anthropomorphic view of The Divine, supported by his later perception which showed a degree of continuity as regards characteristics associated with The Divine. As a theologically trained lay leader⁴¹ in the church Len was in a position to facilitate change in the church's thinking with regard to women, but there was no indication that he planned to do so. If he were to continue to perpetuate the concept of patriarchal domination, he would have been doing so intentionally.

⁴¹ Lay Leader: One who holds a position of leadership within the church, but is not ordained.

Participant Eleven of Twelve: Oscar.

Personal Profile

Oscar was the only child of older parents and was raised alongside a grand-daughter from his father's first marriage. Both his parents were equally involved in his upbringing and he considered himself to have had quite a happy childhood in a generally Christian home, although church attendance was not a common occurrence. He was given little choice with regard to his future and the expectations of his parents forced him into an occupation in a financial institution, something which he never wanted to do and never enjoyed. He would have preferred something outdoors. He was married but had no children and had taken early retirement.

He first committed his life to The Divine when in high school, during a visit by a para-church organisation. He initially chose to worship in an Anglican church, because "everything was done decently and in order". He offered himself for full time ministry in the Anglican Church during his early twenties, and considered it fortunate that they suggested he wait a year, since during that year he attended a renewal conference in Johannesburg, after which he joined the Lighthouse Community Church where he had been a member for more than twenty years. His most significant spiritual experience was his Baptism in The Spirit – an event which was accompanied by the gift of "singing in the spirit"⁴². He attended church at least three times a month, said he was very involved in church activities and considered himself to have had a very good understanding of his church's doctrine and teaching.

He and his wife were recently involved in full-time mission projects in two countries north of South Africa. Although they went with their church's covering, they were not sent by their church⁴³. Oscar's time in mission proved to be very costly, emotionally and financially, and he regretted not having attempted to get more spiritual support from his home church during that time.

⁴² Singing in the Spirit: A phenomenon over which the believer may say they have little or no control and is considered – as is "praying in the Spirit" or "praying in tongues" – evidence of having received the Holy Spirit; the latter often believed to be the "doorway" to the other gifts of the spirit for example prophecy *et cetera*.

⁴³ Had they been sent by their church they would have received financial support; having their churches "covering" meant that the church approved of what they were doing, but did not support them financially.

Perceptions of The Divine (and Mary)

As a child Oscar would have described God as "one who [was] a father, someone who [was] there for you" a "loving father ... with a deep concern for his creation"; while at the same time being "enormous ... magnificent ... just big ...". The awareness of this "largeness" had developed over time and was "uppermost in [his] mind"; using words such as "omnipotent, omnipresent, loving, upright, true, [and] straight". He was amazed that "such a great God" had concern for him, and even for the smallest of desert flowers.

When feeling far away from The Divine he blamed it on his "withdrawing from" The Divine, rather than the withdrawal of The Divine from himself. He said The Divine was "around – within me and around me". Oscar said he felt "at peace" when he thought about this. When faced with a crisis he said he "would like to say [he] always [went] to God first, but often [he] just tried to work through it himself". When struggling he sometimes asked where The Divine was, but he said that in the back of his mind he knew The Divine was still there.

A further perception of The Divine revolved around the human emotions of joy and humour, something which in his opinion was an interaction between the members of the Godhead (the Trinity). Mary had had no role in Oscar's faith experience, his focus always having "been on Jesus".

Imago Dei

As far as Oscar was concerned the implication of humanity created in the Image of The Divine was that "God [had] put his life into us ... we [were] part of the eternal", that "we were here for a purpose" and that human beings could have "some of the nature of The Divine". He thought that there was an incredible sense of joy and humour in the interaction of the members of the Godhead and believed that this sense of joy can be experienced by humanity inasmuch as humans have been created in the image of The Divine. Oscar believed that he shared the divine attributes of love, compassion and joy, and that these have increased over time.

Patriarchy and The Divine

As with most Christian believers, Oscar also referred to The Divine in masculine terms, and as a father who was "there for you" and who cared. His sense of "belonging" to The Divine engendered in him a desire to once again be like "a little child ... with his father".

He said that his role in the family was "obviously ... being the head of the family" and that the biggest influence of the Lighthouse Community Church had been in this area. This role included being the family priest and caring for his wife "as Jesus [cared for] the church". He considered it a "bad thing" if women were to dominate and want their own way.

The church as a place of community, relationship, continuity and trust

The church had always been important for Oscar and appeared to be the place where he felt most comfortable; and where his insecurities were less severe. He was of the opinion that the church was a body of believers which could be depended upon; that "you can go to ... if you have a crisis – if it's two o'clock in the morning". However, he had never called on the church for help or support, even when he really needed it, and he regretted that. It appeared that it was in and through the church that he had attempted to find a purpose in life.

Freedom of choice and creative expression

An interesting theme – with strong religious overtones - that ran through the interviews was his frequent reference to Scripture as his guide for decision-making, as opposed to an internal referential source. He said he would be opposed to homosexual priests - "but not – personal – but on Scriptural grounds". He said his views of women as priests and Pastors "came from scriptures", and he explained it as follows: "I feel scripture said women [should] not in that sense to be over men - God [had] put an order in society by which man [was] in a sense to be the priest".

He belonged to the Lighthouse Community Church because he believed it to be "the expression of the Body of Christ" and would not leave the church unless he felt The Divine was telling him to do so, and it would have needed to be "on Scriptural

grounds". Changes happening in the church were, according to Oscar, "an attempt to hear God in the situation", and not human decision.

With regard to his career he felt that he may not have reached his potential. It was not the career of his choice and he "was never ... particularly happy, or didn't get on particularly well". When Oscar did eventually take early retirement it was to follow what he believed was a call from the Divine. He said that "The word of God directs one along His path ... understanding what God wants [being] a continuing revelation". He felt that The Divine had chosen him and that it was "just by grace" that he had been saved.

The power of the church

Much of Oscar's life seemed to have been tied up with the church, first in his desire to enter full-time service, and then his work in full time mission. The church had also had a great deal to do with regard to his role at home.

Although he said his decision making was based on Scripture it seemed this was often linked to his understanding of the authority of Scripture as taught by his church, which would consider itself "Bible based". On the other hand he did say that if he felt that the Lighthouse Community Church was "erring, that [it was] digressing from scriptural principles", that he would have spoken to the leadership, and if it did not change, he would leave.

Self-perception

Oscar said he did not often think about himself, so talking about his perception of himself was not easy. He said he hadn't, not even to himself, tried to voice how he felt about himself: "... I just in a sense take day by day". When asked if he liked who he was he answered, "I really don't try to think about myself – but I am also [pause] in many ways I'm a [pause] do a lot of dreaming – if this or if that ...". When asked what words best described himself, he replied: "In some ways I still feel a little bit mixed up in that ... I still in a sense ... I suppose conflict - wondering ... whether I couldn't

have done better in my life ... but [after a long pause] I think [pause] I'm happy with where I am at the moment in God⁴⁴.

Without the input of The Divine he thought he might have gone off on his "own imaginations". The person in the Bible with whom he would have liked to identify was David⁴⁵ because the Divine had said of David that "he's a man after my own heart", although he said that he identified with David in as much as David was a sinner. In addition, Oscar identified with Peter⁴⁶ in that he sometimes spoke without thinking.

Oscar also said that he was not really a "group person" – but he was not sure if he was an introvert. He felt he could be very compassionate, but, above all, he said he had "a serving heart"; and enjoyed working with people, helping and serving them. He found "great satisfaction in helping people", although at times he found it difficult to relate to people's suffering. He said he was more comfortable in the company of older people and while he felt that he could be very patient, he was also inclined to "explode" when things got too much.

He felt that he was the type of person who could not easily ask for help, but preferred to struggle through things himself. He wished he could be more practical, that he could avoid procrastinating and that he was able to see through to the end projects which he had begun. If he failed he questioned himself, and asked of The Divine "why, why did I not succeed?". He also felt devastated and tried to put it behind him and "just keep on living life". At the time of the interview he said he just felt "dead".

Evaluation

The concept of fatherhood was the only solely masculine trait that Oscar associated with The Divine. Traits which were – for Oscar – both feminine and masculine gender stereotypical in nature included love, uprightness and trustworthiness. Faithfulness, concern, caring and compassion were feminine gender stereotypical qualities that

⁴⁴ The disjointed nature of these quotes are given as an indication of Oscar's difficulty in speaking about himself. The "words" that have been omitted were his attempts to think of what to say, for eg. ugh, umm *et cetera*.

⁴⁵ An Old Testament king, under whose leadership the Israelites were said to be very powerful. He was also said to have committed adultery.

⁴⁶ A New Testament apostle who was reportedly renown for his tendency to speak without thinking.

Oscar associated with The Divine. The implications of *imago Dei* are difficult to assess, but could be relevant.

Oscar was not easily able to speak of himself and did not appear to have had a sense of direction, continuity or purpose in his life. His personal choices had been limited by the desires of his parents, what he believed to be the injunctions of Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit⁴⁷. His views with regard to the church as a community were ambivalent. The idea of service in the church had always been a factor in his life but his attempts had not always been successful. He claimed that he would not have allowed the doctrine of his church to override his convictions with regard to the content of Scripture.

Given the criteria involved in the making of identity – according to Giddens - the story of Oscar's life did not point to an individual who enjoyed a strong sense of identity. The role of the church in this was difficult to identify, but it would appear that it had not been a positive one. Oscar's personal stereotypical perceptions of The Divine were predominantly feminine⁴⁸, suggesting that the lack of strong masculine perceptions could have hindered his self-identity development as a man. In spite of this Oscar seemed set to actively strengthen the patriarchal nature of the church, society and home life. The role of his mainly ethereal perceptions of The Divine was difficult to determine.

⁴⁷ Leading of The Holy Spirit: A term used to imply that one had heard (believed to be aware of) the will of The Divine with regard to a decision or action.

⁴⁸ It is important to note that none of these perceptions emanated from any thoughts of Mary.

Participant Twelve of Twelve: Gus.

Personal Profile

Gus was a semi-retired artisan in his seventies. He had been divorced, was remarried, and was a father. Gus said that his mother had been the primary influence in his life, his father, who left home when Gus was a young adult, having been too busy. He said he had been a generally well behaved and happy child/teenager. Although he did well at school, he had to leave before he could matriculate, because of his father's lack of interest. He was given a degree of choice with regard to decisions affecting his future, but these were limited to the area of following a trade. He was quite a good sportsman.

In what he considered to have been a home which was reasonably Christian in orientation, his awareness of The Divine was initially as a result of his mother who used to take him to Sunday School. His consciousness of The Divine was maintained through the ministry of a local minister who made church a fun place to be, and presented the Christian way of life as one of joy. Although he had later suffered a number of set backs and disappointments with leaders in the church, he maintained his commitment, and said that he hardly ever missed a Church service.

He had been a congregant in a number of denominations and church congregations, including Baptist, Methodist, Anglican and the Lighthouse Community Church. Some of these he had belonged to because of convenience (locality), others because of his wife, and others because of circumstance. Gus considered his introduction into the charismatic movement as the start of his enlightenment and in his opinion the Lighthouse Community Church was biblically based and taught Jesus. He had been a member of that church for over ten years but was only marginally involved in church activities. He considered himself to have had an excellent understanding of the doctrine and teaching of the Lighthouse Community Church.

Perceptions of The Divine (including Mary)

Gus had always held that The Divine – as creator of all – was "just too big" and could only be described by "all the superfluous [sic]⁴⁹ [one could] think of" and that The

⁴⁹ Superlatives.

Divine "could never be compared to anything". He was however aware of the caring, love and forgiveness of The Divine; "... the wonder of it all ... his pity ... his concern that we are going off the rails ...".

With reference to his life story Gus felt that if The Divine had not been a part of his life he "could have gone off the rails and been a naughty boy ... that [The Divine] had definitely kept [him] on the straight and narrow". Gus said that he'd "always had the feeling that [his] God the Father was watching everything that [he] did – [he had to] behave [himself] – and that [was his] basic belief". This was a recurrent theme throughout the interviews.

When asked about the role of The Divine in human suffering he hesitantly replied: "He's, somehow left us to find our own way and we've gone the wrong way – suffering is some of the result of all that – he just looks down on us – and he's - his love is still always loving – we just live for the day when we are all together in heaven". He felt that he may not question The Divine with regard to suffering in human experience or in nature, and said, "it's all part of his [The Divine's] plan".

He did relate incidences where he had felt that The Divine had taken a personal interest in his life and intervened in ways that were practical and possibly life-saving. He said that he trusted The Divine implicitly for his material needs and "couldn't care less if he died". Mary had had no significance in his spiritual experience, although he did associate the traits of gentleness, kindness and self-giving with her.

Imago Dei

With regard to what it meant to be created in the image of The Divine, Gus' attempt to answer had very anthropomorphic implications, and he said that he found the idea confusing. He said that, "if that was the case, how are we generated into Chinese, Japanese, Indians, Zulu's, Xhosa's – how do we manage to get in these different ... I just accept it, I don't try to understand it".

Inasmuch as Gus was unable to understand the concept of *imago Dei* or venture any opinion on what it may have implied, but simply accepted it, it was impossible for him to identify anything of the Image of The Divine in himself. According to Gus,

any attributes that human beings had, had been given as "gifts" by The Divine and were not perceived as reflections or attributes of The Divine in humanity or human nature. Confirming this he said (in relation to further questioning relating to the image of The Divine and human nature) that The Divine had "given each one of us our own will to do as we please" and that this gift was wonderful and a reflection of the love of The Divine.

Patriarchy and The Divine

As a member of the Lighthouse Community Church Gus confirmed the approach that as the male he should be the leader in the home. However he interpreted this differently to the other participants in that he said: "I love going to our church because we are being taught that the husband is the leader in the house, that the wife is not an underling - she is his equal ... but she's seen differently".

Although he maintained that he subscribed to this role, there were inconsistencies in this area. He was unable to lead family prayers (an integral aspect of headship being that the husband was the spiritual head of the home) and although he maintained that all important decisions in their home were joint decisions, he referred to times when he had "followed her [his wife]" in her choice of a church" but added: "we're a team – I have to follow if I think she's doing the right thing ...".

He said he admired his wife and called himself blessed because she nagged him about his relationship with The Divine, but continued: "I keep telling her ... you don't know what's inside somebody else's mind ... I'm a Christian – so I'm living a Christian life – so I couldn't care less about what my wife says or anybody else says – she doesn't know what is inside of my heart or [this] stupid brain of mine". It was clear that she did not support his participation in this research, but he volunteered anyway.

Another area in which his approach to women differed from that of his church was that of women in the ministry. As noted, The Lighthouse Community Church maintains that women may not be involved as Pastors or leaders in the church, but Gus expressed the conviction that he was quite happy for women to be priests or ministers, since "... the story that the Bible says men only is nonsense – [women]

were priests in the early days so it doesn't bother me at all – if she's got a calling then she gets to be made a priest ...".

He also mentioned that he often got himself into trouble at social functions when he insisted that men and women should integrate, as opposed to the traditional norm of men in one group and women in another.

The church as a place of community and relationship

Gus had not always been a member of the Lighthouse Community Church. He spoke of times in the past when he was involved and felt comfortable in different denominations, although he had also suffered a number of set-backs and disappointments with the leaders of some of these churches. He had been taught by the Lighthouse Community Church that each person was an essential aspect of the body⁵⁰, but he was of the opinion that he was not adequately involved in the life and activities of his church. He expressed feelings of incompetence, inferiority and of letting The Divine down because he was not able to preach or teach as many others did. He said: "You know, I sit in the congregation sometimes – and I've actually said this to somebody the other day – you know I feel once again ... you know I feel a failure ... I don't volunteer to go up and pray - I just feel inadequate – I do – I shouldn't do ...".

He said that he found himself confused when he thought about his belonging to the church and to The Divine. He explained, "you know there are only certain people who seem to gel with you ... [age may play a part] ... I know I take the blame – I think it's my own fault – I probably don't look very friendly ... although it is sometimes possible to find a link". With regard to his sense of belonging to The Divine he said: "I'm apologising to the Lord all day long because [if] something goes wrong and I use a word I shouldn't ... the wonder of it all [being that The Divine] bothers about us at all".

In looking for what was not reported, an interesting missing link was that he made no mention of being Baptised in the Spirit, the one event which was normally very

⁵⁰ With reference to the Christian ecclesiastical concept of the Church as the Body of Christ on earth.

important to all members of Charismatic churches. This could have hindered his integration into the Lighthouse Community Church.

Freedom of choice and creative expression

Gus believed that The Divine had given humanity the gift of free choice. However, his response to many questions during the interview indicated that he did not enjoy having this privilege. It seemed he lived in fear of The Divine inasmuch as he believed that he was under the constant surveillance of a judgemental and controlling Divine Being. This could be seen in his reply to a question regarding self-identity. He said that one of the things he liked about himself was that he tried to be honest – but added, "... if I've got any ... thoughts about doing the wrong thing – then I think – no – it's not right ... maybe because I feel God's watching me at all times ... and maybe that is what had been my saving grace ... I won't get away with it because he's watching ... how does one like oneself – I suppose you've got to otherwise you are in trouble".

He also refers to the Bible as a source of knowing what was right and wrong, and said that he enjoyed the Lighthouse Community Church because they went according to the Bible.

The power of the church

There appeared to be a number of areas of incongruence between what Gus said or believed, and what his church maintained; while at the same time he seemed to experience pressure from his church to be someone he felt he was not.

As a member of the Lighthouse Community Church he believed that he was expected to tell others about his faith but felt inadequate because he was of the opinion that he did not have the competence to do so, and was afraid that he may have said the wrong thing. There was also evidence of the power that the church exerted over Gus in that he believed that a person was either saved or not, on the right way or the wrong way. The former involves being part of a church, while the latter implied being outside of the church.

On the other hand there were areas in which he maintained his own views. In the context of the sadness he felt over one of his old friends who was, in his opinion, not a Christian, but with whom he still enjoyed a friendship he said "... you know our instructions [are] not to associate with people who are not believers, but this was an old – I mean he was at school with me ...". He also noted that he was currently working for someone whom he said was "unfortunately not a believer", something else of which the Lighthouse Community Church disapproved. A further area in which he held his own views was with regard to the role of women in the church. He also appeared to give lip service to many areas with regard to the idea of the husband being the head of the home.

Self-perception

This was not an easy question for Gus to answer. He was unsure of many attributes in that he dismissed or "explained away" most of what he said. He described himself as an average child, but also thought he had potential as a leader and an academic. He said that he preferred not to be "number one" and this was initially attributed to a lack of confidence but then he suggested that his "lack of confidence might have been a little laziness".

When asked what he liked about himself he replied that he tried to be honest – but only because he felt The Divine was watching him. He was aware of what he called "evil" around him, but felt he did not have the capacity to do anything about it. He had no influence because according to him, one needed wealth in order to have an influence.

His role model would have been "a decent chap", while the biblical character with whom he would have liked to identify was David because of his bravery and also because David was loved by God in spite of his weakness.

Evaluation

Gus's understandings of The Divine revolved around the "otherness" and omnipotence of The Divine; The Divine being panoptic, restraining, often disapproving – but fortunately also merciful. He also mentioned care, love and forgiveness as traits of The Divine and gentleness, kindness and self-giving with Mary. Gus insisted that he

had no gender-stereotypical views with regard to traits and characteristics evidenced in human beings, although it was possible to establish, from the general content of the interviews, and with a degree of certainty, that love and forgiveness were strongly associated with the feminine; while caring was associated with both the masculine and the feminine. Unfortunately, this was insufficient evidence to establish Gus' gender-stereotypical perceptions of The Divine. Gus found it difficult to come to terms with the concept of *imago Dei*. It would appear that a very anthropomorphic image of The Divine precluded any understanding in this regard.

Gus was not easily able to speak about himself, nor was he sure of himself with regard to his purpose in life. He felt that he was a failure at many things that he had set out to do and that he was inadequate with regard to doing what he knew he needed to do. His belonging to, and involvement in, the church would seem to have been a hindrance more than a help. His role as a husband and head of the house was fraught with inconsistencies. It would appear that Gus evidences very little capacity for free choice, in relation to his wife, the church and The Divine. While he may venture to do something of his own choosing, it was normally accompanied by guilt and a degree of fear. Significantly, David - his choice of biblical character – was one who was "loved by God in spite of his weakness".

Guided by Giddens' criteria for self-identity one could conclude that Gus did not enjoy a strong sense of self-esteem or identity. The influence of gender-stereotypical traits of The Divine could not be determined while the church, in that it had not had an actively affirming role in Gus's life, had not been a positive influence. By default, Gus was likely to perpetuate a patriarchal model of The Divine, as well as a church, and society, which are patriarchal in nature.