SELF-REALIZATION IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY:
TOWARDS A VISION OF CHRISTIAN WHOLENESS.

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that

SELF-REALIZATION IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY:
TOWARDS A VISION OF CHRISTIAN WHOLENESS

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used
or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged
by means of complete references.

Jennifer Slater O.P.

Date

29 August 2002
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To my family and friends

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provide a constant environment

for personal self-realization.
SUMMARY

This research determines the ground for a Christian theological anthropology that makes provision for a doctrine that supports human self-realization. It is evident from the study that anthropological self-realization is an involved process of becoming truly human, not an isolated course founded solely on the biblical knowledge of being created in the image and likeness of God. All sciences, and in particular anthropological sciences, enjoy the prerogative of unraveling and analyzing the human person. Whether these sciences are neuro-biological, psychological, theological, philosophical, biblical, spiritual or mystical in character, each with its specific method legitimately attempts to explain the complexities of the human person. In the light of this neither philosophy nor theology possess the exclusive claim to authentic human wisdom. In truth most scientific insights have a combined impact on the self-realizing growth and development of humanity.

The process of self-realization links theology to real life questions such as evil, suffering, hope, love, justice and freedom, as well as with the immanent, the transcendent, the human and the divine. This thesis holds to the opinion that a theology of self-realization would contribute to the 'humanization' of theology since it brings praxis and theory into close alignment. This study equally expresses the conviction that the doctrine of consecrated vowed life, an ecclesiastical structure in the Roman Catholic Church, is particularly in need of humanization, as the notion of 'self' as a strength has been notably absent from traditional treatises on the practices of religious life. Conventional forms of consecrated vowed life called the woman to suppress and spiritualize at least some of her femininity. This was due to the distorted theological anthropology that sustained consecrated life in which God was presented as an idea to be grasped intellectually, and not an experience to be lived.
KEY TERMS

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem.

The problem of 'self-realization' is intriguing precisely because of the diverse uses of the term which range from abstract philosophical-theological theories to practical psychological-spiritual applications. Karl Rahner, the 20th Catholic theologian, uses the term self-realization in his theology on 'freedom' and 'symbolism', relating it to the basic free choice which the human makes for or against God. He claims that this fundamental free choice is at the same time a basic choice about oneself. It is therefore understood that a human person is radically free to become the choices she or he makes. Thus in Rahner's view, freedom is the capacity for definitive self-realization. The very exercise of freedom shows that humans, precisely as historical beings are also transcendent beings. However, the difficulty is that if human self-realization involves the power to make decisions, which actualize his or her own reality, how does this self-realization come about and where does God fit into the process? If self-realization is related to the self and God, then another question is posed namely, what constitutes the self?

Neither is the term 'self' confined to psychology or theology alone. It is also used in philosophical, spiritual/mystical literature, and of late increasingly in neuro-theological studies. The meaning and practical implications of the term are also very ambiguous particularly with regard to the existential conditions of the human person. In most cases literature of the relevant disciplines presumes that the reader has a natural understanding of the human self and how to achieve its realization. This leads to another question: Is the concept of self-realization the key tool employed by theologians in their search for an understanding of being? To locate the problem of self-realization in the inner structures of being, is to believe that true integration takes place at the level of being and not, as is usually assumed by
psychological theory, on the level of the mind. For this purpose the thesis will inquire into the mystery of being. To explore the self-realizing potential of being human is also to determine what is meant by being, truly realized. Knowing the crevices of the historical structures of the Roman Catholic Church, and keeping in mind the recent theological problems concerning the consecrated vowed life, and the impact of feminism on the general position of women, this thesis addresses the problem of how the woman vowed to poverty, obedience and celibacy becomes self-realized. And this must take into account the fact that she is well aware that the witness value of her life is not only counter-cultural, but is built on a negative Christian tradition that places much emphasis on self-denial and self-sacrifice.

Importance of the study.

The study endeavours to make the concept ‘self-realization’ theologically intelligible. Its principle concern is to determine the ground for a Christian theological anthropology that makes explicit provision for a doctrine of human self-realization, particularly in the case of the woman consecrated to the evangelical counsels, poverty, chastity and obedience. In this sense it wishes to contribute constructively to theological anthropology that authenticates human self-realization. While this present study acknowledges the path-breaking work of feminist scholars, an important aspect of a proposed theology of self-realization is that it challenges feminism to develop into a total theology, rather than remain a critical theological opponent of mainstream theology. Feminism per se is not enough to facilitate the self-realization of anyone, least of all that of women. In truth, when it becomes fixated on a human-centred definition of life, it could be a hindrance to self-realization. It needs to create an inner capacity to escort the individual beyond liberation to self-realization: an inner process of discovery and development, which includes knowing oneself without any labels, prejudices, controls or preconceived ideas.
Another important aspect of this research is to establish the relationship between self-realization and salvation, and to determine whether self-realization is by its nature specifically both Christian and salvational. Since Christian self-realization is centred on the person of Christ as well as on his Good News, it helps to define the human person in a process that moves from individualism to community, from dualism to wholeness and from individual identity to collective identity. Christian self-realization, while it is shaped by Christian principles, culminates in Jesus who is the ultimate meaning of human self-realization.

Method

The first part of the dissertation researches, studies and evaluates the concept self and self-realization in an inter-disciplinary setting and in its initial stages focuses on obtaining clarity of both self as an entity and self-realization as a method towards human salvation. It deals with material that is overwhelmingly prescriptive and theoretical by nature, exploring both traditional and modern writings. While there appear to be little agreement of exactly how to determine the nature of self, this research gives preference to western psychology, philosophy and theology which share a basic common cultural perspective that perceive the self as the central axis of life.

The theoretical determination of Part I paves the way for Part II. This focuses on the specific exploration of self-realization as it relates to the Christian woman who reflects God's image and likeness. The theological investigation of the Christian understanding of female personhood is then more specifically related to the Roman Catholic woman who embraces the consecrated vowed life. This part of the study focuses the spotlight on the evangelical councils of poverty, celibacy and obedience as constitutive features of consecrated life.
The closing section of the research provides theoretical conclusions and concrete proposals towards making self-realization an achievable reality. It puts forward practical suggestions and could possibly open avenues to further research in this area.

**Procedure**

This study consists of two sections each comprising of four chapters and a final chapter that presents concrete suggestions and proposals. The literature of different scientific disciplines, indicates not only the different meanings of the self, but reflects the richness of the term in its diverse uses. This exploration should facilitate an understanding of the centrality of the self, showing how it constitutes the well-being of a person, influences the course of life and determines its innermost position within the personality. While the self can only mean the whole person as he or she really is, there is an important distinction between the self and the various hyphenated self-related terms such as self-realization, self-esteem, self-fulfilment and the like. It becomes clear that all humans pursue personal happiness, wanting to lead personal lives where self and individuality are valued and cherished.

The first chapter sets the stage by exploring the existence of the self in its relation to the Divine self. It continues by exploring the self in its physical context from the neuro-biological perspective, presenting the various kinds of self within a complex relational structure, and suggesting that the limbic system could well be the seat of the self. The exploration of the self unfolds by viewing the psychological imprints of the self, the self as spirit-in-the-world, the self hidden in Christ.

Chapter II places specific emphasis on the Christian understanding of the self, locating it in the heart of biblical anthropology and presenting Christ as the symbol of the human self. In this chapter it soon becomes apparent that the notion self-realization clamours for
clarification and this is what chapter three embarks on.

Having explored the self is its various arrangements Chapter III turns to self-realization. Specific psychological and philosophical explorations highlight the fact that self-realization is not just a simple, uncomplicated human process and experience. On the contrary, as a concept it demands rigorous examination and formulation to make it understandable. The philosophical observations, which focus on the ontological capacity of the self in self-realization, lead the research into the philosophical-theological exploration of self-realization.

The theological discussion in Chapter IV deals mainly with the transcendental Thomistic views of Karl Rahner. It places strong emphasis on self-realization in the exercise of human freedom, the consequence of which is the making of authentic choices for life. While love is identified as the full realization of transcendental freedom, this chapter also notes that faith as an act of self, transcends self-realization, yet at the same time it confirms humanity's distinctive capacity for self-realization.

This theoretical reflection, which expresses the structures of Christian search towards self-understanding, identifies essential elements at work in self-realization, though not all the essential elements are captured. The thesis at this stage turns to the question of how the woman fits into the intellectual understanding of Christian self-realization.

Chapter V explores the theological anthropology that authenticates the self-realization of women. In order to establish a truthful anthropology that would promote the self-realization of women, it will be necessary to take a theological journey back in time, identifying the misinterpretations of scripture, and reflecting on the origins of an anthropology that denied woman, as an individual as apart from man, any form of self-realization. While this section reflects feminist views,
it calls for the deconstruction of the traditional understanding of woman and the formation of another paradigm by which woman can be truly interpreted as the image and likeness of God.

Chapter VI continues in this vein by looking at the current official Catholic teaching on the position and standing of woman in the Church. This chapter provides rich insights gleaned from church documents, but it is clearly evident that up to the present, much of the material has neither been explored nor used to create an awareness of how the church views the woman. As a result, much of the teaching of the Church on the role and status of women, has not been implemented.

Chapter VII challenges the assumption that consecrated women in the Catholic Church, by vowing themselves to negatives such as poverty, celibacy and obedience, cannot be realized. This chapter brings consecrated vowed life into focus by concentrating on the positive helps it can offer towards the all-inclusive growth of the woman. It looks critically at the theology of consecrated life as it reflects individually on poverty, obedience and celibacy. This is followed by an appraisal of consecrated vows in relation to self-realization.

Chapter VIII endeavours to make a theoretical contribution towards the formulation of a theology of self-realization. It points out the possible contribution to our understanding of the human person that a theology of self-realization would make. This includes the view that self-realization contributes to the process of humanization of humanity, while at the same time it gives recognition to the mystery element in human nature. A specific Christian theology of self-realization, which deals with the fullness of being, is both salvational and christological. Self-realization, which implies participating in the holiness of God will, as a goal, provide a new focus and direction for those who embrace the consecrated life.
The final chapter endeavours to make concrete suggestions as to the practical ways in which this abstract concept of self-realization can be applied in practical ways to life in the contemporary Church. These include the formation of grassroots theological reflection groups, theological forums, church liturgies, and the creation of religious life formation programmes which would reflect and promote prophetic consciousness.

This thesis does not present the final word on human self-realization. Indeed it is perhaps the first shot in a long battle, involving not only Christian/Catholic theology but also the other human sciences. Be that as it may, evaluative commentaries at the end of each chapter encourage the study and contribution at all levels within the Church, towards the creation of a theology of self-realization as a sub-structure of Christian anthropology.
SECTION ONE

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TOWARDS THE CONCEPT ‘SELF’

1.1 Introduction

Scholastic theology defines the nature of God as “Actus Purus” (Pure Act), that is pure perfection, completely actualized and not limited by unrealized potential. In accordance with this understanding, God is infinite and pure, the fullness and source of all being. The ‘perfections’ which human beings possess are participations in, and reflections of God’s infinite goodness. The ultimate good for which God created the human person has to be God’s own infinite goodness and excellence. This knowledge will cast light on how the human person is to actualize the purpose of its own existence, understood as the self-realization of God’s distinctive goodness.

God’s purpose in creating is set forth in the dogmatic constitution, Dei Filius, of the First Vatican Council (1869-70). This document defines the end for which the world and the human person were made, that is the glory of God.

This one and only true God, of His own goodness and almighty power, not for the increase of His own happiness, nor for the acquirement of His perfection, but in order to manifest His perfection through the benefits which He bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom and council, “from the beginning of time made at once out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body” (Neuner and Dupuis 1998:168:Article 412).

According to above statement the human self is “a composite of spirituality and materiality”. It is therefore anticipated that self-realization would consider the entire synthesis of the human person
enabling it to achieve its true perfection, and so give glory to God. It is believed that by participating fully in the self of God, the individual becomes fully alive, hence the famous saying of St Irenaeus, "Gloria Dei est vita hominis", "The glory of God is the human person fully alive".

If the glory of God is the human person *fully alive*, the question is: what constitutes being "fully alive"? Does it mean possessing in abundance the qualities which people admire and would like to have, such as intelligence, a zest for life, friendship, good health, achievements and success? As far as God is concerned this may not be the case, as an individual may have all these qualities and still not give glory to God. The glory of God' finds perfection only when the human self has been realized in the *Divine Self* of God.

If the human self were considered as the starting point of self-realization in God, then knowledge of both self and God would be prerequisites. Philosophically it is apparent that despite the fact that human persons are limited in comprehension, they do possess the unlimited will to know, and this capacity provides insights into God, the *Divine Self* and Principle of all Reality. Karl Rahner (1978:44), the 20th century German Catholic philosopher and theologian, maintains that the individual, insofar as she accepts her own *transcendence*, admits it into her *consciousness*, and by reflection, objectifies what is already in her transcendentality, knows explicitly what is meant by "God". Expressions such as *Pure Spirit, Infinite Selfhood, Unlimited Knower*, and *Divine Self* generally refer to God. The *Divine Self* is unrestricted and transcendent and as argued by Kelley (1977:64), an English Benedictine monk, the *human self* cannot grasp its essence, hence the question: how does the *human self* connect with the *Divine Self* in the process of self-realization?
1.2. The Divine Self and the human self.

Taking into account that there exists a constituent difference between God, the *Divine Self*, and the *human self*, the question arises: how does the *human self* participate in the *Divine Self*? Reflecting on the mystical writings on the *Divine Self* by Meister Eckhart, a 14th century Dominican, Kelley (1977:88) points out that God is transcendent and timeless, and all individual beings, including human beings, are contingent images or reflections of God, the *Divine Self*. God, in comparison to human beings, is considered as *'Pure Spirit'*, or *'Infinite Personality'*; Spirit in this context is not spirit opposed to matter. *'Pure Spirit'* transcends all real distinction and individualization and hence it is identical with God. This is so because in God there is no real distinction or *'otherness'* (Kelley 1977:95). If the human person is to participate in the *'Divine Self'*, that is also *'Pure Spirit'*, it is surmised that it should possess similar attributes to that of God.

Where does the human self have its origin? As suggested by *Dei Filius*, the self is a *composition of spirituality and materiality*, hence, while the it exists in time and is born in time, self, since it can transcend the limits of time, is also *supra-temporal*. Does the fact that the self, being born into time and space, mean that in its causes, it has an existence of itself? In answer to this Kelley (1977:66) explains that insofar as the self is material or corporeal, it “existed before itself in time”. He argues that the self existed in the ancestral cells. The physiochemical and psychic materials, as well as energies utilized by life, since pre-existing times, form part of an evolving process. Kelly argues that when the self is wholly absorbed in the *Divine Self*, “it proceeds from eternity”, and this despite the fact that the self is born in time. According to this insight the self has a prior existence in the transcendent and ultimate *'Divine Selfhood'*, where there is no temporality or individuality. Rahner (1978:40) names this *posterion* knowledge which the human has of God. Kelly (1977:96), following Meister Eckhart, affirms that the self, also known as the spiritual self,
proceeds from eternity. It is a reflection or image of its object - the *Divine Self*. The *spiritual self* and the *Divine Self* are, like fire and heat, bound up with one another. They could be thought of separately, but they cannot be separated. Separated from God, The *human self* separated from God, from which it derives all reality, is meaningless, illusory and nothing.

The *human self*, by means of "direct participation" in the *Divine Self*, becomes a participant in the existence of the *Divine Self*, and takes on its characteristics. According to Fox on Meister Eckhart (1980:75), that which is in God is God, the self that is in the *Divine Self*, is *divine selfhood*. In this sense the materiality and corporeality of the *human self* represents only a minute portion of the individual’s possibilities. This thesis postulates that human self-realization benefit by a person’s full participation in the existence of God. However, the distinct separation in the relationship of the *human self* to the *Divine Self*, as it is expressed in classic Greek thought, prevalent in Western society, does not permit of a theory of self-realization.

Platonism distinguished between the *temporal self*, (not regarded as the principal self), and the *eternal or spiritual self*, (perceived as the truest self). By making this sharp contrast between the soul and the body, Plato claimed that the *true self* alone could attain eternal goodness and truth. Unlike Platonism, Aristotelianism preserves the body/spirit unity of the person and integrates the human being into the material world. While many philosophers would accept Aristotle’s presentation of the human person, Rahner, is of opinion that this view does not do justice to what is essential to the human person, namely its openness to transcendence and unfathomable mystery. Because of its openness to the boundless and the infinite, Rahner (1996:35) describes the human person as *embodied spirit*. Without referring to two separate selves, spiritual and temporal, the mystics like Eckhart claim that the human person’s innermost self is God. This
understanding concurs with the autotheistic sayings of the mystics, and the experiential realization of the self in the mystical state.

While dichotomization classifies the self into various components, the predominating motive of this thesis is to determine whether the total human self is called to realize God’s goodness. In order to make sense of the theory of self-realization in relation to God, the concept self needs its own clarification. Currently the term is widely used in various disciplines and appears by its very nature to be more than just the materiality of being. Since the self does not exist in a vacuum, it is presumed that for its realization each person requires an awareness of a sense of self.

The Western world-view holds a long history of the notion of self which appears to be both vulnerable and open to manipulation. Since no human being by means of contemplation, can perceive the self, it is important therefore to inquire into the concept of ‘self’ as is expounded in various disciplines. This suggests the need for a review of the theory of self in the biological, psychological, spiritual, aesthetic and theological sciences. The first to be examined in this dissertation is a neuro-theological investigation - a contemporary study that is becoming increasingly valuable in the development of a theory of a sense of self.

1.3. A neuro-theological perspective of the self.

Historically the relation between science and religion has often been either ignored or viewed with suspicion. Currently there is a growing inclination among scientists, particularly neurologists, to explore the connection between the brain and religious experiences. It is believed that in deep meditation or prayer, the brain, as it experiences itself at one with all of creation, has no choice but to perceive the self to be endless. This reality is often accompanied by relevant feelings. Neurologists claim that when a person is deeply involved in spiritual
exercises, the region at the top rear of the brain, which weaves sensory data into feeling, has difficulty in finding the borderline between the self and the world.

1.3.1. A neuro-biological sense of self.

There is a contemporary move to look into the biological roots of human understanding. The American neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio (1999:4), on whose work much of this section depends, uncovers the neurobiological foundations of the self, and places self-realization in the light of the ability of the human person to step into consciousness. This "stepping into consciousness" includes the acquisition of a sense of self, which takes into account a transition of the human person from innocence and ignorance to knowingness and selfness. Julian Jaynes (1990:2), a psychologist whose research explores the origin and evolution of consciousness, maintains that it is not a straightforward concept. He points out that "people have been conscious of the problem of consciousness since consciousness began". He claims that consciousness is something that humanity had to learn, in order to respond to certain catastrophes which occurred only 3,000 years ago. This question of consciousness was originally known as a mind-body issue laden with ponderous philosophical solutions. In more recent years scholars such as Damasio, give credence to the biological development of consciousness.

Operating from a biological stance, Damasio (1999:4) defines consciousness as an organism’s awareness of its own self and surroundings. He says consciousness has opened the way in human evolution to a new order of creation, which could not have taken place without it. According to his thesis, consciousness in every sphere of life, has enabled humanity to know sorrow, joy, suffering, pleasure; to sense embarrassment or pride, grieve for lost love and lost life. He
claims that it is consciousness that enables a human being to develop a concern for the personal self, as well as for that of others. And even at its most complex and elaborate level it helps the human person to improve the art of living.

The idea of the sense of self constitutes an indispensable part of the conscious mind, and according to Damasio (1999:9) it is the brain, in the act of knowing, that engenders a sense of self. His findings recognize two different types of consciousness: core-consciousness and extended-consciousness. Core-consciousness, provides the organism with a sense of self at the present moment. The scope of core-consciousness is thus confined to the here and now. Extended-consciousness, which he calls the complex kind of consciousness, consists of many levels and grades. This extended-consciousness provides one with an elaborated sense of self, an identity, which places one at a point in individual, historical time. The individual is richly aware of the lived past and the anticipated future, as well as having a keen cognizance of the surrounding world (Damasio 1999:9).

Damasio describes core-consciousness, as a simple, biological phenomenon with one single, stable level of organization. This organization remains stable across its own duration. This type of consciousness he does not attribute exclusively to human persons, and neither does he claim it to be dependent on conventional memory, working memory, reasoning or language.

Extended-consciousness, on the other hand, is a complex biological phenomenon, with several levels of organization, and it is involved across the lifetime of the organism. Although this extended-consciousness could be present in some non-humans, at a very simple level, it generally attains its highest level exclusively in humans. It does, however, depend on conventional and working memory, and when it attains its human peak, it is also enhanced by language (Damasio 1999:16). It is the extended-consciousness that
facilitates the self-realization process of the human person. It "brings the full construction of being into light" since in "extended-consciousness both the past and the anticipated future are sensed along with the here and now" (Damasio 1999:17).

It can be deduced from Damasio's presentation, that core-consciousness, as a distinctive human phenomenon, forms the foundation on which extended-consciousness is built. Impairments that originate at the level of core-consciousness destabilize the entire edifice of consciousness, and also undermine the quality of extended-consciousness. For consciousness to realize its full splendor, the orderly enhancement of both core and extended-consciousness is required. The sound integration of both kinds of consciousness would be a prerequisite for personal self-realization. Each consciousness corresponds to a kind of self: the core-self, the autobiographical-self and the proto-self.

1.3.2. The kinds of self

Damasio puts forward a tripartite arrangement of the self which he has named the core-self, the autobiographical-self and the proto-self. The first two are intrinsically part of consciousness, while the proto-self is part of pre-consciousness. The three kinds of self are inherently connected and reliant one on the other. What constitute an individual's sense of self are not three separate selves, but one self with different dimensions.

1.3.2.1. The core-self

The sense of self which emerges in core-consciousness, Damasio (1999:174) terms the core-self. He described this core-self as follows:

The core-self inheres in the second order, nonverbal account that occurs whenever an object modifies the proto-self. This core-self can be triggered by any object. The mechanism of production of core-self undergoes minimal
changes across a lifetime and we are conscious of the core-self (Damasio 1999:174).

A characteristic of this self is that it is a transient entity, with the ability to re-create itself ceaselessly for each and every object with which the brain interacts. The autobiographical-self in turn depends on systematized memories of situations in which core-consciousness was involved in the knowing of the most variant characteristics of the person’s (organism’s) life. This includes autobiographical knowledge such as: to whom was I born, where and when was I born, what are my likes and dislikes and how do I react to a problem and to conflict situations (Damasio 1999:17)?

1.3.2.2. The autobiographical-self

The autobiographical-self arises out of the core-self. The following clarification of the concept of the autobiographical-self is proposed by Damasio:

The autobiographical-self is based on autobiographical memory, which is constituted by implicit memories of multiple instances of individual experiences of the past and of the anticipated future. The invariant aspects of an individual’s biography form the basis for autobiographical memory. Autobiographical memory grows continuously with life experience but can be partly remodeled to reflect new experiences. Sets of memories which describe identity and person can be reactivated as a neutral pattern and made explicit as images whenever needed. Each reactivated memory operates as a “something-to-be-known” and generates its own pulse of core-consciousness. The result is the autobiographical-self of which we are conscious (Damasio 1999:174).

The memory, intelligent inferences and language are critical to the generation of the autobiographical-self and to the process of extended-consciousness. These are the deep roots of the self, which include the elaborate self that encompasses identity. They continuously and non-
consciously maintain the body-state within the narrow range and relative stability required for survival.

1.3.2.3. The proto-self

The other identification of the self as put forward by Damasio is the proto-self, which is the preconscious biological self.

The proto-self is an interconnected and temporarily coherent collection of neural patterns which, moment by moment, at multiple levels of the brain, represent the state of the organism. We are not conscious of the proto-self (Damasio 1999:174).

The proto-self, which has no power of perception and holds no knowledge whatsoever, precedes the other selves. The human organism is not conscious of this self, yet it is out of the proto-self that the conscious core-self emerges, and to which the autobiographical-self is connected (Damasio 1999:174).

These three kinds of self are inter-related in the sense that the core-self, which is transient, gives rise to the autobiographical-self, and both these selves are rooted and connected to the proto-self.

1.3.4. The inter-relationship of the different kinds of self.

Despite the ephemeral nature of the core-self, the human organism is equipped with a vast memory capacity, and the fleeting moments of knowledge in which we discover our existence can be committed to memory, properly categorized, and related to other memories that pertain to the past and the anticipated future. The consequence of this complex learning operation is the development of the autobiographical memory. The autobiographical-self emerges out of personal records, and the marvel is that “the autobiographical memory is architecturally connected, neutrally and cognitively speaking, to the non-conscious proto-self and to the emergent and conscious self of each lived instant” (Damasio 1999:173). The stability of the non-conscious
proto-self is constantly reconstructed, is alive at each instant, and the conscious core-self, which emerges from it in the second-order nonverbal account when an object modifies it, is enriched by the accompanying display of memorized and invariant facts: these are regarded as critical events in the autobiography. The basis of the autobiographical-self is stable and invariant, but as a result of experience, its scope changes all the time. The autobiographical-self is more open to refashioning than the core-self which is reproduced again and again. Unlike the core-self, which inheres as a protagonist in the primordial account, and unlike the proto-self, which is a current representation of the state of the organism, the autobiographical-self is based on a concept in the true cognitive and neurological sense of the term (Damasio 1999:173).

The distinction between the core-self and the autobiographical-self reflects the relationship and interaction between the two, but it does not refer to two different persons. The core-self and the autobiographical self do not imply two distinct selves either, but different aspects of the self at work in self-realization. The one presupposes the other, and the one happens because of the other. Self-realization relies on the effective functioning of all three aspects of the human person. The distinction between the Core-self and the Autobiographical is well illustrated in the following table taken from Damasio's study [1999:175].

*Distinguishing Core-self from the Autobiographical-self.*

**THE CORE-SELF**
The transient protagonist of consciousness, generated for any object that provokes the core-consciousness mechanism. Because of the permanent availability of provoking objects, it is continuously generated and thus appears continuous in time. The mechanism of core-self requires the presence of proto-self. The biological essence of the core-self is the representation in a second-order map of the proto-self being modified.
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL-SELF

Based on permanent but dispositional records of core-self experiences. Those records can be activated as neural patterns and turned into explicit mechanism. Because of the permanent availability of provoking objects, it is continuously generated and thus appears continuously in time. The autobiographical-self requires the presence of a core-self to begin its gradual development. The autobiographical-self also requires the mechanism of core-consciousness so that activation of its memories can generate core-consciousness. (Damasio 1999:175).

1.3.5. Self-realization as the call to go beyond extended-consciousness.

While core-consciousness is regarded as the indispensable foundation of consciousness, extended-consciousness is its glory. Damasio describes the extended-consciousness as a prodigious function, which when it reaches its peak, is uniquely human. Extended-consciousness goes beyond the here and now of core-consciousness and while the here and now remains pervasive, it is at the same time flanked by the past and by the anticipated future (Damasio 1999:195). When the extended-consciousness reaches its zenith, its scope may span the entire life of an individual, from the cradle to the future, and it can place the world beside it. In fact extended-consciousness is everything core-consciousness is, only bigger and better. It has the capacity to be aware of a large range of entities i.e. the ability to generate a sense of individual perspective, ownership, and agency, over a larger compass of knowledge than that surveyed in core-consciousness.

Identity and personhood, the two notions that come to mind when one thinks of the self, require an autobiographical memory and its realization in the autobiographical-self. The repository of records in autobiographical-self contains different kinds of memories: those that constitute identity and those that help define one’s personhood (Damasio 1999:222). The concept ‘person’ includes both selfhood and individuality, but it is important to indicate how self differs from individuality and relates to person. *Ordinary self-realization enters into the essence of personhood.* Consequently if self-
realization is understood as the ability to reach the maximum of one's capacity, the extended-consciousness paves the way in the sense that extended-consciousness allows the human organism to reach the very peak of its mental abilities. This includes the ability to create helpful artifacts; to consider the mind of the other; to sense the minds of the collective; to suffer with pain as opposed to just feel pain and react with it; to value life; to construct a sense of good and of evil distinct from pleasure and pain; to sense beauty as opposed to feeling pleasure; to sense discord of feelings and of abstract ideas. Among this remarkable collection of abilities permitted by extended-consciousness, Damasio highlights two facts of particular importance: the ability to rise above the dictates of advantage and disadvantage as imposed by survival-related dispositions, and the critical detection of discords that lead to a search for truth, and a desire to build norms and ideals for behaviour and for the analysis of facts. These two abilities Damasio isolates as the pinnacle of human function perfectly captured by the single word conscience. It is interesting that he places conscience at the pinnacle of human qualities, not consciousness, whether the latter is at the core or at extended levels. While consciousness is necessary, it is not sufficient to reach the current pinnacle by itself (Damasio 1999:230). To have a developed conscience is to have reached the summit of human existence and a chain of precedents marks this.

The "enchainment of precedences" is most intriguing in the sense that the non-conscious neural signaling of an individual organism begets the proto-self which permits the core-self and core-consciousness. This in turn allows for an autobiographical-self, which permits extended-consciousness. At the end of the chain, extended-consciousness permits conscience (Damasio 1999:230). To reach the point of conscience implies knowledge about the self. This self-knowledge is what determines self-realization, and it comes to fruition when a sense of a feeling self is created in a person's mind. Because consciousness
has a homeostatic, regulatory role over human existence, feelings are essential for a person's self-realization.

1.4. Evaluative commentary.

In order to pursue the significance of self-realization it appears imperative to determine the precise nature of consciousness. From a biological perspective it can be argued that consciousness can be defined, neither as a process that is entirely mysterious, nor as a single unitary process. It is believed that a person is not equally conscious at different stages of human development. For example, young children would not be of the same consciousness as healthy adults. It can be inferred from this that consciousness forms part of a maturation process. The neuropsychologists, Kolb and Whishaw (1996:484), explain that while neurological damage can reduce or distort a person’s consciousness, it does not eliminate it totally, except in the cases of coma or death. There are also many functions of the normal person that are not conscious, such as the beating of the heart, the processes of the nervous system as well as sensory processes and motor actions. For these reasons Kolb and Whishaw are of opinion that consciousness involves processes that are different from all of these.

Despite the fast and exciting growth in the understanding of the many systems of the human brain, science has still much to discover about the complex processes of consciousness. At one stage it was considered that the process of language is essential to consciousness. Yet Kolb and Whishaw (1996:485) argue that a person who suffers from aphasia\(^1\), and cannot articulate or understand words, gives every sign of consciousness, being able to communicate feelings and needs in other ways. The same applies to people who are mute; they are

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\(^1\) According to Kevin Walsh, the term aphasia refers to an impairment due to organic brain damage in the reception, manipulation or expression of the symbolic content of language. Such definitions normally exclude perceptual, learning and memory difficulties and purely sensory or motor deficits, unless they specifically involve language symbols (Neuropsychology: a clinical approach p 103).
considered to be conscious and are able to express themselves in various ways. In support of the argument that language is essential for consciousness, biologists were of opinion that the left hemisphere is necessary for consciousness because it is the structural basis of language. Yet patients who have lost the left hemisphere are not described as having lost consciousness. Therefore it can be concluded that neither the left nor the right hemisphere is specific for consciousness. According to Kolb and Whishaw (1996:485), the same holds for the hippocampus and the medial temporal lobe structures involved in memory.

While an understanding of the functions of various brain systems assists towards a conception of consciousness, it is apparent from a biological perspective, that no one structure or function can be equated with consciousness, because consciousness is a composite or product of all cortical areas and their connections. However, Kolb and Whishaw (1986:485) succeeded in identifying some elements of brain functions that can lead to normal consciousness. These include the property of spontaneity of brain functioning by means of a system that allows action in space, in relation to objects, and which supports language, and the division of function between the two hemispheres.

In order to explain consciousness, Kolb and Whishaw (1996:487) point out that the nervous system is designed to move the body through space. The brain, using the process of reaference, lays down a trace of the intended action or movement, which allows the nervous system to ask of itself: "Is what I have done what I intended to do?" According to neuro-psychologists, this process, which allows the nervous system to be 'self-conscious', can be defined as consciousness. The process of reaference allows the individual to distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary. This quality of self-consciousness forms an indispensable part of the self and the nature of the self.
Though it is still not clear how best consciousness can be defined, it is very clear from a neurobiological perspective, that it is a property of the nervous system. It is also evident that the process of consciousness distinguishes real movements from mental objects, and ongoing events from memories, therefore it is essential to the construction of what we believe is reality (Kolb and Wishaw 1996:487).

1.4.1. The limbic system as the seat of the self.

Many scientists have begun to develop a neuro-theological interest in that area of the brain which enables the individual to experience religious feelings and undergo mystical experiences. R Joseph (1996:269), an American neuro-psychiatrist, maintains that it could be argued, that the essence of God, and of the self or the living soul, may be slumbering within the depths of the ancient limbic lobe which is buried in the belly of the brain, hence the expression, the "Kingdom of God is within you". For the self to come to realization implies bringing it to a state of awareness and consciousness.

Because of a growing understanding of the internal organization of the human brain, it can be argued that the seat of the self is the limbic system. The limbic system, that is the amygdala, the hippocampus and the inferior temporal lobe, are all housed in the brain. These together with the right frontal lobe contribute to the religious and emotional experience of the person. It is the amygdala, in conjunction with the temporal lobe and hippocampus, (which are richly inter-connected, and apparently act in concert), that enable the individual to have religious, spiritual and mystical experiences. Intense activation of the temporal lobe, hippocampus and amygdala has been reported to give rise to a host of sexual and religious and spiritual experiences (Joseph 1996:280).

Neurologists have shown how the amygdala, hippocampus and inferior temporal lobe of the brain appear to sub-serve and provide the
foundations for mystical, spiritual and religious experiences. They also say that the spiritual realms associated with the human limbic system and temporal lobe activity include feelings of hyper-religious cosmic wisdom, astral projection and the perception or rather the hallucinations of demons, spirits, and beliefs in demonic or angelic possession (Joseph 1996:269). All peoples, regardless of their religious affiliations, have similar religious and mystical experiences. This is because the limbic system and the brain are both organized in a similar way in all persons. Jung (1964) refers to these as ‘archetypes’: inborn tendencies to produce, create, dream of, and be responsible, in a similar manner to specific images, symbols and experiences. This commonality in ‘religious’ or ‘archetypal’ experience includes the capacity to experience ‘God’ as well as the many vestiges or incarnations of what has been referred to as the personal soul or self (Joseph 1996:269). It is this understanding that leads neurologists to say that the essence of God, or the self, is buried deep within the brain.

Since no one knows at which point humans first became aware of God, this capacity to experience God, says Joseph (1996:274), forms part of an evolutionary process of human development. Given the fact, according to Joseph, that there are neurons that fire selectively to specific geometric visual shapes, and exist largely within the inferior temporal lobe, it could be assumed that “mystical religious feeling”, neurons or neural networks, had been evolved 100,000 years ago. These neurons in the amygdala and inferior temporal lobe are also multi-modally responsive and sub-serve almost all aspects of emotion, including religious feeling. Therefore it is possible for faces and geometric symbols to become infused with emotional, mystical and religious significance. The amygdala enables the individual to experience emotions such as love and religious rapture, as well as ecstasy associated with orgasm (Joseph 1996:279).

The development of the neuronal spiritual, mystical religious capacity is, over countless generations, the consequence of repeated, and
exceedingly intense, perceptual and emotional experiences with God. After repeated experiences under the guidance of God, homo sapiens evolved these neurons to enable her/him to perceive and respond to spiritual messages (Joseph 1996:307). It is believed that no true scientist would rule out such a possibility. The ability to experience God and the spiritually sublime is obviously an inherited 'limbic' trait that is invariably expressed by different individuals. Those who possessed religious and spiritual capabilities, passed these on to the next generation. It could be argued that mystical images, archetypes and spiritual feeling have, like dreams, always been internally generated. The ability to experience God has no doubt assisted in the survival of the human self over the centuries (Joseph 1996:307).

Given the role of the temporal lobe and limbic system in the generation of these spiritual feeling states, it could be argued (at least at the level of metaphor) that the limbic system may well be the seat of the soul (the self), or it could serve as the transmitter to God, and as intimated earlier the understanding that the "Kingdom of God is within you" (Joseph 1996:319). It can therefore be deduced that to be realized, the self needs to be brought to a point of consciousness. As stated by Damasio, and discussed earlier in this thesis, to actualize the true self demands transcendence even of extended-consciousness.

It is interesting to note that Damasio regards the development of the conscience as the pinnacle of human development, since in German theology the conscience is perceived as the "Treffpunkt": the place where God and humanity encounter each other.

Once the mystery of consciousness has been penetrated and transcended, the sense of self recognized, and the point of conscience reached, the whole process takes on theological and philosophical proportions. The element of conscience becomes important later when the philosopher, Martin Heidegger, discussing the self, claims that conscience, in the effort towards its own self-realization, bids the self
face its own inner capacity. Here the processes of reasoning and decision-making form part of the most secret core of the human being. At this point the person is alone with the Alone whose 'voice' echoes in the inner depths. *Conscience provides knowledge about the self, and requires a disposition of quiet interiority that enables the person to be sufficiently attentive to the inner self.*

Having laid the neurobiological foundation for the understanding of the self and established the importance of the mind in the development of the self, it seems appropriate to consider the psychological self. The psychological insights complement the biological conclusions by focusing on the consciousness of the psyche. Certain questions continue demand clear answers. Is the self a structure of the mind, determined by its biological drives? Does the self exist only in the transcendence of pure consciousness, or is it structured in time and space? The next section will endeavour to establish the identity of the self before the notion of self-realization can be explored.

1.5. Psychological imprints of the self.

Comprehensively speaking the *psychological self* is a puzzling entity and very difficult to accommodate in a coherent definition. Despite the familiar use of the term in psychological circles, there is an air of confusion around the term psychological self, which expresses so many diverse connotations and associations. For this reason it is virtually impossible to provide one single definition which will do justice to all the uses connected with the term 'self'. This precise point is made apparent in the eventual statement of Heinz Kohut, an American humanistic psychoanalyst, who is perhaps one of the most widely recognized 20th century scholars in the field of self-psychology. In the following statement he indicates that in his judgment that the term 'self' is most elusive and simply not definable:

"The self... is not knowable in its essence ... we cannot, by introspection
and empathy, penetrate to the self *per se*; only its introspectively or emphatically perceived psychological manifestations are open to us. Demands for an exact definition of the nature of the self disregard the fact that the 'self' is not a concept of abstract science, but a generalization derived from empirical data" (Kohut 1977:310-311).

Dermot A. Lane (1981:10), an Irish theologian, makes the useful psychological statement that the human person does not come into the world with a readymade self. Rather one enters life with a *capacity* to become, and is shaped by the experiences of one's reality. He says that it is through different experiences that the emergence of the self, self-consciousness and personal identity takes place. Kohut (1977:85) would affirm Lane's views, claiming that the self is an evolving entity and does not function in isolation. He proposes that a healthy self is one that survives and grows psychologically in "an empathic-responsive human milieu". This strong self he describes as complete and independently creative because it is capable of drawing upon and contributing to the matrix of life. Kohut (1978:184) emphasizes, that just as the body depends on an optimal amount of oxygen in the atmosphere, so the self relies on a supportive milieu. He says the "self is a comparatively experience-near-abstraction" or concept. Reflecting on Kohut's theory, O'Connor (1995:188), a South African Dominican theologian, describes the self as a dependent entity governed by its own internal drives, but it is at times also subject to various external forces against which it must put up defenses. In other words the self is a *continuous and open-ended unfinished entity, always in a state of development, always both changing, and being in a position to change*.

Western spiritual and psychological traditions, imbued with individualism and narcissism, have constructed some of the external forces which impede inquiry into the self. In order to facilitate an exploration of the self, so that it can be freed from false identities and materialistic structures, it may be necessary to deconstruct the ego. This would make possible a realistic appreciation of the true nature of
the self.

1.5.1. The individualized self of Western Culture.

In contemporary Western culture one of the most salient features of the ‘self’ is that it is driven by self-centredness. This in turn advocates, in the negative sense, self-fulfilment, self-gratification, self-affirmation and indeed self-realization. In such a culture the self is being isolated and ‘individuated’, and is always in danger of being depersonalized and enslaved by futility. The identity of the human person is equated with individual personhood, while relationship with God and other human persons is often stifled by negative self-orientation. Kohut (1978:308) is of the opinion that this prevailing value system captured in Western individualism, assumes that a person’s life “from childhood to adulthood is a move forward from a position of helplessness, dependence and shameful clinging to a position of power, independence and proud autonomy”. He has, however, consistently rejected the view that the self as an entity is complete within itself. He claims that the quality of care expressed towards a child in its early stages, provides the basic pattern of the self which sometimes needs to continue throughout life.

This highly personalized ‘self’ of the Western tradition is connected with the individual person and forms part of the structure of the personality. This individualized self, which is the predominant inner psychological organization of the person, is often competitive in its individualistic and ongoing process of self-creation and the search for self-identity. In this environment the term ‘self’ refers to a unique human person, endowed with human qualities that render one person distinguishable from another. Often it appears that the self represents the sum total of everything that could be called “mine”.

The Swiss psychiatrist, Carl Jung (1953:137), also emphasizes the complexity of the ‘self’, and defines it as the totality or the wholeness
of the entire psyche. Like Kohut he also claims that the self is not a static entity, but is always in the process of becoming. Jung’s self comprises infinitely more than mere ego: in fact he goes even further by equating the self with the soul, while the ego is the content of the soul. This latter he defines as that which is known to the human person. The self is the all-embracing totality of both the consciousness and unconsciousness of the psyche. Jung understands self-realization or individuation, as the development of the self, its explicit unfolding into individual personality, which is the ultimate goal of self-realization.

The process of individuation, is defined by Jung as the ‘coming-to-be” of the self, leading it into a broad and collective relationship with others. However Jung (1954:474) maintains that the total self, since it is the “uniting symbol which epitomizes the total union of opposites”, can only be described in antinomial terms (Jung 1959: 115). In other words it does not abide by the normal rules and regulations. The complex relation between antinomial terms such as consciousness and unconsciousness, subject and object, nature and spirit, the finite and the infinite, determine the structure and dynamics of the quest for the self. It is this dialectical tension that generates the emergence of the self as a complex whole or a dialectically self-articulating totality.

1.5.2. The conscious and unconscious self.

Meckel and Moore’s (1992:132) reflection on Jung’s (1968:3-7) theory of the self, explains the psychological arrangement of the human person in clear distinct terms. The ‘I’ of the human person, (also known as the ‘ego’) constitutes the centre of the field of consciousness. The ‘Self’ consists of both the field of consciousness and the field of unconsciousness. The totality of the psyche, that is the entire personality of the individual, consists of the Self, which includes the ego, which grows out of the unconscious, but is very limited and small in comparison with the whole, boundless psyche. According to this
understanding, the ego accounts for half of the Self, that is, only the consciousness of the ego is known to itself, while the unconscious field of the self remains unknown. To talk about "self-consciousness" in this context, is really to talk about "I-consciousness".

Jung claims that the truly realized "Self" is normally the "True Self" or the "True Being" of the person. The puzzling question is, what determines the True Self, and particularly in the framework of an ordinary dualistic ego consciousness, how can a person's "True Self" or "True Being" be realized? Can the Self be clearly realized according to Jungian psychology if it remains as something unknown to the ego? In order to comprehend the process of self-realization, it is necessary to go still deeper into the understanding of the Self or True Self.

As indicated above, Jung claims that the "Self" is the total personality which cannot be fully known since it embraces both individual consciousness and unconsciousness. The unconscious contains the personal or individual unconscious, the content of which has never been consciously known. This personal unconscious has the capacity to present itself to consciousness. Behind this personal unconscious is the collective unconscious, which is the universal source of all conscious life and the common heritage of all humanity. This collective unconscious consists of the pre-existent or archetypes, and it gives definite form to certain psychic contents. In the depth of this collective unconscious there are no individual or cultural differences, no separation. It is regarded as the realm of primordial unity, of non-duality through which each person is connected with the rest of humanity (Jung 1991: 276). The ego normally perceives the Self as something inwardly, but not externally, beyond. In the light of this it can be argued that the unconscious is unknown. However, according to Jung, if self-realization is to occur there is an imperative need to overcome the collective unconsciousness.

Various psychologists also accept this theory of the True Self. For
example Charles Whitfield (1993:XVII), an American physician and psychotherapist, describes the *inner life of a person* as the self. The self, he says, consists of feelings, thoughts, needs and wants, as well as values, hopes and dreams, and these are just some of the major aspects of a person's True Self. He says that: "Living out of the Authentic Self is what facilitates growth and when the True Self is betrayed, human integrity and wholeness suffers" (Whitfield 1993: XVIII). Common terms in Western psychological literature are, "True Self", "Real Self", "Inner Self" the "Deepest Self", the "Ideal Self" "Private Self" and "Public Self". By contrast such terms as the "False Self" or "Co-dependent Self", are also common. Instead of providing a psychological explanation of what precisely the "self" really is, the "True Self" is often described in terms of how it behaves; that it is "spontaneous, expansive, loving, giving and communicating" (Whitfield 1987:10).

1.5.3. The self-in-process.

The HSRC (1977:15) research project on self-realization has formulated a very comprehensive description of the nature of the self. It is claimed that in a person the distinctive nature of the self emerges as a totality of somatic, psychic and spiritual qualities. The meaning and significance attached to the concept "self" is based on the individual's personal involvement and active participation in the exercising of personal choices, initiatives, sharing and involvement (HSRC 1977:16). The emphasis here is also on the understanding that the self is not ready-made, but is in the making all the time, and it is very important to note that the intention behind this self-making is for the person to become an individual, though not in isolation. From an African perspective the human self is dependent for selfhood on other selves, and this is a form of dependence that the human person will never transcend. The search for self-identity, through various activities and relationships, forms part of an exploration and realization of personal, inner potential.
For Carl Rogers (1960:200) the *self is a synonym for personality*, while Jung (1958:par 391) conceptualized the self as the ‘agency’ within the psyche moving the personality to maturity and completion. The search for self-identity, through various activities and relationships, forms part of an exploration and realization of personal, *inner potential*. In common with Maslow, Rogers (1960:200) stresses the importance of self-realization and maintains that while the substance of the self consists of a relatively stable pattern of integrated perceptions, it is nevertheless flexible and changeable. However the “ideal self” is that which the individual would most like to be, or live by. In the case of a psychologically healthy person the ideal self is more or less realistic, attainable and in harmony with the self-concept. But according to Rogers (1960:200), in the case of psychologically unhealthy person, the opposite is true. In this case the ideal self, which reveals the characteristics and ideals towards which the individual strives, provides valuable guidelines for growth and development.

It is recognized that the above statements do not provide one with the *essence* of what constitutes the self, but with ideal secular expressions of the nature of self. The individualized self provides no transparent opening to the realm of the sacred otherness; it does not act even as a signpost which points to such a realm. This Western individualized self, that is competitive and materialistic by nature, does not provide any significant meaning to life. In many respects it is in contrast with the understanding of the self as experienced in Eastern cultures, where the psychological tradition gives very little prominence to the individualized self. In contrast the concept of self is grounded firmly in a religious tradition, the primary aim of which is to *transcend the notion of an isolated individual self*.

1.5.4. The familial self of Eastern Culture.

In the Eastern psychological tradition, the understanding of the self is
experienced at various levels of consciousness. Differentiation is also made between the 'Real Self' and 'False Self', but not in accordance with the Western tradition. The 'Real Self' is a permanent, unchanging basis within the personality structure, while the 'False Self' is temporary and of a transient nature. It can, however, be mistaken for the 'Real Self', which is considered as indescribable. It can only be encountered on higher levels of consciousness, invariably through cognitive experiences (Meyer, Moore and Viljoen 1997:595).

In his research, Allan Roland (1988:6), an American psychologist with interest in Eastern religions, contrasts the familial self of the East with the individualized self-concept of the West. He presents as the ultimate aim of the Eastern tradition, each individual's endeavour to transcend the notion of self so as to identify with an ultimate reality. The psychological interest in the self is in relation with other human beings. It is situated within society, within nature and the cosmos. However, in Western psychology the 'I', or 'Self', or 'ego', is rooted in exclusivity and is considered to be the focal point of the human person. Consequently it must be preserved, extended and actualized at all cost. The real struggle in the Eastern tradition of Hinduism, is the individual's struggle to attain to his or her ultimate destiny through transcending the self, or even, as in Buddhism, the renunciation of 'self'. Roland maintains that the conceptualized self is a more central idea in Eastern psychology. There is also an emphasis on the familial self, perceived as a we-centred self that is manifested in a two-way symbiotic interpersonal relationship, and the spiritual self, which is manifested in transcendent relationships.

It is significant that from the Eastern perspective, if self-realization is to occur, the individual must distinguish clearly between the permanent (true), and the impermanent (false) self. This distinction is much more than a cognitive awareness. Part of the process of self-realization in the Eastern context is to transcend the notion of an isolated, individual self, and preparing for self-realization implies the
relinquishing of emotional investment in material possessions. According to this perspective, if an individual continues to strive for personal success, power and fame, his/her existence remains dominated by the pursuit of external goals. It is understood that enduring peace and tranquility are to be found in the deepest regime of inner subjectivity, not in material objects. A critical investigation into the real nature of the self helps the individual to attain self-realization, the consequence of which is that the person is no longer directed or determined by egoistic desires, but has stripped away the sense of ‘mineness’ (Meyer, Moore, and Viljoen 1997:595).

The Eastern experiences of the self and the method of self-realization flow from a religious, philosophical and psychological tradition, and are aimed at transforming the life of the individual. This experience is heavily based on the cultivation of certain virtues, including purity of mind and heart brought about by continuous self-reflection. Both the Eastern and Western traditions, however, do perceive the self as the centre of life.

1.6. Evaluative commentary.

Despite the various interpretations of the nature of the self, what is clear from the above that it is central to the psychological universe. A normal healthy self is not inexorably torn between its ambitions and its ideals, its interests and values. Between these two poles lies an intermediate area of skills and talents. These form an uninterrupted tension that mediates between the drive and the ambition, the guidance and the ideals. Kohut (1997:97) places the self at the centre of the psychological universe where it possesses wholeness and a vitality of its own. Despite the fact that the human body and mind, the character and personality, change as a result of on-going development, Kohut (1977:179) claims that the underlying self remains the same. The self, the centre for organizing activities, is linked with this, and arising out of being a self, is the sense of
freedom and the capacity to take the initiative (Kohut 1984:99). The self is, however, more than the drives, defenses and abilities that are located within itself. Even though these mechanisms constitute the self, they should be considered as manifestations of a greater whole. In his reflection on Kohut, Connor (1995:196) asserts that an elaborate theory is not necessary in order to gain an understanding of the self. Sufficient in the beginning will be some reflection on one’s own experience, as well as on that of others.

In assessing the strength, harmony and cohesion of the self, two complementary approaches have to be considered. The first is the self as the centre of one’s life and involvement, and the second the self as the enduring structure of that which is experienced. The ability of a person to reflect on his/her life is a way of becoming self-aware, and in this sense, says Kohut (1977:xv, 1978:585), the self can be understood as the “content of the mental apparatus... not one of the agencies of the mind”. In other words, according to O’Connor (1995:197), if the mind is considered as an apparatus or mechanism, the self is not like an ability or a drive, but rather an achievement, elaborated by the working of the apparatus, and self-awareness is a further elaboration.

Weakness and distractions incurred in the structuring of the self undermine and distort the individual’s approach to life, and to human involvement. Since the very ability to bring such weaknesses and distortions to awareness is weakened and distorted, they cannot easily be averted. If that is the case, a person can never entirely escape in order to grasp the self as a whole, and to know the reality of his/her real self (Connor 1995:197).

As in the neurobiological presentation of the self, Kohut (1984:4-5) also attributes a core to the self. He views his “bipolar self” as the essence, or the core-self. From Kohut’s definition it appears that he views the bipolar self as a psychic structure. A.H.Almaas (1996:481)
an American psychologist and spiritual writer, reflecting on Kohut’s theory, deduces that this bipolar self is both a psychic structure and a metapsychological concept, built by the psychic processes. The bipolar self of Kohut is also a segment of the actual self, which he presents as a functioning self, hence giving the self a functional property. He maintains that the most significant developmental accomplishment of the healthy self is that it develops a centre that becomes its most important sector. This centre is the bipolar self that develops in early childhood from the original primitive centre, known as the nuclear self. Almaas (1996:80) observes that Kohut’s healthy self appears limited in that he confines the centre of self to actions and accomplishments which form an essential part of narcissistic personalities. Kohut defines the healthy self as an inner tension between ambitions and ideals. This is to perceive the self as fundamentally narcissistic. If this is the case, does it imply that self-realization is essentially a narcissistic process? Almaas is of opinion that authentic self-realization cannot form part of pathological narcissism.

The psychological development of our potential for self-understanding has not really penetrated the question of the self in a way that would satisfy the quest of either the philosopher or the mystic. This territory has been explored by both existential and some aspects of transpersonal psychology. This exploration has resulted in a certain degree of integration of philosophical and spiritual understanding with that of psychology. In general however, psychological theory is limited by its conception of the self.

The question of the self in psychological terms clamours for further refinement and clarification. However, to clarify exclusively in psychological terms, the entire nature of self, would be insufficient. Hence the idea of finding the self in the area of the mind that is intimately connected with the psyche, links up well with the concept of the development of the philosophical-self. This brings the research
to the point of reflection on the self from a philosophical perspective.

1.7. The Self as Spirit-in-the-world – a philosophical perspective.

In common with practitioners in other disciplines, philosophers are not excluded from the search towards an understanding of the concept ‘self’. Indeed this concept has long been an intriguing topic in philosophical debate. However, for the purposes of this research the discussion will be strictly limited to what is relevant to the present thesis. Catholic philosophers and theologians most notably Josef Marechal, Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, who while accepting the basic principles of Thomistic philosophy, have explored the further implication of these principles by applying the method of transcendental reflection initiated by G.W.F. Hegel and Immanuel Kant, and developed by Martin Heidegger. Rahner (1978:42) contends that it is difficult to define the human person, because definitions set limits and one characteristic of the human self is that it reaches out beyond limits to the boundless horizon of being. He describes the human person as “embodied spirit”. “Spirit” here means a self-conscious subject open to transcendence. This implies that the human self is open to the boundless, the infinite, while “embodied” means that the human person is not merely a body, but is a body being. Rahner in fact describes the human person as ‘spirit-in-the-world’ and here too ‘spirit’ denotes the capacity for transcendence. “In-the-world” indicates that it is by means of contact with the material world that the human spirit, by following its inner dynamism, reaches out to transcendent mystery. The human self as embodied spirit, lives in a world that is historical and in the process of becoming. It is not limited in its knowledge to concrete objects of sense experience, but is capable of reaching out to a boundless horizon of possible being. The human self reveals its orientation to the boundless, to the infinite. It reveals the capacity for transcendence and this is particularly important when the human self searches for meaning and ultimate value, as well as for an encounter with God.
While the philosophical theories of both G.W.F. Hegel and Martin Heidegger may enjoy prominence in this thesis, it is not the intention to provide a detailed account of their work, but to extract what is relevant for the actual elucidation of the problem. It must also be understood that the theories of both Hegel and Heidegger form the foundation of the theological stance of Karl Rahner’s understanding of the self and self-realization.

1.7.1. The Self as Spirit

In German philosophy, with its Hegelian emphasis on self-consciousness and subject-object dichotomy, the concept ‘self’ is described by Hegel, a philosophical idealist, as the locus of a number of faculties, capacities, states or activities. The facts that human beings can perceive, desire, remember, feel and think about are attributes that belong to the “Self”. According to Hegel’s speculative insights, as interpreted by Mann and Kreyche (1966: 225), the ‘self’ is a complex whole, and constitutes the middle term between the correlative concepts of the Absolute and self-realization. The ultimate purpose of the human self is self-realization, and in Hegel opinion, this occurs in the realm of the Spirit and in Freedom. He explains that our universal consciousness consists of two realms: that of Nature and of Spirit, and these two realms converge and unite in Human Nature. The realm of the Spirit is all-comprehensive and includes everything that has ever interested and ever will interest humanity. The human person is active in the realm of the spirit and the essence of the Spirit is Freedom, since all the properties of the Spirit exist only through Freedom.

There are compelling similarities in the psychological and philosophical approaches to the self. The concepts are similar, though expressed in terminologies relevant to each discipline. What Jung calls the Self; Hegel terms the Spirit. As with the psychological view,
Hegel (1973:397) also states that the self is not static, but is in the process of becoming. In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel (1969:583) does not speak in terms of the 'Self', but the 'Concept'. The Concept is a complex whole that is a dialectically self-articulating totality, which manifests itself through the differentiation or particularization of its universal or self-identical essence into the actual individual, which is its ground. The Concept “when it has developed into a concrete existence that is itself free, is none other than the 'I' or ‘pure self-consciousness’ (Hegel: 1969:583). It is precisely this 'I' or pure self-consciousness that constitutes the individual personality or the Self. The latter is the dialectical unity of consciousness and unconsciousness, ego and archetype. As Self, the Concept “embraces the contradiction of simplicity and difference, and therefore its own restless nature impels it to actualize itself to unfold into actuality”.

In Sean Kelly's (1993:30) study of Hegel the concrete 'Concept' of self is individual personality in the form of Self, and Idea is the absolute content of the Concept. He says that the conceptual form of the Absolute remains that of the Self. The Absolute is in fact the Self. Since knowledge of the self is presupposed in every act of consciousness, Hegel is convinced that the possibility of knowing oneself is real, and he claims therefore that it is the task of each philosopher to make explicit what remains merely implicit for the unreflective consciousness. While this possibility is real, Hegel (1964) states in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* that one achieves true freedom only through responsible interrelationship with others. This progressive development of interrelated community is what Hegel in fact calls Spirit, a term intentionally borrowed from Christian theology. According to this theory, no one can become truly a 'self' in isolation, but only in mutual and reciprocal association with others. No individual self is an absolute, but is relative to another in such a way that the totality of the interrelationship constitutes the only Absolute, namely 'Spirit'. It is clear that one does not find oneself in oneself, but in relation to others. Hegel’s view can be summed up as
follows: the self exists only insofar as it is in relation to other selves, or a community of selves.

The relationship that constitutes a self in freedom is mutual, bilateral or even multilateral. This does not imply that others are the means of one’s development as a self. This is a mutual inter-dependence, one person upon another, for their respective growth in freedom and selfhood. Hegel (1964:300-438) in terms of his dialectic of opposites, describes at length the growth of the self, which occurs in interrelatedness. For him it is important to become aware of what draws people together rather than what separates them. This implies that people grow in consciousness in order to become more conscious of self, and the latter can be brought to fruition only in mutual recognition. The difference between interacting selves cannot be eliminated entirely, but ought to be recognized, and once recognized, can be relativised to the benefit of the community.

Hegel's (1964:300-438) makes it clear that since the self is realized in a community of selves, the individual’s self-realization cannot be achieved in isolation from the community. The individual selves in turn enrich this community of selves termed the Spirit, or the Greater Self. To search for the realization of the individual on a level of individual activity, is to look for the unattainable. It is only on a level of ‘spiritual’ activity or community that authentic individuality makes sense. What is at stake here is an “activity of each in all, the essence which is the essence of all essences, spiritual essence”.

According to Lauer (1993:178) in his study on Hegel, self-realization is the movement of becoming “spirit”, and evident in the movement of becoming a ‘person of spirit’ is the movement whereby spirit becomes conscious of itself. It is no longer a question of the individual’s need of others in order to realize itself, but it is the need for the individual to be more than individual so as to be a thoroughly meaningful Communal Spirit. Spirit is the self of which consciousness is
conscious, and Spirit is truly spirit when it is the spirit of community (Hegel 1964:314-459). According to this view a person finds his or her true self to the extent that he or she overcomes narrow concentration on self. Selfhood is not found in isolation, but in a very complex diversified and interrelational context. The individual self is thus incorporated into a community self – the Greater Self.

The pervasive idea that the human person is self-realized only in freedom is also evident in the work of Hegel. While matter has its substance outside of itself, Spirit is Being-within-itself. The latter has a self-contained existence and a free Spirit is recognized in self-knowing truth. This, Hegel claims, is precisely what Freedom is: it is the self-contained existence of Spirit which is self-consciousness. The human person is free and Freedom of Spirit constitutes the very essence of human nature. The Spirit’s consciousness of its freedom, as well as the final purpose of the world, is in the very realization of freedom. According to Mann and Kreyche (1966:225), freedom alone is the purpose which realizes and fulfils itself, and self-realization is none other than the process of bringing the self to consciousness and recognition.

1.7.2. The self as “Pure thought”.

In his Phenomenology of Spirit (1964) Hegel says the Self as Spirit is often expressed in the element of pure thought. He claims that only the mind is real and he presents it as a system of individuals that are actively developing their potentialities by embodying them in complex forms. As previously determined, Hegel presents freedom as a fundamental feature of the mind, and since nothing that is finite can be wholly free, the mind is therefore understood as the only reality that is infinite. To be free implies being conscious of what one is doing, hence the self-consciousness of the infinite mind, and the most

\[2\text{ Self-realization in freedom proves to be a pervasive motive as the research of the thesis unfolds.}\]
notable element in self-consciousness is pure thought. Hegel teaches that in religion the human self gains knowledge and consciousness of the Absolute Being, and in Christianity the human and divine are no longer rendered apart, as God is seen to be present in the world (Edward 1967:439).

Inwood (1983:86) points out that Hegel presents the ability to think, which distinguishes the human person from the animals, as an activity carried out only by the human self. Inwood (1983:35) also notes that according to Hegel, the individual, in order to be an "I" or a "Self", must be aware of herself as an "I". And since the Hegelian concept defines "self" as pure thought, this is essentially involved in one's being as a self or an 'I'.

Developing Hegel's concept of self, Lauer (1993:111) states that the individual becomes aware, or conscious of the self, not by intuition, but by means of pure thought. He consequently identifies the 'self' with the self's pure thoughts. Self-knowledge, an essential prerequisite for any form of knowing, is not limited to knowing the 'self'. Of equal necessity is to know what is other than the self. Hegel says that the fuller sense of self is obtained when the self is aware of itself in relation to another self. The self possesses the pure power of self-making. Even in its positive pristine origins, the human self is dependent for selfhood on other selves. Hegel (1955:217) claims that one will never transcend one's dependence. The self is what it does; that the self is a self-constituting process (Frackenheim 1967:36).

Hegel asserts that it is the Spirit that gives substance to the self and forms its self-conscious identity and its true being. Pure insight embraces nothing but the self which, by means of pure thought, comes to grips with itself in its authentic selfhood. The self, says Hegel (1955:217), realizes itself in relation to nature, to other similar selves, and to the Ultimate Being of the World. Awareness of the self or self-consciousness is truly realized only when it is universal self-
consciousness, when consciousness is certain of itself throughout all of reality. His claim is that self-consciousness achieves satisfaction only in another self-consciousness, and as no one exists in isolation, so too no one in isolation has a sense of self. The search for the self goes beyond terrestrial boundaries as, according to Hegel, the reality of the human person is infinite, and finds its total consummation in divine self-recognition in human self-consciousness. The religious-self in its personal self-understanding remains humanly receptive to the divine. Even though human selfhood lays claim to an infinite dimension, it does not dissipate its finite humanity. This point is brought out very clearly in Martin Heidegger search for an understanding of Being. His conclusion is that the human person becomes an authentic being only by transcending the reality of the self. This point becomes apparent in the next section that examines the self as authentic “being-in-the-world”.

1.7.3. Self as ‘authentic being’ in the world.

The philosopher, Martin Heidegger, a central figure in contemporary existentialist thought, believes that it is the vocation of the human person to ask the all-important questions. His understanding of the Self becomes apparent in his quest for the “meaning of being”. Heidegger does not speak of the human being or person. Instead he employs the term Dasein or “being-in-the-world”: to be in existence. The concept of being presents a deep problem and constitutes the genesis of all philosophy. It goes beyond mere psychoanalytic and empirical verifications of propositions.

Dasein or being-in-the-world is defined as ‘human existent’ and the place through which Being illumines (Langan 1996:269). In a study of Heidegger, the Eastern philosopher, Pathak (1974:27) explains Dasein as the possibility to stand in openness of Being; the possibility of a ‘there’, or ‘openness’ of Being-in-the-world. In this sense the human person is distinguished from other creatures by this quality of open-
standing. *Dasein*, according to Heidegger, is not a substance, a subject, or a person, rather it is the term for human existence. *Dasein* is not complete in itself as it is continually ‘more’ than it is factually. But it is never more than that which it is factually, because its potentiality-for-being belongs to its facticity (Heidegger 1962:185). Therefore Being is open to actualizing its own potentiality. The Self by being engaged in everyday situations, is the basic determinant of *Dasein*. This realization of being depends not only on appropriate conditions, but also on whether the being wishes, and has the opportunity, to actualize abilities. Edward (1967:260) points out that according to Heidegger's philosophical anthropology, the human being can be viewed from three fundamental aspects constituting one internally unified structure. These are: *facticity, existentiality and forfeiture*.

Edward defines *facticity* in relation to the human being in a world of things, but as the maker of things the human person is limited. *Existentiality* refers to the act of appropriation whereby the human being makes the world and what it consists of his or her own. It also pertains to the inner personal existence of what the human being is designated to become, and in this sense it exists in anticipation of its own possibilities. For this reason the human, despite the fact that it never reaches the boundaries of transcendence, is always reaching beyond itself. *Forfeiture* implies that the human being, in its own self-projection and self-transcendence, is at once understood in its world, and becomes itself. In Heidegger's terminology, forfeiture has an 'ontological' meaning in the sense that, because of the multiplicity of beings around one, one forgets “Being” itself. In practical terms it means that by attending daily to a multiplicity of things and people, one's real self becomes forgotten. In this context the human being becomes alienated from the central task of becoming its authentic self. The integral self is hidden by daily events and moods. This double tension with which the human being lives, according to Edward (1967:460), constitutes the self, and that is why Heidegger describes
the human being as free, yet enslaved, or in bondage. The tension between bondage and freedom is what keeps the human being in bondage. On the other hand freedom provides a creative tension between the present moment and the future.

As the person is constantly in flight from this distracted real-life situation, the Heideggerian question is: does one ever turn back to face one’s own being with honesty and directness? Wholeness in Heidegger’s terms, explains Edward (1967:260), comes to the human being when understanding of the self takes place in its entirety. He is of the opinion that the only mood that calls the human being from self-betrayal to self-knowledge is the mood of dread, which he terms angst. This mood occurs when the human being, in isolation, rises from forfeiture to authenticity. The most authentic moment of isolation is when a being is faced with death. He maintains that the human being in its totality is “being-to-death”, and death is uniquely personal and authentic because it is real to the self.

As is the case of the neurobiological presentation of the self, Heidegger also depicts the conscience as the entity that calls the self to itself. Conscience, he believes, is expressed in and through dread, and it calls the self out of forfeiture to authenticity. This takes place only through the acknowledgement that this self, which one ought to become, has been given to the human being. Thus the self in conscience, rather than forgetting itself in trivial pursuits, bids itself transcend facticity, and face its own inner capacity. The individual must make her own situation vitally personal rather than allow it to inflict itself on her. In this sense the person, by determining her own destiny, possesses the potential to realize her self. According to Heidegger, in realizing itself, the self one moves out of the future through the past into the present. Self-realization takes place in freedom, and conscience is the voice that calls the human being to its freedom.
L. A. Sass (1988:250) points out that for Heidegger the “true locus of selfhood is not seen as existing behind the public persona, nor as a point of consciousness set back at a remove from the objects of experience”. Self and world are not two entities or forms of being, but basic determinants of the situation of Being-in-the-world, which is what we have continually, before and around us. Everything about us is interlocked with everything else. The human person achieves self-knowledge and self-understanding in relation to others, and this is where self-realization occurs. Heidegger (1962:/1979) argues that the fundamental mode of existence of the self or being is not a detached knowing, but an engaged activity. He claims “everydayness” is not just a possible mode of existence, but an everyday engagement lived pre-reflectively. It is both the primordial foundation of and key to an understanding of all other modes. Human authenticity is what makes for human self-realization, and this implies being true to one’s inner self.

1.8. Evaluative commentary

While psychologists and philosophers have paid considerable attention to the concept of self and found it a cause of much complexity and differences of opinion, Lonergan (1972:105) saw this difficulty as rooted in a failure to understand the precise nature of conscious subjectivity as both cognitive and constitutive. The self, he claims, is constituted both by consciousness, and through the concrete specifics of its own personal history which has meaning and value. As a personal reality the self is also constituted by a radical innate drive to move “beyond itself” for meaning and value, and especially in reaching out to others in love. In this sense the self has an innate drive towards self-realization and this feature is peculiar only to the true self. He also differentiates between the true self and the false self. The true self exists in a drive for self-transcendence, whereas the false self fails to achieve self-transcendence. This is expressed in the way in which the individual experiences self-love.
Loving oneself as an object leads to selfishness, whereas loving oneself as subject happens only by loving others. This latter type of loving is inherently beneficial for the individual concerned and constitutes the authentication of the human’s capacity for self-realization. In Matthew 16:24 Jesus makes clear that anyone who wants to be His follower should renounce self and take up the cross and follow Him. The self that Jesus refers to is not the true self as subject, but the false self as object. It is ego-centric self-interest that is the obstacle to self-transcending the love of self and others. Every self has a fundamental desire for self-transcendence\(^3\), that is the desire for relationship with reality, both human and divine. In Lonergan’s (1972:109) view, self-transcendence requires a self that is independent, possessing cognitive and affective powers necessary to move beyond itself in realistic knowing, responsible decision-making and generous loving. The self, constituted by consciousness, is rooted in a loving full reality of the whole person, which includes an understanding of the body and a grasp of the emotions. The drive for self-transcendence is likewise rooted in images that trigger intelligent questioning and spontaneous empathy that sparks interpersonal love. The drive for self-transcendence, described by Lonergan, is a truly radical drive that heuristically unifies the self in its dynamism and integrates it in its self-realization. As the drive for self-transcendence progresses, the empirically conscious self becomes successfully the intelligent, rational and responsible, that is the existentially conscious self. Lonergan (1972:249) says that “the self’s capacity for self-transcendence meets joyful fulfilment when religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject of love – a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and other worldly love” The self-transcendence of such otherworldly love constitutes the fullness of authentic self-realization. In this regard Lonergan and Rahner are in agreement, both claiming that freedom is the

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\(^3\) The idea of self-transcendence as related to self-realization is dealt with in Chapter four.
who live a life obedient to the divine commandments. Others strive to find a spiritual link with a higher reality. Finally there are those who seek mystical union with God, or come to realize the oneness of existence. A selective, inter-disciplinary approach to contemporary spiritual views on the question of the self, is to be found in the writings of Thomas Merton, a Cistercian monk and spiritual writer. He collates the diverse perspectives which have already been considered in this study. By considering the self in the framework of theological anthropology and the doctrine of original sin, Merton presents it as a primary reality in contemporary spirituality. He does so, not as a biblical scholar, but as a spokesperson for the contemplative tradition. The individual, being "born in sin", has a false self, and is alienated from the inner, true self, which is related to the concept, Image of God. Merton makes a paradigmatic distinction between the true and the false self. The false self he describes as the illusion of egocentric desires that claims an existence outside the will and love of God. The true self, he maintains, is hidden with Christ in God. However he is not always clear on either the distinction or the relationship between the true and the false self. But the true self is hidden and needs to be found, and this discovery forms part of a paradoxical process. He says that true prayer takes place through the centre of the true self, which he defines as the soul, or the self before God. The centre of our being Merton (1968:142) describes as "a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our mind or the brutalities of our will". Merton (1972:7,8) also claims that the true self emerges in contemplation, where the individual is stripped of the false self, which he equates with the Likeness of God and the Image of God. To distort the likeness of God is to become deeply false to one's inmost reality. Sin alienates the human person from the true self, and for this reason Merton constantly urges people to find their true selves, which are hidden with Christ in God. He asserts that the true self is indistinguishable from
the image of God. However we constantly lose the true self by our habits of selfishness and our constant flights from reality (Merton 1976a: 44). Merton maintains that it is the function of the Christian to find the real self and finding the real self is, in fact, finding God. Merton (1976a: 30) believes that “unless we discover this deep self, which is hidden with Christ in God, we will never know ourselves as persons, nor will we know God, because it is by the door of the deep self that we enter into the spiritual knowledge of God.

Union with God takes place through the “true self” whereas the “false self” serves as the greatest obstacle towards such union. In Seeds of Contemplation, Merton (1961:129) says, “If I find (God) I will find myself and if I find my true self I will find God”. The false self is alternatively described as empirical self or ego self, while the true self is perceived as the transcendent self (Merton 1972:7). The false self is characterized by superficial consciousness, as opposed to the deep transcendent self that awakens in contemplation (Merton 1961:7).

According to Merton (1976b: 86), the true self is not easy to find, precisely because it is hidden in obscurity and nothingness, and is in some way identical with God. This true self does not surface easily as it is weighed down by the egocentric desires of the external self, and is in constant opposition to the false self. Merton (1972: 38) maintains that the true self, the inner self, must be drawn from the bottom of the sea and rescued from confusion, indistinction, the trivial and the sordid. The true self emerges on its own terms of pure consciousness in contemplation. He regards love as the substance or identity of the true self. This love, which goes out to find a new centre, is the opposite of self-love (Merton 1972:60).

The deep transcendent self that emerges in a state of pure consciousness forms part of the paradoxical experience. And according to Dawney (1993:847) writing in the New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, in this situation the true self is conscious, but conscious as a ‘no self’ because it is lost in God, where it discovers its
true identity. It is by means of a contemplatively oriented process of self-transcendence that the individual is capable of withdrawing from the humanly constructed (false) self-as-object, and originating the (true) self-as-subject. It is here that the non-objectified-conscious subjectivity God, may be experienced as subject. For Merton (1961:29) this contemplative movement into the true self and God is often individuated through the selfless love of others. God is found in others and the truth of life is the law transcending the self. A person "cannot enter the deepest centre of himself and pass through that centre into God, unless he is able to pass entirely out of himself and empty himself to other people in the purity of selfless love" (Merton 1961:29). The true self is intricately related to God, the source of the true self, as well as with the true selves of others.

While it is apparent that the term "self" has gained meaning from the discipline of modern psychology, and is usefully defined as a personal understanding of self in relation to others and to God, it has not acquired the depth and courage of the self which is encountered in mystical contemplation. In the deep religious domain there is a foundational understanding that in each person’s psyche there is a "transcendent self", and here the self is perceived as the truest essence of a person’s being. Merton is in touch with this idea but the mystics take it even further by identifying the true self with the self of God.

1.9.1. The transcendental mystical self

The mystics, by claiming positively that the true self is at the level of the innermost being of the person, stressed the deeper self. Much is written on the subject, and one woman, Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), a Dominican mystic, presents an intriguing and intuitively daring insight into the self by equating it with God. She insists that the ‘self’ and God are two aspects of the same mystery. In this context the self is presented as mystery. When Catherine embarked on her spiritual journey she asked the question: "Who am I?" and not "Who is
God?" This search for personal meaning and self-knowledge is not only a contemporary quest, but also one that appears throughout the ages. Mary O'Driscoll's (1981:6), a Dominican theologian, in her study on the spirituality of St Catherine of Siena, points out that since mystical self-knowledge is tantamount to knowledge of God and Self, to obtain knowledge of the self was in fact to obtain knowledge of God. This is an interesting concept, since St Catherine did not hesitate to offer her true self in union with the Self of God.

It was very evident in Catherine's life that the question of selfhood was both haunting and terrifying (O'Driscoll 1994:21). For Catherine the secret of the self was to be discovered through self-knowledge. She came to an experiential understanding that the self of the individual is realized in God the Creator. The self that Catherine sought was discovered in the "cell of self-knowledge", which she calls the 'true self'. By entering into her cell of self-knowledge Catherine comes to know her own 'self' as she "who is as non-being in herself, exists because God has given her being and sustains her in being" (O'Driscoll 1981:9). She gained knowledge of herself by looking at herself in God. While the knowledge of self and God are inseparably connected, in the process Catherine also gains knowledge of the selves of others.

Christian mystics, such as Eckhart, Ruusbroec and Catherine of Genoa, promote the concept of the transcendental mystical self, the self that is experienced in prayerful union with God. This is very evident in their autotheistic sayings. They would go so far as to identify their individual ‘selves’ with the Self of God. Catherine of Genoa could assert: "My me is God, nor do I recognize any other me except my God Himself", and "My being is God, not by some simple preparation, but by a true transformation of being" (Wiseman 1990:233). These statements constitute a claim of the personal identity of the self with that of God. Jan van Ruusbroec(1995:146) the Flemish mystic, claims that in true contemplation the person "is to be
God with God, without intermediary or any element of otherness”. For Ruusbroec, however, the experience of contemplative love is characterized by a union so intimate that there seems to be no longer any distinction between the self and God.

In reference to this autotheistic imparting of the self, Gaylin (1986:100) explains that one of the capacities essential in human love is that of fusion, that is creating a fused identity by merging the self with that of another person. This is not dissimilar to the psychological observation of Freud (1955:21; 64-65) who said that at the height of being in love the boundary between the self and the other disappears. Commenting on the question of the fusion of the “human self” with the “self of God”, Thomas Aquinas (1-2 q 112 a.1) maintains, that theologically speaking, the fusion in no way nullifies the ontological distinction between creature and Creator. He says that the human person shares in God’s nature only by participation.

While the mystics claim that the self is realized in the experience of mystical union with God, Rahner (1975:122-132), who believes in the mysticism of everyday, argues that this is a fundamental experience of the self and of God. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of self are obtained from this basic experience of the self as transcendental. In terms of Rahner’s (1975:125) metaphysical anthropology we do not have to acquire the fundamental experience of the self and of the transcendent, it is an inbuilt capacity. The “original and ultimate experience of God constitutes the enabling condition of, and an intrinsic element in, the experience of self in such a way that without this experience of God no experience of the self is possible”.

The mystical self is often appropriately identified with God. The superficial empirical self often hides the mystical experience of the self, which is uniformly viewed as that of a deeper self. Not many mystical writers are so daring as to identify the deeper self with God. Rather they limit themselves to the view that this is the point where
oriented behaviour, coping mechanisms and cognitive-rational activities. Normally when energy is vested in the functional powers of the self, people usually operate successfully. Spiritual experiences involve paradox-mystery and transcendence. The spiritual self reveres mystery and surrenders to it. The aesthetic dimension of the human self refers to the unity of the physical, rational and spiritual dimensions of the person. In the aesthetic dimension all the other dimensions come together. Yet, the question remains, if the self is described in so many dimensions, does this imply that every dimension needs to be realized if the individual is to reach selfhood or wholeness? The answer depends on the understanding of what is meant by realization (Kraft 1989:19-21), but according to Almaas (1988:16) true self-realization must satisfy all parts of the human being, including the mind.

It is apparent from the various theories already considered, that the concept of self is an important outcome of different anthropological interpretations of the human person. For instance, as already established, Heidegger insists that to be human means primarily to be open to transcendence. His criterion for humanness is Openness to Being. He studies the human person in terms of the possibilities that can set down the limitations of being human. Hegel considers the person to be truly human only to the extent to which he or she transcends individuality. Carl Jung, in his neat distinction between ego and self, considers the latter to be the super-ordinated or ideal personality. Kierkegaard claims from a religious philosophical perspective that one finds the true self partly in concrete and partly in ethical commitment, but fully in God. For him one is not automatically a ‘self’ but becomes so through one’s relationship with God. This relationship goes beyond the rational, hence the necessity of faith which is available to everyone, and which is for Kierkegaard, the key to selfhood. Since for Nietzsche, God is dead, he claims that not everyone can become a self. Notwithstanding, both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard would agree that one truly becomes a self only to the
extent to which one transcends the morality of the masses. Sartre holds that the self is a project of consciousness and is created daily by making choices. The main characteristic of the human being is the ability to become more than s/he already is.

It is clear from the examples quoted above that the self is not something given, but something that is created day by day. The realization of the self is a goal towards which one moves by actualizing one’s potentialities. Heidegger means this when he says that the (true) self calls out of the future to the (untrue) self. Also Jung refers to the self as the ideal. Buber’s (1958) in Jewish philosophical terms would insist that one is called by God to become what one is meant to be. In this sense the self is viewed as the goal and certainly not the departure point of one’s journey towards selfhood. Moving towards the self as a goal implies realizing potentialities, and believing that the individual possesses the capacity to become truly human. Reflecting on this point, Byrne and Maziarz (1969:231) argue that the self is the difference between what is and what can be. The notion of self involves the evaluation of what one has already become in the light of what one is deemed capable of becoming. This evaluation, when reified, tends to be described as the process of realization or fulfilling potentialities. For the present purposes it can be assumed that the human person is capable of the ideal of realizing the self. Because of this “the self is characterized by a kind of tension and polarity that must be continually resolved in the here and now. The tension is a sign of “mental health” for it is of the essence of selfhood” (Byrne and Maziarz 1969: 231). The essence of the self is created by the tension between what the self is and what it is called to become. Where there is no tension, no polarity, there is no self, only the blissful state of arrival. In Heidegger’s terminology, facticity is what one is, and transcendency is that which one can be.

Potentiability is the ability of the human self to become more than s/he already is, and transcendency is the tendency of the individual
towards the realization of potentiality. There are also two different kinds of potentialities, namely ultimate or *ontological potentialities* and proximate or *ontic potentialities*. Considering the temporal finiteness of the individual, it is necessary to move towards "self-realization" with full awareness of the fact that time at one's disposal is limited. Since the human person is both spatially and temporally finite, the move towards self-realization is confined. However, regardless of the spatio-temporal limitations, the individual is allowed to reach her goal within a given context. Transcendence is an empty abstraction if it is not seen in opposition to the confining influence of one's conditions of heredity and environment. History records the lives of people who reached their full potential despite the odds and limitations they had to overcome. One has to make the effort to overcome one's facticity so that it ceases to be a restraint upon transcendence. Helen Keller transcended her blindness, Beethoven his deafness and Abraham Lincoln, poverty. The American psychoanalyst, Eric Fromm, says that in order to realize the sum total of one's potentialities, which he calls the true self, one has to overcome social pressures. Jung also refers to the true self, and he insists that self-realization must be achieved in full awareness of, and in spite of social pressures. Potentialities are indeed realized only in relationship and interaction with others. What, then, are the potentialities that need to be actualized so that self-realization can be attained?

1.10.1. *The self as ontological presence.*

In order to proceed with the exploration of self-realization it is well to define word 'self' as it will be used and understood in this investigation. 'Self' here is not perceived as a construct, but in the words of Almas (1996:13) an "actual ontological presence". This implies that the self is a living organism that constitutes a field of perception and action. Alternately this is sometimes referred to as "soul". Fundamentally it is a field of consciousness and of awareness capable of experience and self-reflection. This consciousness, the self,
emerges in consciousness as an important task for the psychologically and spiritually maturing human being. As maturity grows into wisdom in an optimally developing person, this task in fact gains precedence over other tasks in life, progressing to becoming the centre that orientates, supports and gives meaning to life, and ultimately encompassing all of one's experience.

From the above it is clear that an understanding of the self in its totality, is important for self-realization. The self is thus understood as the soul or a living centre of awareness which can experience itself in, and identify with many dimensions of experience, from physical reality to the fundamental presence of Being (Almaas 1996:36).

While the following section discerns the basic biblical and theological lines of inquiry into the realization of self, clearly there is no ready-made plan of action which ensures access to self-realization. However it is clear that a theological study of the concept of self, cannot begin to do justice to the many subtleties and nuances proposed by theologians and already considered in this study. However, a biblical and theological exploration of the human self, created in the Image of God, and of Jesus who is the foundation and symbol of the Self, will help to clarify the point at issue. In addition, in order to clarify certain points, the investigation will often relate back to the philosophical, psychological and spiritual ideas already established.
CHAPTER TWO

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE CONCEPT
'SELF'

2.1. Introduction

What does St Paul mean when he says, "You should put on the new
'self' (Col.3: 10)? According to Biblical theology, a distinctive
characteristic of the human person is the declaration that each one
has been created in God's own Image and Likeness. Does the Image of
God form the fundamental essence of the 'self' of the human person?

God said: "Let us make the human persons in our Image, after our likeness; and
let them have dominion over the fish of the sea... so God created the human
person in God's own image, in the Image of God, God created the human person;
males and female God created them. And God blessed them..." Gen. 1:26-28.

This text is regarded as one of the most concentrated theological texts
in scripture. Only the human person is said to have been created in
the Image and Likeness of God, yet the priestly author does not say
explicitly what is meant by "image" and 'likeness". In the literal sense
of the term "Image" means a physical resemblance, a copy, a
manifestation or an icon. It is apparent that the similarity between
Transcendent God and the human person cannot be a physical
reproduction. The American Protestant theologian Niebuhr (1955:3)
says: "This assertion of the divine element in human nature was,
however, not elaborated except by implication". This was left to the
Greek philosophers who equated the divine element with the rational
ability of the human person. Be that as it may, the Image of God no
doubt refers to God-Self, and both man and woman share the Divine
Image*. The full meaning of humanity is therefore realized in both man and woman, both of whom are needed to reflect the Image of God (Leon-Dufour 1967:288). This Image of God, expressed in both man and woman, has a unique dignity and cannot subsist independently of God. To study the relationship between the human self and God, immediately takes the research beyond the limits of empirical verification. Nevertheless it is imperative to define the “anatomy” of human selfhood in biblical terms.

Psalm 8:5 celebrates in poetic terms the truth that the “human person was made little less than God”, indeed like God, he is endowed with glory and splendour. However, the psalmist does not say what constitutes the Image of God in the human being. The Book of Wisdom 7:26, testifies that the Image of God in humanity implies Immortality – yet the human person remains subject to death. We are made in God’s own Image, which, according to Sirach 17:1-11, accounts for the fact that human person can commune with God. This is also recognized in the spiritual qualities such as immortality, uprightness and knowledge.

   The Lord fashioned ‘man’ from the earth
   To consign him back to it.
   He gave them so many days’ determined time
   He gave them authority over everything on earth.
   He clothed them with strength like his own,
   And made them in his own image.
   He filled the living things with the dread of man,
   Making him master over beasts and birds.
   He shaped for them a mouth and a tongue, eyes and ears
   And gave them a heart to think with.
   He filled them with knowledge and understanding
   And revealed to them good and evil.
   He put his own light in their hearts
   To show them the magnificence of his works.
   They will praise his holy name
   As they tell of his magnificent works.

* The idea of the woman sharing fully in the Image of God is taken up again in chapter 6 that deals with the self-realization of the woman. At this stage the research deals with the self of the human person in general terms as related to the Image of God.
the unity of the human being and the value of the individual's physical existence, has successfully challenged this distinction. Today anthropologists present the whole human person as the image of God. This in turn calls for a reinterpretation of the theology of the image of God.

König (1982:103) argues that the statement concerning the human person made in the Image of God, is indeed a unique one and this is demonstrated by the fact that God has a verbal relationship with the human person. "God speaks with the human person and about the other creatures. Nothing else in creation stands in relationship to God, not even the angels" (Mt 22:30). The fundamental difference is that God is God and the person is human, called to be what God created him or her to be. Indeed this is considered to be the only way towards achieving the greatest possible happiness.

However this view, which depicts or defines the image of God as a totally relational or functional matter proves to be problematic. Both the relational and functional views are in fact consequences or applications of the image, rather than on the image itself. Experiencing relationships and exercising dominion do not in themselves constitute the Image of God. Erikson (1999:532) asserts that the image refers to elements in the human make-up that enable the realization of human destiny. The image is the powers of personality that make humans like God, capable of interacting with other persons, and also of thinking, reflecting and willing freely. Peter Hodgson (1994:199) claims *freedom* as *the* criterion of humanity to be the Image of God. The human being is intended to love, know and obey God and live in harmony with other members of the species. For this reason it can be deduced from the Biblical position that the "Image of God" refers to the "divine elements" of human nature, which set the human person apart from other created organisms. "Divine elements" because human beings share those specific qualities with God. As a consequence of being created in the Image of God, the
individual is endowed with special dignity which is related to a sacredness that makes human beings inviolable. This view justifies the prohibition against taking human life (Gen. 9:6). The sacredness also sets the human person apart from other created beings, and simultaneously places the individual in close proximity to the Creator.

Certain perceptions with regard to human beings in the Image of God are re-affirmed: that this is universal and is inseparably connected with the very essence of humanity; that it refers to something the person *is*, rather than something he *does* or *has*; and that by virtue of being human, the image of God and its realization is not dependent upon the presence of anything else. While experiencing relationships and exercising dominion are qualities very closely linked to the image of God, they do not constitute the image. Persons are most fully human when they are active in these relationships and performing functions: they are fulfilling their *telos*, (God’s purpose for them). On the other hand, relationships and dominions are the applications or consequences of the image. Erikson (1999:533), maintains that the image is the qualities of God which, reflected in the human beings, make personal interaction and work possible. If God is perceived as a being with qualities, humanity will have no problem accepting the fact that humans have similar qualities. Therefore communicable attributes would be an example of those qualities that constitute the Image of God. In the biblical sense, humanity encompasses all that constitutes personality or selfhood: intelligence, will and emotions. This purpose for which people are created, these qualities possessed by all, including the potential for fellowship with God, will not be complete unless they are realized (Erikson 1999:535). As already established, human self-realization concerns, not discrete segments, but the whole person.

2.2.1. *The Image of God embraces the whole person*. 

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5 The Image of God as related to the woman is dealt with in the second section of this thesis. 

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In the light of the Biblical perspective the human person is not regarded atomistically, but in entirety, not in isolation, but in community. It can therefore be concluded that human self-realization would accommodate the total person rather than discrete segments. The same holds for the Pauline and Semitic mentality. Here the human person is a unity, and while there is talk of body and soul the term body does not signify a separate component of the person as distinct from the soul. Body refers to the whole person and is something more profound than the physical-chemical structure of cells. It is both the consciousness of human matter and of the spirit manifesting and realizing itself within the world. In the light of the resurrection it is God's plan that the human being as body, will be totally transfigured and made complete in openness and communication. According to Leonardo Boff (1978:1136), the Latin American theologian, the resurrection of Christ has overcome all impediments to human self-realization. The dying and rising of Christ has opened the way to, and made possible, human self-realization. This doctrine also sheds light on the person of Christ who, as the second person of the Trinity, took on human nature. An understanding of the nature of Christ facilitates an understanding of the nature of humanity in the Image of God.

2.2.2. Jesus the perfect Image and human self of the Father.

The Biblical faith of Christianity presents the self of Jesus as homogeneous with the Image of God. While it is not easy to explore the selfhood of Jesus, indeed even the concept of human selfhood is complex, nevertheless Jesus, in his experience of deep affiliation with his Father, had a unique sense of his own selfhood.

Christ the Image of God, is an expression only found in the epistles of Paul, though the idea is also present in the Gospel of John (Jn. 14:9): “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”. Paul (Rom 8:29) presents
Christ as the perfect image of God, and at the same time sets before us an invitation to conform to the image of Jesus. Paul is at pains to discern the mystery of Christ, and links Him, as the Image of God, with his Sonship to the Father. According to Col. 3:10 Jesus, the true Image of God presides at the creation of the new “person”, and in this sense Paul brings together new and old ideas. In so doing his doctrine of the image of God becomes rich and complex. In the strongest sense of the word, Jesus is the representation of the invisible Father. According to Paul, to be in the Image of God is something to be realized, to be achieved; it is a dynamic, not a static concept. Jesus by becoming human became the perfect Image of God on earth, and in the Scriptures this image is characteristic of the whole person, with no distinction between soul and body. To understand Jesus as the human face of God, the created image of God, has implications for humanity. The reproduction of the image of Christ the only Son is the vocation of every human person (Rom 8:29). This presupposes a complete regeneration which for the individual, means participation in the life of the Son (Titus 3:5). The transcendent image of Jesus Christ can be applied to every human being. Jesus revealed the meaning of God in a very personal way: essentially so that the human and divine aspects in Jesus Christ are not separate or disparate, but united in his Person (O'Grady 1994:178). Undoubtedly Jesus was the prime example, which exemplified for humanity the way in which to live according to the Image of God. Jesus, as the Image of God, brought humanity face to face with the fundamental understanding of the nature of humanity.

2.2.2.1. The self-realizing capacity of the selfhood of Jesus

By virtue of Jesus' status as the Son of God, it can be assumed that his natural goodness would enable him to have reached perfect humanhood. John Macquarrie, the British systematic theologian, describes Jesus' accomplishment of his own personal selfhood very aptly as that potential, which enables a human being to become a truly
personal being. He maintains that this potential is intrinsically part of human existence. This conclusion rests on Macquirrie’s (1981: 300) understanding of the “Self”, which “is not some kind of substance that gets put into the body at the beginning of the individual’s life, but rather it is the ‘form’ of ‘entelechy’ of an embodied existence in the world, and as such is something that has to be brought into being in the deeds and decisions of life”. Macquirrie (1981: 301) claims that reaching selfhood is not an instantaneous, but a progressive event, something that one grows towards. For this reason he argues that the incarnation of Jesus should not be understood as an immediate happening, but as a process of coming together, and that Jesus gradually realized his Christhood. The progressive self-realization of Jesus’ selfhood is understood as coming about through a process of human-growth-awareness, which happens parallel with the development of Jesus’ sense of Christhood. According to Macquirrie’s reasoning Christhood and selfhood are equated and should not be separated.

Macquirrie’s ideas concur with those of John Cobb (1975:126), the American process theologian. Cobb perceives Jesus, the perfect image of God, as the prototype of the human person. Jesus, who endeavours to realize the ‘infinite’ capacity, is co-existent with the image of God. According to Cobb (1975:126), Jesus is not man and God, but God as Man, or more exactly, divine as man. There existed no division in Jesus between human and divine since the divine is the human. Jesus, as the most fully realized human being, is seen to be the high point, the goal, the end of the evolutionary process, which is constantly transcending itself. He achieved the fullest possible self-realization (Cobb 1975:127). The difference between Christ and human beings is that he both most human, and also fully human, indeed more human than human beings. St Paul (Phil. 2: 6-8) writes:
"...He did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave and became as people are, and being as people are, he was humbler yet...".

Jesus was human in all sense of the word except sin. Sinlessness constitutes a fundamental characteristic of the Christhood or the selfhood of Jesus, and this righteous condition is attained in the deeds that are performed and decisions that are taken in life. The fact that Jesus obtained his own Christhood separated him from the ordinary mass of humanity, and so does his sinlessness. Jesus' human- hood and true God-hood are not separated either, says Macquirrie (1981:302), as both converge within his person.

Macquirrie (1981:302) maintains that the move towards a perfect or sinless selfhood or Christhood, is eschatological and is realized, as in the case of Christ, at the moment of death. The dying and rising of Christ is the key to all human possibilities. As Niebuhr (1955:66) expresses it: "All of life is given this norm for the realization of selfhood". The unity of body-soul enters into a total and definitive realization.

The true body, personalized by the "Self" or the "I", which proves to be more than physical-chemical matter, will participate in eternal life. Consequently, since Jesus is regarded as the perfect image of God the Father, and in him humanity and divinity has achieved a perfect balance, the Christian places much value on the self of Jesus as the goal of all humanity. The unity of the divine and the human in Jesus means that God is at home with God-Self in humanity. In the self-realization of Jesus Christ as the Son of the Father, the perfect image radiates the self-expression of the Father, who expresses God-Self in the world by becoming human by means of Jesus' incarnation. "He who sees me sees the Father (Jn. 14:9). Jesus' self-realization would take place in his being the perfect Image of the Father."
To be human is a gift from God, and the remarkable humanity of Jesus is due not only to God’s gracious presence in him, but also the creative responsiveness of Jesus to that presence. He is that human, says Cobb (1975:128), who was open to God’s gracious support, reliant upon it, trusting in it, responsive to it. It is within the framework of this humble awareness of who he was called to be that Jesus came to know his own self. Cobb (1975:390-393) points out that the ‘Self’ or the ‘I’ of Jesus was not merely a psychic self that animated a small portion of matter i.e. his body. He maintains that the ‘self’ of Jesus was his mode of presence in the world and the world’s presence to him. Cobb (In Sullivan: 1987:61) explains that Jesus’ awareness of God enabled the ‘self’ or the ‘I’ of Jesus to identify his authority with God’s. He (Cobb: 1987:61-62) emphasizes that the ‘I’ of Jesus was “neither merged with the divine nor replaced by the divine. On the contrary, it retained its autonomous existence, but in such a way as to identify its relation with God. God’s aim for Jesus was that he apprehends God in terms of that which constitutes him as God - his Lordship, his love and his comparable superiority of being and value”. Cobb’s (1987:62) hypothesis is that Jesus’ prehension of God was co-constitutive of his selfhood. This prehension, which Jesus experienced, was not mere information about God, but was the presence of God to Jesus which constituted the centre where everything in Jesus’ psychic life was integrated. The ‘I’ or the ‘Self’ of Jesus was therefore constituted by his consciousness of God. It can be inferred from Cobb’s analysis that the consciousness which Jesus had of God constituted his self-consciousness and self-awareness, which he came to realize as a result of his free and total submission to the will of God.

Jesus’ unprecedented drive for ‘breath’ and inclusiveness, indicated that he was intrinsically and consciously linked with God the Father, and that he operated from his innermost understanding of God. This suggests that the “size” of the “self” of Jesus enabled him to work, not
for self-denial in the negative sense, but for self-actualization. (Cobb 1987:62). The “size” of the “self” of Jesus was so expansive that its capacity to accommodate others was boundless. The “self” of Jesus was his mode of presence in the world and the world’s presence to him. According to Cobb (1987:62) “the borders of the ‘self’ of Jesus begin and end in God”. Jesus’ “self” had no boundaries, consequently, since the ‘I’ of Jesus appropriated the destiny all peoples in his own selfhood, his love for humanity is universalistic. Understood in this light, it is clear that the lives of all people are included in the life of Jesus, as well as in the definition of the “self” of Jesus (Cobb 1987:62). This means that the self-realization of Jesus is all-encompassing, as it includes humanity’s responsive love. The size of the “self” of Jesus, says Cobb (1987:62), is huge in that it can accommodate so much love, and his love has no limits or boundaries. Since the self of Christ is all expansive and all-inclusive, the realization of his self would not be individualistic, but would embrace that of all people.

Christians believe that God’s revealed love in Jesus Christ is of such a range and depth that his capacity for relationships, which forms part of the “self” of Jesus, enables him to take into his own “self” the entire volume of life without having to sacrifice his integrity and individuality. He can display intense feeling and emotion without losing the unity of his “self”, and can encourage some people to be free in the development of their uniqueness, and display magnanimous concern for others, without losing his own sense of ‘self’. The ‘size’ of Jesus’ self was revealed by his demeanour, and was sustained by his “peak experiences” with his Father. To have access to “peak experiences” of Jesus as God, would require the ‘size’ or capacity of Jesus’ “selfhood”. The necessary “self” set for self-realization needs to be inclusive, huge in size and co-extensive (Cobb 1987:63).

Co-extensiveness and tremendous inclusivity, reflect a self-realized self, hence the understanding that the benefits from a single “self” that is realized, extends beyond the individual to the larger humanity.
This was evident in the life of Jesus in which everyone benefited. Cobb’s (1987:62) Christology suggests that what enabled Jesus to achieve self-realization, was precisely the ‘size’ and stature of his “self”.

The conclusive claim is, that whatever was possible in Jesus’ life is possible for the Christian, and whatever happened in and to Jesus is important and valuable for humanity today. It is up to the Christian to engage with the Jesus, making it a personal and immediate reality of daily living. Jesus, as the person who achieved the fullness of self-realization, is himself seen to be the high point, goal and end of the evolutionary process, which is in a constant process of self-transcendence. Jesus, who achieved the fullest realization as a human person due to his divine self-giving, emptied himself taking the form of a slave (Phil.2: 7). The difference between Christ and others is that he is not only most human, but he is fully human, indeed the perfect fulfilment of being human. Jesus, who witnessed true humanity, is its the ground, embodiment and catalyst of humanity. To be human is a gift from God, and the remarkable humanity of Jesus is due not only to God’s gracious presence in him, but also the creative responsiveness of Jesus to that presence. He is the human person open to God’s gracious support, reliant upon it, trusting in it, responsive to it (Cobb 1975: 127-128). Each man and woman has been called to surrender to the humanity displayed by Jesus. Each Christian is invited in faith to relive the self-emptying of Jesus. The more one is assimilated into Christ, the more boasting is abandoned and Christ is allowed to become the centre of one’s personality. Then the individual can truly say with St Paul and many mystics: “I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal.2: 20).

Theologically it is understood that in so far as created beings manifest creativity, love and self-giving, they tend to be like God. This self-giving is supremely manifest in Jesus Christ who, in himself is total self-giving. This is illustrated by his love and in the act of accepting
the cross. In this act of self-giving, selfhood passed onto Christhood, the human Jesus became the Christ of faith, and it is at this moment that the human and divine ‘natures’ converged in one person.

The self of Jesus, though unique to himself as the Son of God, exists in relation to the inner life of the Triune God. ‘Relation’ here describes a mode of presence, and relation in God signifies the achievement of divine being. So even though the ‘self’ of Jesus exists in a distinct and relative way, it is not distinctive from the nature of the Father and the Spirit. As a relation in God, the ‘self’ of Jesus is subsistent in God and exists in itself.

Since humanity has no experience of subsistent relations, it is a difficult concept to express in practical terms. Thomas Marsh (1994:152-154), an Irish systematic theologian, maintains that humanity only knows beings that have relation and has no experience of being who simply is relation. So the distinctive relation in which the ‘self’ of Jesus exists, does not interfere with the unity of the nature of the Triune God, namely the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Jesus, the perfect image of God and symbol of the “self”, is therefore the prototype of the self of the human person. The symbol reveals its own meaning and its own referent. The referent must reveal its true character through the symbol. To understand Jesus as the symbol of the self, one has to pass through it so as to experience what it symbolizes. Christ as the symbol of the self is not only a theological concept, it is also explored in psychological fields of study. Before exploring Jesus as the symbol of God and of the human self, is worth looking at the self of Jesus as it exists in a distinct, relative manner.

2.2.2.2. The Image of God as Trinitarian in structure.

Christians believe in a Trinitarian God in whom the self of Jesus is intimately related to both the Father and the Spirit. Clearly this has implications and raises questions for the human person created in the
"Image of God". Is the human person being created in the "Image of the Trinitarian God"? During and since the Patristic era, right up to medieval Christianity, the self of the human person was primarily perceived as the "Image of God", and not the "Image of Jesus". Would this understanding, in Christian terms, imply that the human self is 'Trinitarian' in structure?

Until the mystical position of the 'not-self' appropriated by Meister Eckhart, came into vogue in the 14th century, Augustine's formulation of the self as the image of the Trinity has occupied a place of supreme importance in the West. Augustine investigated as to whether the human person might contain within itself some reflection of its Creator, the Triune God. He reasoned that if the human being is made in the Image of God, and if this God is the Trinity, then even despite the ravages of the Fall, one must surely expect some traces of this image to remain in fallen, but redeemable humanity.

According to his Confessions, Augustine (1951:265), in his theological search for an understanding the mystery of the Trinity, looked inwards and searched for an understanding of his own self, which he believed would give him an understanding of the Trinity. He argued that there is a close connection between the self and interior subjectivity. Augustine believed that God is Trinitarian, and he assumed that there is, in the human person, a kind of Trinitarian structure which reflects the divine mystery of God. However, he sought the Image of God not in the soul, but in the three mental acts of the mind. These acts he termed remembering, understanding and willing, and his doctrine recognizes a progress from self-relatedness to God-relatedness. Stated briefly, Augustine argued that God is discovered through the proper discovery of the self, and the self through the discovery of God. This is summed up in his famous phrase: intimior, intimo, meo. The ultimate perfection of the human
person is to transcend\(^7\), to go beyond the self, to be taken out of the self to the deepest ground or cause of each one's being, namely God.

Augustine's doctrine implies that the procession of the human self assists the mind to understand the Trinitarian mystery, and he himself gained insight into the Trinity by entering into his innermost self \textit{(in intima mea)}. By encountering God in the depth of his soul, in the innermost recesses of his consciousness, he experienced not only his own self, but also a transformation of consciousness. As Cousins (1990:64), points out, when Augustine experienced his own self, he retained the self's own intrinsic constitution, ontologically, theologically and mystically. In its ontological and spiritual depth the self is not only relational, but at its very being it has God at its centre as light, eternity, truth and goodness.

In experiencing an implicit awareness of his self, Augustine called the image dimension of the self \textit{mens}. This he defined as the highest, deepest portion of the self, which by its very nature reflects God. The \textit{mens} is the \textit{image of the Trinity}, also perceived as superior reason, and when the consciousness of the \textit{mens} is awakened, as was the case in Augustine's mystical experience, the individual becomes aware simultaneously, of both self and God. This is precisely the experience of the self as Image of God, because it has God present to itself as interpenetrating light, light shining in a mirror (Cousins 1990:65). Self as the Image of the Trinity is experienced in the inner life of God, that is the inner Trinitarian life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Augustine distinguishes two selves: the first is the \textit{individual's self} as the object of \textit{consciousness}, and the second self which has \textit{God as the object of consciousness}. The former is the finite \textit{superficial and self-contained self}, the \textit{self of illusion}, which stands between the \textit{true self and God}. The second, the true self is fully itself when it reflects the

\footnote{The transcendent self will be expounded in detail when dealing with Rahner's presentation of the self and self-realization.}
Trinity, and within a mystical experience the true self is retained, while the superficial self disappears and ceases to function significantly (Cousins 1990:67). According to Augustine, self-realization, in the Christian sense of the term, is grounded in a mystical experience of the self as Image of the Trinity. Cousins (1990:67), reflecting on this makes the point that this “mystical experience has a noetic or intellectual character and contains as its metaphysical content a grasp of ultimate reality itself. This means that the metaphysical ultimate is contained in the experience and is not brought in as a subjective interpretation of the mystic, who is heir to a particular philosophical and religious tradition”. It is a positive experience, which contains imagery of light, is affirmative of God and stands in the tradition of kataphatic theology.

In sum, there is an inner drive of the self towards self-realization, that is a yearning towards the unity of the self-conscious image, that is its exemplar, God. Because the self stands on the borderline between spiritual and material levels, it is imperative that it purifies itself of attachments to the lower levels of being, and is transformed into the likeness of the divine source. This yearning for self-realization is brought about by love, which according to Augustine (1951:184-189), is the most ‘luminous’ of all realities. Love operates epistemologically in self-purification by focusing more deeply on God, and thus transforming the self more and more into the likeness of God. Commenting on this very point in Augustine’s writings, Brian Gaybba (1990:91), a South African dogmatic theologian, asserts that as one becomes what one loves, and loving is professed as the very act that brings about self-realization. The act of loving is within itself God-like and as such conforms the self to God. Gaybba claims that self-realization comes into process the moment the person loves. In this he is in agreement with Augustine, who said that love enables a person to understand divine realities; it deepens one’s knowledge of what is loved; all truths can be grasped fully only by the one who loves God as well as neighbour. Self-realization occurs when a person sees reality in
the light of his or her relationship with God. Love has the power to make the lover become like the one loved. According to Augustine, love operates epistemologically in the sense that it unites and conforms knower to known, and creates conditions for connatural knowledge to occur. Gaybba (1990:93) maintains that Augustine's thesis implies a paradigm for the connatural knowledge the Father and the Son had of each other within the Trinity: the latter knows the former perfectly because of being in his perfect image. Love brings about self-realization and love has the power to make the lover become like the one is loved. And this, says Gaybba (1990:93), is where love's purifying, unifying and conforming powers enter into the picture. The awakening of love for the Christian is part of the process of self-realization in faith, hope and love, and this is what refashions the human person into the image of God.

It is clear from Augustine that although the divine image is something given, its realization has to be achieved, a task totally dependent on God. This implies a spiritual disposition of clinging to God; seeking God's presence constantly as He is to be discovered within the self. This self, understood as the divine image of God, is perceived as an inherent capacity. It is the essence of human nature, and the ultimate realization of the divine image comes as a result of adherence to God, by remembering, understanding and willing God. The self, as the divine image of God, can be destroyed by sin, but it is the task of the individual to restore this broken image by imitating Christ, the perfect and never distorted image of God.

While Augustine presents the self as the image of God, he also maintains that the self has a need to transcend itself in order that self-realization may occur. This sheds light on an important concept that has been mentioned several times in this thesis: the self as a transcendent entity. Because it covers a wide area of research, this topic will be discussed in a separate chapter. In the meantime it is important to return to the concept of Jesus, as the perfect image of
God and symbol and prototype of the "self" of the human person. The debate on Christ as the symbol of the human self is not limited to the science of theology, but is also explored in psychological fields of study.

2.3. Christ as Symbol of the human Self.

To perceive Christ as the symbol of the self posed is a problem for many, including Jung (1983:299). He struggled from a psychological perspective to portray the Self of Christ in its uniquely human, yet godlike potential. He identifies the original person, the *anthropos*, the androgynous Adam, and claims that because there is much more to the human person than physical appearance, it is not feasible to make a comparison of the human person with any other created life form. He perceives the person as a splinter of the infinite deity. In seeking a fuller model to develop his insights into the self, he drew upon the figure of Christ, though he recognized that choosing Christ as a symbol of the Self, posed problems.

Jung's (1983:299) presentation of Christ serves as the nearest analogy of the Self and its meaning. He claims that the attributes of Christ: as consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father, and the theological terminology used: filiation, parthenogenesis, crucifixion, Lamb sacrificed, one divided in many, all undoubtedly mark him out as an embodiment of the Self. He proposes the analogy that the Self expresses itself through the conscious ego, in the way God seeks to become human, through Christ. This no doubt is a powerful analogy, which holds considerable and daring theological implications. Jung (1959:18) challenges people to assume personal responsibility by withdrawing their projections from the historical Jesus, and looking to their own Christ/Self within them. The Christian attains fulfilment in Christ when the ego-centric existence of his/her consciousness dissolves in Christ.
Christ, says Jung (1959:37), exemplifies the archetype of the Self, in fact it represents a totality of a divine or heavenly kind, a glorified man, a son of God *sine macula peccati*, unspotted by sin. Christ is the true image of God after whose likeness the human inner person is made invisible, incorporeal, incorrupt, and immortal. Christ represents the self in Christianity as the *apotheosis* of individuality, and in this sense the self possesses attributes of uniqueness. Jung (1959:63) says that Christ did not merely symbolize wholeness, but as a psychic phenomenon, he *was* wholeness. This very claim, that Jesus was the symbol of wholeness, presented Jung with problems from a psychological perspective. He (Jung 1959:68) claims that if Christ were whole in the psychological sense, then he would have been expected to ascribe to the totality of the psychological self. The latter, by definition, includes embracing both the light and dark aspects, just as it embraces both the masculine and the feminine. Individuation or self-realization is achieved when the self experiences a union of opposites, and this implies recognizing and embracing in unity, the opposites of humanity. Jung's (1959:41) precise problem was that the Christ-figure cannot symbolize the self as psychic totality because it lacks the “nocturnal side of the psyche's nature and is also without sin” (Jung 1958:232). In this sense the real problem of the symbol of Christ is that it lacked any positive relation to the dark chthonic side of human nature. Jung (1958:258) points out that this is especially evident with the symbol of the Trinity which, except for the Holy Spirit, is male in identity. The Spirit is neuter, all light, and as the chosen image of the *summum bonum* itself, all perfect and good. It can therefore be argued, that with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the body of the faithful, humanity as such participates in the life of the Trinity. It follows then that the nature of God must also include those elements which have come to be associated with the principle of evil. Jung (1958:258) contested this theory as impossible, since “in the domain of Trinitarian thinking such an idea is simply out of the question, because the conflict is too violent for evil to be assigned any logical relation to the Trinity other than that of an absolute *opposita*.”
If self-realization of the true nature of the self is to be engendered, Christianity must integrate its shadow side; must incorporate those elements of existence which have come to be associated with evil, the chothomic, the instinctual, the feminine (Jung 1959:41). Realization says Jung (1959:68), is a task that is imposed upon the human person by nature, and is described as "the recognition of our wholeness or completeness, a binding personal commitment". He (Jung: 1959:9ii: 171) regards the crucifixion as a symbol of Christ's realization of His Self. He claims that in "the course of being crucified Jesus as ego and Christ as self emerged. Christ as symbol, Jung (1953:22) asserts, is of the greatest importance for psychology. This is because, apart from the figure of Buddha, the Self of Christ, a symbol of wholeness, is perhaps the most highly developed and differentiated symbol of the self.

What Jung says from a psychological perspective is not altogether dissimilar to what is presented by the theology of symbol. However, the theological explication provides a substantial understanding of Christ as symbol of the self. It is through the works of Rahner, the leading Roman Catholic exponent of the theology of symbol, that the concept of Christ as the symbol of the Self can best be comprehended. He has rooted his theology of symbol in his theoretical anthropology, and consequently regards the whole of theology, if it is not seen essentially as a theology of symbol, as incomprehensible.

2.3.1. The theology of symbol.

According to Rahner (1966:225), there is an intrinsic ontological relationship between the real symbol and that which is symbolized. While the real symbol is distinct from the reality that is symbolized, it is also derived from and united with the reality, which is symbolized and made present. A real symbol is for this reason not only a symbol, it is both distinct from the reality that it symbolizes, and also from the
real presence of the reality that it symbolizes. In the real symbol, both symbol and the reality distinct from the symbol, are given together and inseparably. The symbol and the reality symbolized are both identified and not identified with each other. The incarnation is an excellent illustration of this point: God expressed God-Self in the world by becoming human in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. The humanity of Christ is the real symbol of the Father and in Rahner's terminology, Jesus is the absolute symbol of God in the World. Only the pre-existing Logos, and no other person of the Trinity could become human. In the course of his earthly life Jesus became aware of the symbolic relation he shares with the Father. Jesus as symbol is not only the image and self-expression of the Father, but he also communicates the self of the Father. According to Maria Motsko (1976:11) a German American specialist in Rahner's theology of symbol, these factors are intrinsic to the self-realization of a being, and it is through self-realization that every being comes to possess itself in knowledge and love. Motsko points out that Jesus is "the expressive presence of what God wished to be, in free grace, to the world in such a way that this can never be reversed, but is and remains final and unsurpassable".

2.3.1.1. Jesus as concrete symbol of God and humanity.

Roger Haight's (1999:13), an American Jesuit and theologian, reflects on Jesus as the symbol of God. He identifies two kinds of symbols namely the conceptual and the concrete. Haight claims that the conceptual or conscious symbols are words, notions, concepts, ideas, sayings, or texts that mediate a deeper consciousness of a level of reality that goes beyond their overt meaning. By contrast the concrete symbol is an object referring to things, places, events or persons which mediate a presence and consciousness of another reality. He cites the example of the human body, which mediates a presence of the human spirit on several levels: "to others by gesture and speech;
to conscious self-awareness by reflection on one's action; ontologically in different ways as construed in different metaphysical systems".

Haight (1999:17) argues that Jesus Christ is a concrete symbol of God by virtue of the fact that Jesus was a concrete figure in human history, and people encountered God in Jesus, as they still do. Jesus is indeed the mediation of God's presence and self-communication to Christianity. He claims that "God in Jesus Christ does not represent a heteronomous suppression of the human but its integral and ideal realization: incarnation does not stand over against the human, but completes and fulfills it absolutely" (1999:17). This hypostatic union is in fact the ideal of what can happen in the human being who, in grace accepts God's presence. Jesus is God's Word or the medium of God's self-revelation and self-communication to human existence.

God assumed human nature in Jesus who is both a human and a divine being. Haight concurs with Cobb (1987:138) who maintains that the human nature of Jesus has no personhood or existence of its own but subsists in the person of the Word. The very selfhood of Jesus, says Cobb (1987:138-139), was constituted by the Logos. In Haight's (1999:3328) view, the Logos is present in Jesus in such a way that God co-constitutes Jesus' selfhood in the dynamics of his existence. The Logos is identical with the centre of being that constitutes Jesus' self, while his human freedom is enhanced by God's presence.

According to the hermeneutics of person, the human acts self-consciously and freely, is capable of knowing, understanding and interpreting. When one person meets another there is mutual interpretation of their public selves, that is their words and gestures, but neither perceives the inner self of the other. The same applies to Jesus. The human person will never be able to penetrate the mind or psyche of Jesus, but is capable of interpreting a public person in his
or her actions, words and orientation of life. However it is possible to interpret the internal meaning of Jesus from the internal witness of his life. Schussler Fiorenza (1993:120), an American systematic theologian, holds that the centre of Jesus’ vision and action is in the basileia of God. Basileia stands for God recreating human wholeness, and as Fiorenza points out, the salvation of the kingdom is human integrity, fulfilment and humanization. God is completely for the human person, a God of human well-being. God’s cause is humanization and it is precisely in this humanization process that the human self-realization becomes an actuality.

Haight (1999:196) holds that symbol as a religious medium participates in transcendence in God, in such a way that God is present to, and within the medium. Yet the medium, a finite piece of the world, is not itself transcendent. As a concrete religious symbol is an entity that reveals and makes present something else, there exists an inner connection between the symbol and the symbolized that allows the symbol to reveal and make present what it symbolizes. For this reason a concrete symbol can be anything: a person, a thing or an event. It is a being that mediates a real presence within itself, of something other than itself. Jesus as a concrete symbol, refers of the real presence of God to him and though him, to the world that is mediated by him.

A religious symbol is transcendent in that it points to something other than itself. It mediates self-knowledge, insight into the most fundamental meaning of humanity relative to the cosmos, the rest of reality, and oneself (Haight 1999:198). Jesus, as an individual human being, is a religious symbol universally available and understandable by other human beings. To interpret Jesus symbolically implies that he is not regarded simply in himself. Jesus’ ministry consisted explicitly in mediating God, and he pointed to something other than himself, namely God, and God’s rule in history. In this sense Jesus was the symbol of God both in his person and in his actions.
2.3.1.2. Jesus the Logos, as Symbol.

The application of the above theological insight to the Incarnate Word, indicates that Jesus, filled, as nothing else could possibly be filled, with God, is the absolute symbol of God in the world.. The humanity of Christ is not an arbitrary sign capable only of representing God and making God present. On the contrary the humanity of Christ is the self-disclosure of the Word itself. The reality of God becomes present and finds expression in the humanity of Jesus. Understood in this way, Rahner (1976: 231) asserts that the Word is the symbol of the Father, “the inward symbol which remains distinct from what is symbolized, which is constituted by what is symbolized, where what is symbolized expresses itself and possesses itself”. Jesus is the real symbol of God. He makes God’s being present, on this earth, where humanity dwells. It follows therefore that to experience God in symbols is to experience the reality of God present in the symbol.

Haight’s (1999:436), study endorses Rahner’s view that the biblical symbol, the Word of God, ultimately refers to God. The Word as Symbol operates as a metaphor in the sense that God is not other than God’s Word; God’s Word is acting outside of God’s Self in creation. The Logos or Word is the symbolic self-expression of the Father within the Godhead, and the full human reality of Jesus is the self-expression of the Logos or Word. Rahner (1996:224) is very clear on this point when he says that: “The man Jesus must be the self-revelation of God through who he is and not only through his words and this he really cannot be only through his words and this he really cannot be if precisely his humanity were not the expression of God”. Judging from Rahner’s insistence, he has no doubt in his mind that Jesus is the very Logos of God while at the same time he is resolute about his real humanity. Rahner’s theology of symbolism is developed in metaphysical terms and is dialectical in nature. Consequently symbol makes present something other than itself, so Jesus makes
present God as Logos i.e. the self-expression of the Father (Haight 1999:439).

The self-presence of God and Logos to human history, is determined by the fact that Jesus is the symbolic self-expression of the Logos. Jesus remains a human person, a human being like all other human beings, while at the same time allowing God to be present and work through and in Him (Haight 1999:441). Often the problem with humanity is not so much the inability to recognize God, but the failure to recognize the God-given and guaranteed dignity of the human person. Rahner (1996:225) says that it is “forbidden to man to think little of himself because he would then be thinking little of God”. Human nature, which constitutes the very source and finality of creation itself, is precisely that which in Jesus, is symbolic of the self-communication of God by grace to all human beings (Haight 1999:444).

While it is understood that Jesus is the real symbol of the Father, nevertheless, by virtue of the fact that Jesus took on human form, this relationship of symbol also has a bearing on the human person. Rahner's investigation into the individual as person, and subject as transcendent being, is shown in the transcendental structures of knowing and freedom. The human person is an indefinable being which has achieved self-consciousness but remains mystery. The human as mystery, is not same as the infinite Divine mystery, an attribute that belongs to God alone. The human person, whose very existence is in reference to the Infinite, Incomprehensible God, is mystery. Consequently any definition of the human person must include a reference to God who is Infinite Mystery. Hence Rahner's understanding is that this mystery, which forms the very core of the human person, can only be realized if the individual ratifies the act of being grasped by God, the Infinite Mystery. This forms part of the self-realization process of the human person. The individual, by being
true to the symbol of his own self, expressed in the mystery of the incarnation, looks at how Jesus obtained his selfhood as the Christ.

While Jesus is the symbol of the Father, and the One in whom the Father comes to possess himself, He is also the symbol of the human person. In Jesus the Father comes to possess Himself: “He who sees me sees the Father” (John 14:9). The Father by sending his own son, reveals himself not only as the “Father of the Son”, but also the truth about himself as Father. Jesus is the symbol of the Father, hence the understanding that Jesus is the self-expression of the Father. The Father communicates himself in the Son, and intrinsic to this is the self-realization of the Son. This implies that the Son comes to possess himself in knowledge and love. In Jesus Christ the individual comes to understand himself or herself as a person. The self-realization of the human person, who according to Rahner, is an indefinable being who has already achieved self-realization, is not isolated from the Trinity, the Incarnation, Grace, Creation and Eschatology.

The use of the term ‘symbol’ does not imply any form of diminution of Christ. There exists a real inward relation between the being symbolized and the being of the symbol. God is present in Christ who is manifested, and this is particularly appropriate in the sense that Christ is the revelatory symbol of God. Jesus could achieve self-realization because He was true to the symbol of his self, and this too has implications for the human person.

Through the openness of the human spirit, symbols reach out into the depth of human existence, the very ground and sphere of transcendent being (Haight 1999:439). The formal structure of Rahner’s theology of symbol, as applied to Jesus Christ, is that as a created human being Jesus Christ is the concrete symbol expressing the presence of God as Logos in history. In terms of Rahner’s theology, Haight (1999:440) points out that Jesus, being the symbol of God, does not merely speak of God, but is in his person the medium of
God’s actual self-gift. Jesus saves by revealing and making God present, and by so doing reveals and actualizes the basic character of human existence as a being related to God. Jesus is the paradigmatic exemplar of the nature of human existence.

2.3.2. The human body as the symbol of the self.

The relationship between the body and the self is another very good example that portrays the relationship between a real symbol and what it symbolizes. Rahner (1966:47) considers the human body, which he regards as the real symbol of the soul, from a Thomistic point of view. He argues that the body is formed, though inadequately, because of the self-realization of the soul. He (1966:247) says:

“At the very most, something in the body could be symbol of the soul, but not the body as such and as a whole. But man, strictly speaking, according to the clear doctrine of Thomism, is not composed of a soul and a body, but of a soul and materia prima. This matter is of itself the strictly potential substratum of the substantial self-realization of the 'anima' (which is its 'in-formation' in the metaphysical sense), which by imparting itself thus gives its reality to the passive possibility of materia prima, so that anything that is act (and reality) in this potentiality is precisely the soul. It follows at once that what we call body is nothing else than the actuality of the soul itself in the 'other' of materia prima, the otherness produced by the soul itself, and hence its expression and symbol in the very sense which we have give to the term symbolic reality" (Rahner 1966:247).

Michael Skelley (1991:37-38), an American Jesuit priest and systematic theologian, states more simply Rahner’s claim as to how the soul renders itself present in the body while remaining distinct from it. In the light of this understanding the body is derived from the soul, and thus corresponds to the soul. This makes it possible for the body to be the manner in which the soul is present to itself and to
others. In plain terms, Rahner’s (1966:247) theology conveys that the body is presented as the real symbol of the soul.

The Thomistic perception is that there exists a real distinction in the human person between the body and the self. So while the human person cannot be reduced to the body only, neither is the body identical with the self since it is possible to give one’s body to another, without presenting the self. So too has the body the potential to change dramatically, while the self may not necessarily change. Despite the fact that the body is both unified with, and derives from the self, nevertheless in Thomistic terms, the body will die and the self continues to exist. However the body is more than just a possession. It is distinct from, and also an expression of, what it symbolizes, and in this instance, the body is the real symbol of the self, and the reality symbolized is really made present (Rahner 1966:247).

Each individual, inasmuch as he or she possesses and realizes being, is primarily ‘symbolic. Being, by doing, both expresses and possesses itself. The symbol is primarily the self-realization of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence. In relation to this Rahner (1966:247) says that the “body is the symbol of the soul, in as much as it is formed as the self-realization of the soul, though it is not adequately this, and the soul renders itself present and makes its ‘appearance’ in the body which is distinct from it”.

2.4. Evaluative commentary.

The notion self-realization, as evident in Rahner’s (1966:224) ontology of symbol, is based on two principles. The first principle is that “all beings are by their very nature symbolic because they need to express themselves in order to attain their own nature”. The second principle is that of symbol: in the strict sense the self-realization of a being, which is constitutive of its essence (Rahner 1966: 224; 234). This means that the symbol not only signifies a being’s self-expression, but
it is also the means to self-realization. Rahner's (1966:66) conviction is that the human person is essentially orientated to the Infinite and he describes this capacity as the "obediential potency" which signifies the person's natural openness to experience God.

To understand how the symbol is the means of human self-realization involves working within both the cognitive framework of Rahner's theological anthropology and his theology of symbol, where he expounds his understanding of being. His anthropology is directed towards the whole person, whom he considers to be an indefinable being which has already achieved self-consciousness or self-realization (Rahner 1966:107). In the framework of his transcendent method of theological reflection Rahner, despite the fact that his anthropology is directed at the totality of the person, presents her/him as a spiritual being or as "spirit-in-the-world". Rahner argues that since in one historical process, self-realization of the person takes place in the context of the world, there exists a correlation between the human person and the world. Consequently the humanization of the world through the self-realization of the human person is a simultaneous process.

In Rahner's ontology the symbol, which constitutes the means to self-realization and self-consciousness, is also the medium through which a knower can come to know another being. Rahner (1966:231) concludes that if a being is of itself symbolic in so far as it possesses itself in a derivative agreement of 'others' with its primordial origin, the same holds good for the knowledge of this being by others. Rahner (1966:231) says "A being can be and is known in so far as it is itself ontically (in itself) symbolic because it is ontologically (for itself) symbolic". Since Rahner was a penetrating student of Heidegger, it comes as no surprise that he uses the latter's terminology. One being comes to know another by means of self-expression through which the latter being comes to know itself. "This self-constitutive act whereby a being constitutes itself as a plurality which leads to its fulfilment or
rather in certain circumstances, which is a reality given with the perfection of being is, however, the condition of possibility of possession of self in knowledge and love” (Rahner 1966:229). Rahner maintains that each being, though one in itself, unfolds itself, for its own fulfilment, into plurality, and these plural moments are always in derivative agreement with their unity. Beings in derivative agreement with their source, are ‘expressions’ and hence ‘symbols’ of it. Beings come to themselves in their expressions, in the derivative agreement of the differentiated, which is preserved in the perfection of unity. So being present to itself, says Rahner (1966:229), “is only another way of describing the actuality, that is the intrinsic self-realization of the being”. Rahner (1966:229-230) expresses this concept as follows:

“For realization as plurality and possession of self cannot be disparate elements simply juxtaposed in a being, but the content of that which we call being (and hence self-realization). And it comes to itself in the measure in which it realizes itself constituting a plurality. But this means that each being – in as much as it has and realizes being- is itself primarily ‘symbolic’. It expresses itself and possesses itself by doing so. It gives itself away from itself into the ‘other’ and there finds itself in knowledge and love, because it is constituting the inward ‘other’ that it comes to (or from) its self-fulfilment, which is the presupposition or the act of being present to itself in knowledge and love”.

For Rahner the symbol is not only the means of obtaining knowledge of self, but it also takes possession of self as well as of reality whereby knowledge of another is attained. The comprehensibility and the actual knowledge of a being (as object of knowledge) depend on the degree of actuality in the thing to be known. Therefore it makes sense that if beings are of themselves symbolic, in so far as they realize themselves in a plurality, and possess themselves in this derivative agreement of the other with its primordial origin, the same should hold good for the knowledge of these beings by others. “A being can be and is known, in so far as it is itself ontically (in itself) symbolic because it is ontologically (for itself) symbolic” (Rahner 1966:231).
The symbol as a means to self-realization, an integral part of Rahner's (1966:229) ontology, claims that it is necessary for the self-realization of a being through plurality in unity, that it expresses itself, and that it constitutes the other, distinct from itself. This constituting of plurality leads to fulfilment, and is the condition of possibility of the possession of self in knowledge and love. In Rahner's opinion, being present to itself refers to this self-realization of being. A being achieves this self-realization through its expressions which are always in derivative agreement with their origin. Hence the understanding that being comes to possess itself through its realization in plurality. This knowing and loving possession of self is what constitutes the content of being and hence self-realization. The extent to which a being realizes itself in plurality is the extent to which it comes to itself. Each being therefore possesses itself by expressing itself; that is, by giving itself away into the 'other', constituted by itself, it finds itself in knowledge and love.

A being is also 'symbolic' in itself, says Rahner (1966:230), because the harmonious expression, which s/he retains while constituting it as the 'other', is the way in which it communicates itself in knowledge and love. Thus, according to Rahner's ontology, the symbol constitutes the means to self-realization and self-consciousness. This metaphysics of the symbols as the means to self-realization and self-knowledge is the basis for Rahner's theory that the symbol is also the medium through which one person can know another. In Scholastic terms, the process whereby a knower comes to know another being is not an act of the knower alone; it is also an act of being which is known. From this analysis Rahner (1966:230-231) was in a position to conclude that "if beings are of themselves symbolic, in so far as they realize themselves in a plurality, and possess themselves in this derivative agreement of the 'others' with its primordial origin, the same holds good for the knowledge of these beings by others. A being can be and is known, in so far as it is itself ontically (in itself) symbolic because it is ontologically (for itself) symbolic". It is by the
very process of self-realization of a being that another comes to know it. Symbol then is a derivative expression of a being always in agreement with its origin, is both the means by which a being comes to know itself, and the means by which another comes to know it. It is here that is found the primordial sense of symbol and the symbolic. Rahner’s first principle of the symbol affirmed that ‘all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily ‘express’ themselves in order to attain their own nature. Rahner’s (1996:234) second principle is the converse of the first: “The symbol strictly speaking (symbolic reality) is the self-realization of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence”.

It is clear from Rahner’s metaphysics, that symbol is the necessary self-expression and means to the self-realization of every being, and hence the symbol belongs to the very essence of every being, which is precisely knowing and being known. It is the being present-to-itself of being. It is knowledge in its original sense, namely self-knowing and self-possession. Since for Rahner, being is both the knowing and the being known, which is self-realization of an existent being, or being-present-to-itself, and since this self-realization must occur by means of symbol through which the existent being expresses itself, Rahner’s metaphysics of the symbol becomes a central element in his whole synthesis. For as far as Rahner is concerned the metaphysics of the symbol and the metaphysics of being are identical (Motzko 1976:10). This brings to consciousness the incomprehensibility of the human person. However, the mystery element of the person is of the essence for self-realization, rather than an impediment to it.
CHAPTER THREE

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TOWARDS THE CONCEPT OF SELF-REALIZATION.

3.1. Introduction

The search for a Christian Theology of Human Self-Realization, which would do justice to the fullness of the person in relation to God, involves a philosophical, theological and psychological, discerning process. The psychological, philosophical and theological interpretations of the human person in relation to God, are not exclusive alternatives. On the contrary, in the quest for truth concerning self-realization, they illumine each other. While the insights of contemporary psychology and philosophy expand and enlighten the concept of self-realization, the Christian, theological vision of human self-realization is placed in the context of the individual’s relationship with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The basic psychological assumption that self-realization is an unquestioned good, has its foundation in classical Greek philosophy. And while psychologists entertain their own, various views concerning self-realization, the prevailing philosophical idea that happiness is intrinsically related to self-realization, is also a common theme in these disciplines.

Having considered the ‘self’ from various perspectives, it is evident that it is a complex structure, a single entity with multi-faceted dimensions. As previously mentioned, Almaas (1996:10) is of opinion that every facet requires realization if the total self is to be realized. It is thus basic for the purposes of this research to establish what is understood by self-realization.

Because of its various contextual connotations, self-realization is not easy to define. The pervasive use of the term in modern Western
culture, often linking it to personal success, high achievement, the accumulation of wealth, power and position, is positively secular. In Eastern culture self-realization is predominantly aimed at the transformation of an individual’s life, a process which forms part of the search for human fulfilment. In this ambience, self-realization focuses more on the well-being of the human person, rather than on the status which can be determined by egotistic desires, competition, success, personal ambitions and wealth (Paranjpe 1988:209). In both the modern Western psychological and spiritual traditions, the existence of the Self was generally affirmed, and despite Christianity’s emphasis on self-denial and on self-sacrifice in relation to God and others, the human self was regarded as of major importance. It is essential therefore, to examine the modern aspects of self-realization and its implications for the person in contemporary society. This analysis of the modern theories of self-realization assists in redefining the concept and in formulating a new theory.

The South African Human Science Research Council (HSRC: 1977:vii) defines self-realization as the development of the human person’s somatic and psychic-spiritual potentialities – a process or act wherein personal involvement and active participation, are inevitable. This definition implies that a person’s potential, which normally lends substance to the individuality of the ‘self’, become a reality. The holistic sense of this particular definition is evident from the fact that it encompasses the physical, spiritual and psychological aspects of the individual, whose personal and active involvement in life situations is seen as an imperative dimension in the development towards self-realization (HSRC 1977:16). Many psychologists, who regard self-realization as the highest level of psychological development, link self-realization to the individual’s psychic-spiritual growth. Carl Rogers, for instance, regards self-realization as the most important stage in his pyramidal presentation of human growth related to the fulfilment of vital needs, whereas Jung situates the idea of self-realization deeply in his structure of the human system.
3.2. Psychological route towards self-realization.

Following on the psychological explorations of the ‘self’, a useful approach towards comprehending the movement towards self-realization is to consider Carl Jung’s theory. This presents spiritual transformation as the ultimate goal of his psychology, and spiritual transformation per se as self-realization or wholeness.

Jung theory claims that the fundamental drive towards self-realization is an unconscious and deep-seated longing in the human person, and hence it occupies an integral position in his teaching on individuation. To appreciate the ‘spiritual drive’ towards self-realization in Jung’s psychology, it is essential to understand his arrangement of the human system and the differentiation between the Ego and the Self. The self in Jung’s view is not only the source of personality, but also the power that seeks to be revealed through the choices and experiences of the ego, to which it has given birth. In this regard Jung’s presentation is similar to Damasio’s neurological understanding of the self, in that the human system consists of a field of consciousness as well as unconsciousness.

This fundamental urge for self-realization, basic to the creative life of any person, is exemplified in Jung’s Memories, Dreams and Reflections (1961). He (Jung 1961:3) relates: “My life is a story of the self-realization of the unconscious. Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious condition and to experience itself as a whole”. The goal is simply to make sense out of life. Individuation has as its aim the stripping of the personality of all that is false and meaningless, it is a dying to the self that is false. Self-realization as a

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8 The gospel concept of ‘dying to self’ contains a theology of its own, which will be dealt with in a later chapter that deals with the theological explanation of the self. The true and false self coincide with Merton’s views where the True Self provides access to the Divine Self.
a process is thus highly dialectical. The self having given birth to the ego, seeks its conscious realization in the ego. In fact it is reaching out for higher consciousness. Forman (1998:126) reflecting on Jung’s theory, says: “It can rightly be said that the self forms the basis of the unconscious, it is the creative precedent, the generative source of the ego, exercising a function not unlike that of the creator in popular Christian imagination”. The realization of the self into consciousness is the redemption of the self from unconscious existence.

Self-realization occurs when the Self, housed in the unconscious, breaks through into ego-consciousness. To achieve this, the individual has to overcome the collective unconscious, and needs to be liberated from the collective myriad of things. The Original or True Self can only emerge if the Self is no longer bound by a myriad of things, and when this happens the True Self becomes the essential point of freedom. This awakening or emancipation of the True Self is an indispensable factor of self-realization or individuation (Jung 1969:198). Meckel and Moore’s (1992:184) study on Jung suggests that self-realization or individuation implies becoming a single, homogenous being, and in so far as individuality embraces our innermost and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one’s own self. In this sense it could be translated as ‘individuation’, as ‘coming into selfhood’ or ‘self-realization’. Jung (1969:198) notes that the individuation process begins normally with a person becoming conscious of the personal unconscious, also known as the shadow or negative ego personality. To admit personally to the shadow tendencies, allows for some measure of realization and self-reliance, without which individuation is impossible. Jung affirms that there is no wholeness, no individuation without coming to grips with one’s own personal imperfections. He is convinced that life insists on completeness, not perfections.
3.2.1. Individuation as self-realization

Individuation, the process that describes the realization of the self, takes up a central position in Jung’s psychology. According to his (Jung 1968:222) terminology, “individuation”, which is seen as the goal of human biological development, is synonymous with the realization of the self. Self-realization, or making real, is one of the strongest urges of the authentic laws of nature, and to achieve this implies that the shadow side of the person needs to be confronted. Basically the process describes what Forman (1998:126) on Jung (1958:247) calls, “the propulsion of the ego from the unconscious through the self and the subsequent incarnation of the self into its own creature, the ego”. The undiscovered self is always trying to manifest itself in a lifelong journey of individuation. A pre-requisite for self-realization is that the human person befriends two aspects of the self, the shadow and the contra-sexual (masculine and feminine). Moreover, psychic wholeness or self-realization implies that the masculine and feminine aspects of humanity be integrated. This process begins with the (already mentioned) innate psychological urge of the self for realization, and it takes place regardless of the conscious will or external situation.

Just as the acorn becomes an oak, the child a man or woman, the calf a cow, so the human person by means of individuation becomes what he or she is meant to be (Jung 1969:467-468). The process involves the unfolding of the individual in becoming truly human in a personal and unique way. The life-task of each and everyone is to become differentiated and to stand independently from others (Jung 1961:343). Individuation reaches its goal in the experience of the “self”. According to Jung (1958: par 390: 258), to become a single, homogenous being is not something that the ego can create at will. By being driven by the innate urge of the self it becomes possible for the ego, the centre of the conscious personality, to evolve. This
incarnation of the self in the ego is most directly worked by conversation between the ego and the self. The self is ushered into consciousness where it becomes a more entrenched component of the ego's reality. The authentic coalescence of ego and self carries with it the sense of inner order, an enhanced vitality resulting from a greater access to libidinal energies, and an extended embrace or empathy for the surrounding world. What emerges is a more "compendious" or "Supra-ordinate" personality that comes to birth in every life that suffers the self's ingestion.

3.2.2. Self-realization involves a paradigm shift from ego to self.

Meckel and Moore (1992:282), note Jung's opinion that once the psychological urge of the Self to realize itself is activated, the Self relentlessly imposes on the ego the task of integrating the dark side, the unconscious, of the psyche. The Self, as the determining factor for its existence and development, constantly conditions the ego. The process of self-realization does not destroy the ego, but places it in a subordinate position in relation to the Self. The ego is no longer the centre of the personality, it is the self that unites all opposites. What is dissolved in the process of self-realization is the inflated, concrete ego, which normally pursues its exclusive selfish purposes and follows its own impulses. What really occurs in self-realization is a paradigm shift in the sense that the self, which unites all opposites, is the centre, rather than the ego. Much of the content of the unconscious is brought into conscious awareness and this movement transfers the centre of gravity within the personality from the Ego to the Self. This movement is explained by Sean Kelly (1993:108) as "a shift in the psychic economy from the ego to the Self". By using Jung's phraseology, Kelly affirms that the cognitive process which accompanies this shift involves the operation of what he calls the "transcendent function". In normal terms, this transcendent function "arises from the union of conscious and unconscious contents". This transcendent function facilitates a transition from one attitude to
another. The transformative power of the transcendent function is what translates theoretical into concrete insight, which in turn passes over into concrete action.

Individuation or self-realization, which is the unfolding of individual personality, can only proceed in the transcendent function, through the mediation of opposites. In view of this fact, the Self is experienced as the paradoxical totality in which the opposites, such as conscious and unconscious, light and darkness, good and evil, are united. It is therefore understood that there is in fact no conscious realization of the total person without the integration of opposites. This integration that forms part of individuation or becoming whole, is a painful experience precisely because it constitutes the realization of the union of opposites. In Meckel and Moore’s (1992:280) analysis of Jung’s (1992:185) theory, they reiterate his claim that self-realization is the ego’s encounter with the archetype of the Self, and it is not a neutral but a numinous experience which exercises a powerful influence on the shaping or re-shaping of the conscious contents of the person. It brings with it, according to Merkel and Moore (1992:280), spiritual freedom, experienced in an integrated and unified personality. In psychological terms this appropriation of the ego to the self or self-realization, says Jung (1959ii: 44), must be a never-ending process.

In Forman’s (1998:127) judgment, individuation is at its very core mystical, and hence intensely religious. This is because self-realization implies the intra-psychic transcendence of both the self and the unconsciousness of the ego. Significant in the process of self-realization is the sense both of inner unification and universal relatedness. Other hallmarks are the sense of personal completion and extended empathy. In Jung’s CW 11 (1953 par. 369:261) he writes: “The self then functions as a union of opposites and thus constitutes the most immediate experience of the Divine that it is psychologically possible to imagine”. It is a consciousness blessed by a profound experience of the self whereby the psyche is driven to
harmony, wholeness and unity. According to this understanding, self-realization is perceived and experienced as the ego integrating the self's unconsciousness.

3.2.3. Self-realization as the ego integrating the self's unconsciousness.

Within the process of self-realization the ego is confronted with the Self which demonstrates its importance for the development of the ego. Throughout the process, ego-consciousness constantly faces the danger of being assimilated by the energy of the unconscious. It is therefore of prime importance for the ego to be strengthened by integrating the unconscious contents of the Self. If this were not done by means of integration, but rather by assimilation, the ego would be in danger of fragmentation and disintegration.

In the process of self-realization, the Self provides the ego with the strength and stability for its development while simultaneously imposing on the ego the task of integrating the dark side of the personality. It is therefore important that the integration of the unconscious into the consciousness be supported by a self-protective function, and this can be brought about by the individual relating creatively to the treasure-house of the unconscious.

It is claimed that a consequence of self-realization is that the person functions on a higher level of consciousness. This comes as a direct result of the dialectical confrontation of the ego and the Self, which is evident in the person experiencing a transformation of personality. The ego comes to function in an ex-centric manner in service of the Self, and not the other way round. The "True Self" and not the ego is the centre of existence. This state, Jung refers to as an "ego-less mental condition" or "consciousness without an ego". He equates it with what St Paul wrote to the Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me". Self-realization in this sense is not achieved by the loss of one's ego, but by surrendering it so that Christ
can live within the individual\(^5\) (Herold Coward in Meckel and Moore 1992:255).

Transformation, as explained by Meckel and Moore (1992:255), takes place when the ego is emptied by the very act of self-realization and the person’s psychological urge is fulfilled. The functioning of the self is uppermost, and in facing this emptying activity, the ego is forced to sacrifice relentlessly whatever it has achieved. Yet this sacrifice of the ego is simultaneously the fulfilment of the urge of the self, or the genuine person. Self-realization delivers an integrated ego that is strong and flexible enough to develop the attitude of listening, in order to function harmoniously with the Self. The strengthened ego is free and capable of functioning in union with and in the service of the Self.

Self-realization brings about such a self-awareness of the psyche that ego-awareness is obliterated. What is overcome is not the ego itself, but the function of the ego, characterized as ego-centricism. The self transcends itself in the act of self-realization. This act brings about liberation of the Self, and this is the root of all happiness,\(^8\) which is characterized by a state of bliss. It is also described as the self's oneness with God.

In sum, self-realization can be described as the ultimate spiritual transformation and the goal of Jung's psychology. The experience of becoming whole, which involves the union of one's opposites, is not free from anguish. However, the union of opposites brings with it spiritual freedom, experienced in an integrated and unified personality. Jung in fact equates the fuller realization of the self with religious and mystical experiences. This is grounded in and made possible by the approximation of the ego and its consciousness as the centre of each individual. Jung makes it quite clear that this

\(^5\) The idea of the Christian taking on the ‘Self of Christ’ is explicated in the section reading “Christ as the symbol of the Self”.

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consciousness is at once the goal of psychological maturity and the height of religious experience.

The process of individuation or self-realization, is not according to Forman (1998:1330), atypical, epiphenomenal, or confined only to a privileged few. The process moves inexorably towards patterns of individual wholeness in conjunction with a more universal empathy that Jung goes so far as to equate it with an experience of God. The goal towards which individuation moves is a state of consciousness, uniting the psychological, the mystical and the religious in a unity that continues to surpass most modes of contemporary perception.

3.2.4. Happiness accompanies self-realization.

Happiness has been identified as an important criterion for self-realization, while unhappiness is perceived as the result of both spiritual and physical deprivation and dissatisfaction. Happiness is described as a state that both accompanies and results from self-realization. Edgar Krau (1989:6), an American psychologist, following the teachings of Sigmund Freud and Abraham Maslow, points out that the former was of the opinion that since happiness is not a culturally experienced value, modern civilization negates self-realization and happiness. Nonetheless, Freud proposes that happiness and self-realization form part of the same process. Significant also in Maslow's (1970:153-180) psychology is the essential connection between happiness and self-realization. In fact he goes as far as to say that self-realization without happiness is not a possibility, and Krau (1989:6) uses Maslow's phraseology by describing the "self-realizing" person as a "happy animal".

Maslow (1969) adheres to the theory that the human person is in a constant state of transition, towards self-realization. To achieve self-realization the individual has to live through various stages in the circle of life. He claims that only when the necessary stages in his
pyramid of needs have been gratified would a person be in a healthy position to reach self-realization. Physiological needs, need for security, for love and affiliation and also for recognition and respect, are among those that precede the need for self-realization. The actual need for self-realization Maslow, in Towards a psychology of being (1969), Maslow describes the actual need for self-realization as a feeling of self-fulfilment, or the realization of one's potential.

Maslow (1971:299) found that the fulfilment of the hierarchy of needs usually takes place in sequence, but the lower needs which are often neglected, can be satisfied at a later stage. According to Markert (1978:53), both the "lower" and "higher" nature are equally instinctoid and both contribute on an equal basis towards self-realization. Considering all the basic needs that ought to be integrated in one human person, it is not surprising that Maslow (1971:299) claims that only 10% of people reach the psychological stage of self-realization. Self-actualized people are by definition gratified in their basic needs of belongingness, affection, respect and self-esteem. Those who are motivated by what has been achieved rather than by deficiencies, are growth-motivated as opposed to deficiency motivated. Self-realized people are not perfect, they have their problems, the only difference is, says Maslow, that they act out of their fullness and their problems are real.

Maslow (1970:153-180) proposes the following as characteristics of self-realized persons. They are more efficient in their perception of reality and are more comfortable with it. They accept other people in general and are they spontaneous, simple, natural, and non-defensive. They are problem-centred rather than ego-centred. They are calm and serene, and enjoy being alone. They are flexible and autonomous, resisting enculturation, and they transcend the bounds of any particular culture. They continue to have a fresh appreciation of things. Peak experiences are more common with them. They experience deep feelings for people and a genuine desire to help
humankind. They have profound interpersonal relationships, are capable of fusion, greater love, more perfect identification, and more obliteration of ego boundaries than is ordinarily thought to be possible. They have a more democratic character structure together with strong ethical, and definite moral standards. They are creative, have a philosophical sense of humour and transcend dichotomies. Their interests are the broadest possible and they have a strong sense of identity. They are not loaded down with shame and regret. They make no apology for their life and they love themselves and have a childlike acceptance of themselves and their failings. These qualities may appear as idealistic, but Maslow (1970:153-180) actually describes the characteristics of a whole and integrated person. An individual living in this state of being would indeed be happy, and in Maslow’s opinion, happiness is an achievement related to inner productiveness. In this sense he would agree with those who claim that one can achieve self-realization not in isolation but only in relation to others, to the world, to nature and to oneself. Eric Fromm (1967:18-19) the German psychologist, who discusses self-realization in relation to freedom, furthers this idea of inner productiveness.

3.2.5. Self-realization as the responsible use of freedom

Addressing the theme of happiness, Fromm (1967:18-19) believes that a person’s inner productiveness is accompanied by the activity of thought, feeling and action. He goes further, stating that self-realization comes from the responsible exercising of freedom, and that the human person is free to use his/her inherent potential for reason and love. Often, however, people avoid the responsibility that accompanies the exercise of freedom. Instead they project the powers of reason and love onto some superior institution or being such as God, or even the nation. This projection, Fromm (1967:18-19) claims, is the action that prevents the individual from believing in the Self and in its full potential for self-realization. When by submitting to another power, one abdicates personal power and strength, a feeling of
insecurity and a loss in the one’s selfhood follows, and this undermines the process of self-realization. Such a person denies the power of personal faith and the potential for self-realization. Commenting on Fromm, Droge (1978:10) asserts that Fromm’s theory of self-realization, which he defines in narrow, humanistic terms, borders on secular salvation.

The idea of self-realization, central to the teachings of many psychological schools of thought, is perceived as a means towards authentic living. It is maintained that happiness and self-realization, which are open to all people, can be achieved in the most humble, inane and hopeless situations. Psychologists relate self-realization, not only to abstract meditation on the nature of humanity, but also to the individual’s active involvement in the outside world.

3.3. Self-realization is a pure act of consciousness.

A.L. Almaas (1996:17), in his claim that self-realization is a pure experience of self-awareness beyond goodness and badness, develops some of the above ideas. The experience which is usually liberated from all memories, images, associations, ideas, emotional reactions, identifications, ego structures, and knowledge, is a pure experience of the self. While this experience is open to all people, Almaas’s (1996:17) holds that the individual must attend to the obstacles that prevent self-realization. His basic insight regarding self-realization is that it is necessary for the whole self. He argues that when one is self-realized, one is “consciously identified with the most true, real nature of the self” (Almaas 1996:10). According to Almaas (1996:16) the experience of full self-realization is radically different from the normal ego-bound state and there are many partial awakennings and openings on the way to the integral self-realization experience. Almaas (1996:16-17), in his discussion of a “pure state of self-realization”, writes as follows:
“In self-realization our experience of ourselves is a pure act of consciousness. We know ourselves by directly being ourselves. All self-images have been rendered transparent, and we no longer identity with any construct in the mind. There is no reactivity to past, present or future. There is no effort to be ourselves. There is no interference without experience, no manipulation, no activity – inner or outer - involved with maintaining our identity; we simply are”. “We are able to respond, feel, think and act – but from a purely spontaneous and authentic presence. We are not defensive, not judging ourselves, nor trying to live up to any standard. We may also be silent, empty, or spacious. We do not have to do anything to be ourselves. We are whole, one, undivided. It is not the wholeness of the harmony of part, but the wholeness of singlehood. We are one. We are ourselves. We are being. We simply are”.

Almaas (1996:17) claims that since narcissism is a direct consequence of the lack or disturbance of self-realization, it is not present in the experience of pure consciousness in self-realization. This experience is characterized by spontaneous realness, without psychological artifacts, pretensions or falsehoods. Self-realization is characterized by an individual’s personal experience of self in a totally direct and unmediated way. This implies that there is no interference of anything from the past or from the experience of others, and the individual’s identity is free and undetermined by the past. This idea would not be accepted by those philosophers and others who hold this notion of ‘direct experience’ in doubt.

According to Almaas (1996:18), self-realization is a complicated experience, the central element of which is usually surprise which however, cannot be deduced from descriptions of the experience. He maintains that this surprise element is what characterizes authentic spiritual self-realization and sets it apart from all other psychological experiences. To be, that is to experience the self directly, fully, spontaneously and authentically, free from all influences of past
experiences, is a quantum leap for the self. This is far more than “just being myself” in its colloquial sense. It is the experience of Being. Almaas (1996:19) explains: “to be’ is not an action, not even an inner action. By being oneself, we find, is being Being.”

Conventionally regarded as a philosophical concept, Being in this instance is not a philosophical notion: but rather a concrete experience and recognition of ourselves, before any mediation, conceptualization or labeling. The simplicity of being conscious of one’s existence, of experiencing oneself as Being, is to encounter the immense mystery of who one is in the world. The direct awareness of oneself as Being falls into a very mysterious category of experience. However, for the self-realized individual it becomes in time an ordinary, common experience in which we recognize ourselves (Almaas 1996:20).

In self-realization the individual experiences the self as being “present as presence”. It is not the presence of the body, emotions, or thoughts. According to Almaas (1996:19), “It is the presence of presence. To be fully cognizant of oneself as presence is the central and most positive characteristic of the experience of self-realization”. Presence is not a characteristic of the mind or body. It is a “concrete ontological given”, more fundamental than either the mind or the body. The presence of Being is deeper than the conventional experience of the existence of our minds or bodies.

The experience of Being is not an idea one has of oneself and of one’s experience; neither is it a conclusion which one draws from it. It is the concrete, direct experience of ourselves as being. Almaas (1996:20) says: “What we are is now, a spontaneity of being, an absolute of being, an absolute given. We perceive ourselves, then, by being ourselves, by being. We recognize ourselves by being ourselves, by

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10 The concept “Being” is given greater attention under the philosophical section.
It may appear, as Krau argues, that this kind of experience is beyond the reach of most people. Yet, as Almas (1996:25) points out, ordinary people have achieved access to this dimension of understanding, either through religion, spiritual traditions, artistic endeavours, or other kinds of explorations. By maintaining a consistent and open enquiry into one's own true nature, seems one way of obtaining an experience of self-realization. To recognize oneself as presence is nothing but the ontological reality of consciousness.

From an ontological perspective, the soul in self-realization is simply professed as the human consciousness, free from the occlusive veil of past experience. The self, in the experience of self-realization, with a self-reflective act, and without any intermediary, releases itself from all past experiences. The experience of self-realization, which is the knowing of oneself as pervasive consciousness, is felt experientially as an exquisite sense of intimacy. The self-existing consciousness experiences itself so immediately that it is completely intimate with its reality. The intimacy is immediate as there is no mediation in the self's experience of itself. The self is totally itself, completely intimate with its identity. The experience of peace and clarity does not come from having accomplished anything, nor is it the result of anything. It is part of the actual feeling of being truly oneself. There is a feeling of intimacy with the self, but the very presence is intimacy.

Almaas (1996:25) proposes four concepts, which he claims are paramount for an understanding of self-realization. These are self (or soul), presence, essence and identity. In precise terms, self-realization is identified with the essence of the self, which is presence. Consciousness, which is the self, has an ontological mode of being which enables it to be directly aware of its own fundamental existence. This is possible when we are simply being, not conceptualizing our identity, not reacting, and not manipulating. We experience our ontological ground when our experience of ourselves is completely unmediated. In self-realization the self recognizes its own nature, the
presence of Being. It is this immediate, intrinsic self-recognition that gives the state of self-realization the sense of exquisite intimacy.

Presence is the essence and a central property of the essence of self, that is the true nature of self as an actual ontological presence. When a person is identified with something other than the primordial presence, then self-realization is absent. Narcissism, for example prevents self-realization because in this experience of self-realization, the self is disconnected from the core, estranged from its true nature. This estrangement of the soul from true nature is the basis of narcissism. Full self-realization completely eliminates narcissism which is not natural to the realized self (Almaas 1996:27).

From a psychological perspective wholeness is part of the condition of self-realization which is not a matter of intellectual understanding or even emotional maturity, but rather a matter of being spontaneously and naturally, without self-conceptualization. The central element of self-realization is presence, the nature of which is consciousness, free, pure and devoid of mental elaborations. This presence, which is undivided, unconceptualized and whole, is the immediate sense of one’s Being.

3.4. Evaluative commentary.

The use of the term ‘self-realization’, increased dramatically in the Western World since the Second World War, and this trend became even more evident in the 1970’s. Edgar Krau (1989:14) attributes this to a change in people’s value system which is reflected in the focus of psychology. Self-realization is described as a “fundamental motivational power”. While it appears to be intimately related to the psychological conditions of people, Krau (1989:14) argues that very often, when material values are sufficiently met, other values, particularly those that centre on human development, replace them. So people ascribe to ‘higher values’ once their basic needs are met.
Although the concept is not new, it appears to be new because of the greater complexity of the multiple possibilities of choices open to the individual on the path of self-realization. Krau (1989:4) is of the opinion that what is new is not so much that the concept but rather the democratization of self-realization. Another reason, which Krau (1989:3) puts forward for the greater awareness of self-realization, is that people are increasingly recognizing that the achievement of self-realization is within their rights.

There exists a secure belief, particularly in psychological circles, that the essential goodness of people, and the self-realization of individuals, will lead to the general improvement of all humanity. However, the claim that the human person possesses an inborn potential for self-realization, implies that certain conditions, psychological and environmental are favourable. If for instance a person is provided with the right psychological conditions, such as acceptance (as intimated by Maslow), s/he will be enabled to plumb the deepest recesses of his/her own psychological and emotional being, and will venture to be that self which s/he is truly meant to be (Droege 1978:11).

The existing self-realization theories, particularly those advocated by scholars such as Maslow, can sometimes be regarded as pyramidal qua elitist, as they maintain that no self-realization will take place before the individual succeeds in satisfying the lower-order materialistic needs. Serious consideration of the chronic poverty and economic difficulties which are so widespread, would indicate that for ordinary persons, all possibilities of self-realization would not be legitimized (Krau 1989: xi). To link self-realization with success and economic security in terms of material needs, seems conditionally exclusive, since it focuses on people who have access to material benefits as well as to the deeper analysis of the phenomenon of self-realization itself. Obviously self-realization is not restricted exclusively
to material and human success. Academic debate has revealed the very close bond between self-realization and the theology of liberation. This came about through the attempt to offer in secular terms, salvation for the self which, according to Droge (1978:15), rivals that of the Christian faith. In this context it can be surmised that the psychology of self-realization offers a secular theology of hope and liberation.

There is an overriding psychological understanding that all human beings possess an inherent human potential for self-realization. Many psychologists including Maslow acknowledges with caution that there is a tendency of the "human potential movement" to regard self-realization as a secular equivalent of sainthood. If this were the case, argues Droge's (1978:13-14), then self-realization becomes a yardstick by which to judge the inadequacies of human nature in terms of the goal towards which it strives. He suggests that a Christian response would be to affirm self-realization as long as one does not equate it with achieving righteousness before God, nor use it as a basis for judging one's state of sanctity.

Krau (1989:19), however, distinguishes between "realizing oneself" and "self-realization". To "realize oneself", he claims, is to "have made real", and this could be applied to a project or an ideal which has been concretized. Realizing oneself implies an experience of personal satisfaction in that the individual has personally achieved or become. This is accompanied by a general state of peace within the person, and by a willingness to repeat the same experience again. In this instance "realizing" oneself has strong connections with personal success, and the word really translates as a true historical becoming of the human person (Krau 1989: 25). Despite this interpretation Krau (1989:19), is convinced that success is neither a criterion of, nor a requirement for self-realization, nor does it necessarily bring about self-realization, though it can favour it. He argues that self-realization operates on a very different level. While self-realization could sustain success, it is
also possible without it, because success is understood as some form of achievement and a way of getting out of a difficult situation. Personal realization can be centred on material benefits, power, knowledge or money. Self-realization, on the other hand, is a development of a permanent quest. Krau cites the example of a saint who though not a success in his achievements, could have realized himself, and by surpassing himself could have been a martyr. Success indicates a happy resolution of a cognitive, economic-social problem, but this does not hold for self-realization. If self-realization finds expression only in the accumulation of material goods, it is not truly self-realization, since this contradicts the spiritual history of humanity. Krau (1989:48) claims that history has shown that self-realization has a price that entails making compromises in various areas of life. What can be deduced from Krau’s understanding is that self-realization is not synonymous with vocational achievement, though this may in many instances, contribute towards self-realization. What is of greater importance is the awareness of one’s self-identity which constitutes a very important factor in the whole arena of self-realization.

Krau (1989:27) claims that while the state of serenity could be the nearest observable response in people who have realized themselves, there is no observable sign indicating the state of self-realization. It is an inner state proper to the person who is trying to achieve his/her own realization. What can best express realization, he says, is a state of non-regret. This indicates an agreement between what the human person most hopes for and what s/he has become. Self-realization is a process in history with a set goal and fulfilment. Hitherto Christians have expressed self-realization in terms of the immortality of the soul, and of the self-communication of God. This history is usually carried along towards the vision and experience of the divine mystery. The self-communication of God is the ultimate meaning of history, cosmic and human. Many, including Krau, base their insights on the views of Benedict Spinoza, the 19th century English philosopher, who stated
that only a few people are capable of achieving true self-realization, and this depends on finding God and restraining human passions. Krau (1989:10) refers specifically to the statement of Spinoza that reads, “without liberation from the tyranny of our passions no self-realization is possible”. Krau explains that what Spinoza meant by passions is in fact “confused ideas”, and hence he advocated correct living and the avoidance of confusion.

In the light of the above, it comes as no surprise that self-realization stretches over a very extensive psychological arena. It incorporates many parts of being, but is not confined to material and personal success. Rather it transcends the mundane as well as the limits of the ego, and enters the arena of the holy and the sacred so as to go into the realm of spiritual meaning. This is where the philosophical and mystical perspectives provide additional clarification of self-realization, by a further investigation of Being and Consciousness.

3.5. Philosophical views on self-realization.

Along with the intensification of reflection on the Self in almost every discipline, questions pertaining to the definition, ontology and metaphysics of the self have attracted profound attention. Even in the earliest philosophical context, Plato, Aristotle, and others also equated self-realization with human happiness which was considered as the highest attainable good in the spiritual realm. It is precisely growth in this realm that underlines the link between happiness and self-realization. Because Plato adhered to a worldview that drew a sharp contrast between matter and spirit, time and eternity, the material world of the senses and the world of ideal forms, Aristotle was enabled to define happiness as an activity of the soul, or the enduring self. According to Plato's views, self-realization transpired only in the spiritual dimension of reality and, although Hegel admired Plato's philosophy, he held that it was impossible to be a Platonist in the 19th century when the philosophical context differed so greatly from
that of Plato’s day. To come to an understanding of self-realization within the Hegelian context implies looking at the self in the realm of truth. Truth for him is realized in spirit, and freedom is truth itself. The unfolding of Being-as-Spirit would thus constitute an integral part of self-realization. However, Hegel’s position does not ascribe to the notion of Plato’s spiritual dimension. Self-realization for him is a spiritual process, and according to his reasoning, self-realization implies the unfolding of Being as Spirit and the human being transcending the physical reality. It would appear that Hegel occupies a philosophical view halfway between Plato and Heidegger as the latter advocates that self-realization takes place in the mode of being-in-the-world. He would therefore not be in agreement with Plato who underplayed the value of the material world, nor with Hegel who transcends the world.

3.5.1. Greek philosophical foundation of self-realization

In his study of Plato, Kelsey (1972:52-53) emphasizes how Plato’s subscription to a spiritual worldview permits him to give preference to the perfection of the spiritual realm to the detriment of the physical. He also believed that the human person has direct contact with both dimensions of reality and can encounter the world of the spirit by virtue of possessing a soul. In his view the soul is the real self, while the body is only a shell in which the soul is imprisoned. His theory led him to believe that physical reality, (the senses and the material world), because it is in constant flux, is unreliable. It is precisely this perpetual state of change that prevents the person from ascertaining absolute truth. The aim of Plato’s philosophical goal was to find in the realm of ideas and spiritual forms, the unchanging elements of reality. Knowledge, that is self-realization, comes to the individual, not through sense experience or reason, but through direct contact and participation in the realm of the eternal. Consequently, human self-realization would be regarded as a spiritual activity and would occur in the realm of ideas and spiritual forms. In the process, the real self
is drawn upward to the love of the highest good and to the contemplation of eternal truth.

Friedlander (1952:68), in his work on Plato, states that the Platonic hypothesis claims four ways whereby, in order to achieve happiness, the recognized state of self-realization, the individual can come into contact with the non-material world. These are recollection, dialectic activity, love desire (eros) and "divine madness". He asserts that it is especially through the way of "Divine Madness" that enables the human person to participate in the eternal or spiritual realm. Plato describes "Divine Madness", which did not have negative connotations for the Greeks, as a divine gift and the source of the most important blessings or happiness granted by God to humanity. This can be understood in the sense that the mind is taken captive by the divine. This "Divine Madness", says Kelsey (1972:56), was in turn sub-divided into four types of direct access to the realm of the non-physical. These are prophecy, healing actions, artistic inspiration, and most particularly, love.

Each of these four types of "Divine Madness" provides the individual with some insight and meaning. The "Divine Madness" of prophecy endows the person with divine insight into the future and this insight gives meaning to the present. The "Divine Madness" of healing is often expressed in healing actions, and Kelsey (1972:56) claims that the healing of the body is connected with the healing of the psyche or soul. In addition real art and artistic inspiration is believed to come only through divine inspiration that is "Divine Madness". The fourth "Divine Madness", love, is described by Plato as the coming together of a fractured soul, so that in its wholeness, the soul can experience happiness, that is, true reality. Human self-realization is thus intrinsically connected with happiness and the wholeness of the soul, while Love is the decisive factor that brings about complete healing and fullness of being.
According to Plato's world-view, where the spiritual world is regarded as most authentic, self-realization is confined to the soul and to the spiritual dimension of human reality. In the light of this understanding, the physical reality of the human person would not be a considered factor for self-realization. The Platonic hypothesis presents love and human wholeness, which are located in the soul or spiritual dimension of the human person, as constituent elements in the process self-realization. This comes as a result of the individual's conscious participation in the spiritual dimension of reality. Friedlander (1952:77), in his work on Plato, explains that when a person's spirit is empowered by love, s/he is enabled to feel, see and love the beauty of another. This can lead the individual both to the idea of beauty and to the mystical contemplation of God which would be experienced as heavenly happiness. Friedlander (1952:37) makes clear that for Plato the "human person's psyche has a spiritual or divine element which must be cultivated". Once this spiritual element is cultivated the individual is able to love, and there is a possibility that s/he will be led beyond Being to the mystical encounter which is the highest form of existence. It is in this realm of participation that the human person achieves the point of self-realization, defined as spiritual happiness.

According to Plato, the second obvious factor in self-realization includes becoming aware of and participating in, the spiritual dimension of reality. He also teaches that a relationship with a Spiritual Being has a direct bearing on happiness, and thus on human self-realization. This would imply that belief in spiritual structures would ensure for the individual ways to approach a Higher Spiritual Being, and to have access to and contact with the spiritual dimension of reality. Plato, however, presents the Spiritual World as the real, perfect world, and the Material World as merely a manifestation of the Ideal. If self-realization is equated with happiness, then it can be inferred that happiness is only obtained in the Spiritual World. If real happiness were only to be found in the
Spiritual World, and according to Plato, not in the Material World with its debasing value, the Material World would not be in a position to provide the human person with the necessary structures to bring about self-realization. Plato's view implies that self-realization is only possible in the Spiritual world and not in the material world, that is the World of Senses.

The marked dualism of Plato's world-view, distinguishing between the world of ideas and the world of matter, the life of thought and the life of the senses, witnesses to a complex relationship between the material and spiritual realms. In this dualistic approach to life, the body, which, as part of the physical realm, is perceived as imprisoning the soul, would be experienced as a hindrance towards self-realization. Considering this view Kelsey (1982:17) argues that Plato's theory of the interaction of the two realms, is not consistent with the way it was portrayed in the Scriptures. For example the experiences of dreams, prophetic messages, healing and visions, all presume the contact between the spiritual and physical worlds. Kelsey (1982:6,17) maintains that in the New Testament the spiritual world has broken through into the lives of ordinary people, and the early Christians experienced the effects of the Holy Spirit in very real way. Kelsey is of opinion that if the restoration of faith in the spiritual dimension of reality is effected, this will facilitate an understanding of the human person as basically spiritual in nature, existing in both the spiritual and physical dimensions of reality. He believes that the physical world touches this physical body, leaving impressions on the spirit or psyche, which dwells in it. While knowledge comes directly through the senses and the body, the psyche is touched by spiritual realities. Through the soul or psyche the person comes to know spiritual reality, thereby achieving some form of wholeness and self-realization (Kelsey 1972:61).

From the above it is clear that self-realization forms part of the search for spiritual existence in the physical dimension of reality. This means
that the deepest disposition of humanity is to seek health, meaning and wholeness. More often than not this sense of wholeness is realized in the experience of love in which the individual succeeds in transcending the limits of his/her physical state, and merges with another, either a person or God. The theological search for a theory and meaningful definition of human self-realization is enriched and sustained by the study and debate on this topic within the human sciences.

Although Platonism has many attractions, it places too sharp a dichotomy between body and soul (the real self) and tends to underestimate the value of temporal realities. The Christian tradition often favoured Platonism and was in agreement that the pursuit of bodily pleasure hinders the soul’s attainment of contemplation and real happiness. It agreed that the self should practice self-denial if it is to enter into intimate union with God.

3.5.2. The self-realized Being as Spirit

Unlike Platonism, Aristotelianism preserves the concept of the body/spirit unity of the human person, and integrates the human being into the material world. The soul is not distinct from the body, rather it is its determining principle. Aristotle teaches that the soul is the animating principle of the body in which it lives. The self, in its act of knowing and willing, is able to transcend material and temporal limitations. As the real self, the soul enables the human person to gain knowledge of realities that lie beyond the realm of sense. However, it does not offer a comprehensive explanation of human reality, and Aristotelianism neglects the personal in favour of the universal and timeless. Existentialist, phenomenological and personalist philosophies attempt to meet this need.

As determined in Chapter One, Hegel’s (1977:203; 328), speaking from an ontological perspective, asserts that the self and even more so the
realization of self, constitute a complex whole. In Hegelian terms self-
realization is a spiritual process which implies that the self reaches for
a higher form of life made explicit in a higher form of knowledge. In
Hegel’s philosophical framework, Being or Life realizes itself as ‘self-
consciousness’ or ‘pure thought’, and self-realization is a process
whereby the whole self is actualized. The ‘Spirit’, which stands
opposed to an objective, actual world, is the self of actual
consciousness. So in Hegel’s ontology, when Being is realized it is
termed Spirit, and as Marcuse (1987:220) explains in his thesis on
Hegel, Being is only Absolute Spirit in accordance with its relation to
itself. The Spirit is characterized as a mode of selfhood, and Being
sustains this selfhood through its relation-to-self, which Hegel
characterizes as ‘determinancy’. This latter, the ontological concept of
Life or Being, is analyzed in terms of two essential determinants:
being-for-self (independence, self-consciousness) and being-for-
another (dependence, objecthood). As an individual the self has always
an “original determinate nature”. Each individual, however, is not a
true self that subsists by itself since it has its reality “in another”.

Apparent therefore in Hegelian ontology is that the self is intimately
connected with self-consciousness, in fact in his Phenomenology of
Spirit (1964), Hegel introduces Being as self-consciousness, and as a
mode of knowing, and modes of knowing are also modes of Being.
Important in this mode of Being is that the self seeks and finds self-
equality in the movement towards individuality and the unification of
the self with another self. This equality is understood as the peaceful
restlessness of ‘pure-consciousness’ (Hegel 1977:127). As the self
embraces the contradiction of simplicity and difference, its own
restless nature impels it to actualize itself (Hegel 1977:397). This
implies that self “lives in expansion, individuation and actualization of
life” (Hegel 1977: 152). Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction
only in another’s self-consciousness (Hegel 1977:138). This is the way
in which the unity of the self in its otherness becomes explicit (Hegel
1977: 110; 139). However, it is clear that the human person attains
freedom and truth in a 'determinate existence' and never in opposition to it, always in otherness and never against it (Marcuse 1987:266).

3.5.2.1. Self-realization in freedom and truth.

In previous sections of this thesis, the idea proposed by psychologists, that self-realization is closely connected with the responsible use of freedom, featured prominently. However this theory is also central to philosophy. If the self is in bondage the relation of the self to this world is essentially negative. Consequently self-consciousness seeks its freedom in opposition to the objective world, which it cannot overcome, and hence, says Hegel (1977:152), the person withdraws from the world into thought. Self-consciousness tries to become free by freeing itself from the world. Once self-consciousness reaches its genuine state of Being, then it attains freedom (Hegel 1977:143). So when the Self has developed into a concrete existence that is itself free, it is none other than the 'I', or pure self-consciousness (Science of Logic: 583). Hegel says that the movement of life beyond the stage of Lordship and Bondage, is characterized by the attempt to overcome what opposes the freedom of self-consciousness.

Self-realization presupposes being present to the world, and only the world that has been discovered and understood can provide the basis for complete unification of self-consciousness with its otherness. So long as the world is alien to self-consciousness, it remains in negative relation to the world. It therefore makes sense to say that along with the realization of personal self-consciousness, there emerges self-realization of the 'world'. Because the actualization of the self is intrinsically a historical process, Marcuse (1987:266) maintains that true fulfilment of the individual is found in the life of a people (Hegel 1977:212). Self-realization can also be characterized by the transformation of a negative to a positive relation to the world. Self-consciousness and self-realization are intimately linked and both are related to the responsible use of freedom.
3.5.2.2. Self-realization as self-equality-in-otherness.

Distinctive of self-realization is the unity that is obtained by the infinite self-sameness with otherness, defined as an act of self-consciousness. Personal self-realization forms part of the realization of life, which in turn is actualized via free individuals who comprehend and generate their own actuality, that is achieving self-equality and self-consciousness with self and others. Consequently, what Hegel calls the full realization of the concept of Being, namely Spirit itself, is brought to life in the spiritual world. The individual, by actualizing himself, simultaneously actualizes all else as well. Consequently, what is involved in self-realization is always the realization of universality rather than simply for the benefit of the individual (Marcuse 1987:277).

In terms of Hegelian ontology, Being finds fulfilment in Spirit and it is a characteristic of self-realization that the Self has reached complete equality-with-self-in-others. A knowing and conscious spiritual being, "pure consciousness", or "consciousness of self", represents the highest and truest form of self-equality-in-otherness. On the basis of knowledge of itself and of the other, it conducts itself knowingly. Pure-consciousness exists only as self-consciousness which actualizes itself as the pure category as the meaning of Being, and holds fast to its unity of Being and Self.

Being is driven by the urge to become essential for itself and to bring forth life in an ontologically appropriate fashion. Life pushes beyond its own immediacy and inauthenticity, to 'higher forms'. The final point in this process according to Marcuse (1987:246) is reached in the actualization of Being-as-Spirit. The full realization of self-consciousness of Spirit or of the self in the form of universal recognition, is expressed in the "I that is We and the We that is I". Spirit is understood as the ability to soar and embrace all existence
while not ceasing to be oneself. The Self is capable of transcendence without its organic structure disintegrating.

Hegel’s view of finding self-realization in the Spiritual realm is not acceptable to Heidegger who argues that wholeness of self is reached by being interlocked with everything around and before one. Self-realization forms part of engaged activity, or in other words, being part of the world.

3.5.3. Human authenticity as Self-realization.

As previously noted, Heidegger’s theory of the self and self-realization falls within his philosophical search for the “meaning of being”. In his opinion, Greek philosophy failed because it raised the question of being, but not the “meaning of being”. What Heidegger (1962) means by the universal question of being is not clear, though it is relatively clear what he means in the present concrete connection of being, that is the particular being of a human person. Each being has possibilities and understands itself as a potentiality-for-being. Heidegger believes that there exists within the human being a self-realizing tendency, which enables people to realize their personal potential for being. This tendency, he claims, is as unique to the human organism as is the individual’s openness to the actualization of the potential for being. According to Sass (1988:216), one knows what ‘is good for the self’ and how best to integrate the unique potential that differentiates one individual from the other. Therefore this represents a unique contribution to the mosaic of society or humanity as a whole.

When the principle of self-actualization is activated, the potentiality for being results in knowledge of self, which is called “self-transparency”. Heidegger (1962) argues that the fundamental mode of human existence is not detached knowing, but “engaged activity”. “Everydayness” as defined by Heidegger (1962:1979), is not just as a
possible mode of existence; it is also the primordial foundation for other modes, and the key to understand them.

According to Heidegger, self-realization does not occur in isolation, but as a consequence of coming to know and understand one's self in relation to others. Human authenticity, which means being true one's inner self, is a marked reality of self-realization. Sass (1988:260), in explaining Heidegger's concept of authenticity, emphasizes that the mode of being and self-realization implies getting in touch with one's true nature, both the inner self and the self existing in the world, and this everyday mode of existence, which forces one to confront one's inner self, is what gives meaning to life.

Heidegger (1962) presents the argument that there are modes of being-in-the-world. He identifies the everyday mode wherein the question of the meaning of being is concealed and forgotten. He distinguishes between the 'ontic' and the 'ontological', that is the inauthentic and authentic modes of engagement with the world. In this regard Tugendhat (1986:205) states that it is the authentic mode that provides a depth dimension to personal being. To exist in this "authentic mode of being is in fact an exemplary mode of understanding one's own being in an 'open range of possibilities". According to Heidegger's way of thinking the Self is realized in authentic existence and being-one's-self. This is portrayed in a person's capacity to make authentic choices.

3.5.3.1. Self-realization as making authentic choices.

Existing 'authentically' means existing in the mode of self-determination, and in this regard Heidegger (1962:263) employs the term "resolute". Resoluteness is in fact the disclosure of the mode of authenticity. It implies that in the process of self-realization the person becomes transparent to his or her own self and the motives that underlie all intentions. Part of realizing the self is to make choices
and speak, not only of a choice, but also of “choosing the choice”. Elaborating on this issue, Tugendhat (1986:207) states that to exist in this choosing implies existing in the mode of being-one-self. Self-realization includes the making of a choice in which the individual decides about his being, and who he wants to be, though not every choice is about being. Heidegger (1962:263) talks about being oneself and choosing oneself, a choice that has to be deliberated and not left to chance. In his opinion authentic choice is what brings Dasein back from the lostness in the arbitrariness of the possibility of finding itself. In Self-realization the person makes a choice for his or her own being. To exist in the mode of authentic freedom is characterized directly as being “in the truth”.

3.6. Evaluative commentary.

Central to all philosophical anthropology is the tacit assumption of the incomprehensibility of humanity, hence the reason why the reflection on human self-realization is intimately connected with the philosophical perception of being. It is true to say that Western philosophy has been, in great measure, the study of being. While the ideas of the various philosophers originated primarily in their personal experiences and appreciation of being, the speculative language of philosophy has expressed being as an abstract idea. As already noted, existentialists, such as Heidegger, saw being as more experiential and immediate, while Hegel understood being as the beginning of experience and consciousness, the fundamental truth beyond mediation. As traditionally explained by Bittle (1939:13), an American Capuchin priest and philosopher, Being, which in its ordinary understanding means “that which has a positive reference to existence”, is neutral. All things have being, each of its particular kind, and the universal element in actual and possible beings is their capacity for existence. Thus being is “something capable of being actualized, it is therefore actualizable; something capable of being realized, therefore realizable”. The human being, despite its many
individuating differences, possesses human nature and consequently is viewed as a thinking being capable of making decisions. The individuating characteristics of any being are changeable and can go missing, but that which is common to every human being, that is the body, its substance and being, constitute the essence of human nature. It is therefore believed that a theology of self-realization will take into account the essence of human being, connected as it is, to the essence of God as “Divine Mystery”. This insight is also based on biblical reading that presents the human person as the image of God.

3.6.1. A philosophy of self-realization aligns the transcendental properties of being.

A philosophy of self-realization takes cognizance of the basic transcendent attributes of being, that is oneness, truth and goodness which are also relevant to the theology of self-realization. The oneness of being refers to human wholeness and unity within itself (Bittle 1939:133). Transcendental unity is the unity of an individual, which implies that the being is undivided within itself. The intrinsic principle of individuation is the ground or reason in the being itself that gives individuality to the specific being so that it is one in itself. Abiding by the principle of absolute individuation is what gives the unity of individuality to an existing being (Coffey 1938: 125-133). Disunity of being would work contrary to self-realization, since it functions in a wholistic manner abiding by the principle of individuation. Self-realization defines the unity of being and operates on the principle that enables the individual to be true to his or her own being.

Just as every being is one so also is it true. Truth is also a transcendental attribute of being and the human derives truth from personal experience. Bittle (1939:167) says that by truth is meant true knowledge, and this latter means true judgments. The opposite of truth is falsity which is a disconformity, generally between the "thing and intellect". Bittle (1939:168-171) identifies three different kinds of truth, namely ontological, logical and moral. Ontological
(metaphysical) truth is an agreement of a being with the intellect. Logical (mental) truth is the agreement of the intellect with a thing. This relationship constitutes true knowledge of an entity. Then there is moral truth defined as the agreement of speech with thought. Of concern here is ontological truth, as it is a metaphysical and transcendental attribute of being.

Part of self-realization is for each person to discover the ontological truth of his or her being. The individual, by conforming to image of God in which he is made, the individual achieves that self-realization for which he has been created, and in this lies the ontological truth of being. (Bittle 1939:172). God’s infinite essence possesses ontological truth. God is a “true” being, “true” reality. God is truth since His essence and mind are in absolute agreement. Bittle (1939:173) says that God is absolute, eternal, infinite, ontological Truth. Creatures have relative, temporal, finite ontological truth. “Ontological truth, therefore, is an essential attribute of all being, divine and human, actual and possible, necessary and contingent. Consequently, the ultimate foundation of all truth consists in the essential conformity of all things to the Divine Mind” (Bittle 1939:173). The human person has his/her actual or potential being by imitating the essence of God, and because God’s ideas and essence are identical, in agreeing with God the individual also agrees with God’s intellect, which means to be ontologically true. The more the human conforms to the infinite essence and ideas of God; the more the he realizes the ontological truth, the transcendent attribute of his being. The self-realization of any being would imply being faithful to the truth of what constitutes the self.

Goodness, the third transcendental attribute of being, is a fundamental concept of the human mind. Good is what all desire and a thing is classified as good in so far as it is suitable to a natural tendency. The perfection of goodness is the full actualization of a being according to the exigencies of its nature relative to the purpose
absent, there is a privation of reality. According to Catholic teaching, in Thomistic terms, evil is the privation of the required good that ought to be there. Evil of whatever nature, as it is a privation of good, works against the self-realization of being. Good is a transcendental property of all being: every being is good and whatever is good is being. Self-realization works alongside the goodness of being, which derives from the supreme Principles of Good and is entirely dependent on God, the supreme Principle of Good.

These transcendental attributes of being: oneness, truth and goodness are essential contributing factors to the process of the self-realization of being. The very act of self-realization is experienced in the individual’s transcendentality, in which the transcendental essence of the self is manifested to the person. This entire process implies that the individual allows its self to be grasped by the essence of these transcendental properties.

It is the objective of a theology of self-realization to facilitate the integration of the fullness of Being by bringing the transcendental properties of the primordial, original condition. Rahner (1966:443) concurs that human self-realization is a gradual process and becomes integrated into the totality of the acceptance of one’s own nature.
CHAPTER FOUR.

A THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF SELF-REALIZATION.

4.1 Introduction.

Until now the aim of this research has been to establish a broad understanding of the self and its own realization. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a specific theological interpretation of self-realization. The valuable insights obtained thus far have created an essential ambience in which to search for the significance of self-realization within a theological framework. Though this section discerns the basic theological lines of inquiry into both the self and self-realization, there is often no ready-made access to self-realization. For this reason the research sets out to establish a scheme of categories, concepts or images which will clarify the meaning of self-realization. In the effort to obtain clarification the investigation will often relate back to the philosophical, psychological and spiritual ideas already established. The theological study cannot begin to do justice to the many subtleties and nuances in the concept of self in the many varied theological writings. The theological exploration will focus mainly on to the theological writings of Karl Rahner. By this it is hoped that greater light will be shed on the thesis as a whole.

4.2. Self-realization and self-transcendence.

The term transcendence emerged frequently in this research and ordinarily it is taken to refer the state of being attributable to God, in relation to the state of being of the world. The aim here is not to clarify the transcendence of God, but rather to note that transcendence is a constitutive element of being human, and to discover how it is linked to self-realization. Transcendence with its root in the Latin verb 'transcendo', means to "climb across" or to "climb over". In English it means to "pass over" or to "go beyond" either a physical obstacle or a
non-physical limit (Orr 1981:5). Does self-realization imply that the human person goes beyond the self, surpasses fixed limits, boundaries and determinants?

Bernard Lonergan (1972:104), a Jesuit philosopher and theologian, says the human being achieves authenticity in transcending the self. Authenticity in this regard implies achieving genuine realness of being. To appreciate this assertion, it is necessary to ascertain how transcendence constitutes the human ability for self-realization. Lonergan points out that transcendence is the opposite of immanence. The human person has the freedom either of being content with the known, in the ordinary sense of the term, or to go beyond that which is affirmed as reality. He says: “One can be content with knowing things related to us, or can go beyond to grasp the dynamic structure of our rational knowing and doing and then formulate a metaphysics and an ethics” (Lonergan 1954:635). The transcendent realm is conceived as either beyond humanity or it forms the ultimate in the whole process of “going beyond”. It is the elementary matter of raising questions that assists the human person in going beyond. Transcendence means the development of an individual’s knowledge, relevant to a development of his/her being. Lonergan (1954:636) asserts, “The immanent source of transcendence in man is his detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know”. Self-transcendence implies “going beyond the subject, but also it seeks what is independent of the subject” (Lonergan 1972:104). According to Lonergan, what constitutes the human capacity for self-transcendence, is our capacity to ask questions, to reflect with intelligence and to deliberate. The realization of this capacity becomes actual when a person falls in love and becomes what Lonergan calls a “being-in-love” (Lonergan 1972:105). Seemingly this “being-in-love” comes in different forms and has its own antecedents, its causes, its conditions, its occasions. Once the “being-in-love” is realized, it turns out to be a dominant factor in the individual’s life, from which flows
desires and fears, joys and sorrows, discernments of values as well as personal decisions and deeds (Lonergan 1972:105).

4.2.1. Love as the ultimate capacity for self-transcendence.

Though there are many ways of being a "being-in-love", Lonergan (1972:111) is convinced that being in love with God in an unrestricted fashion, is the ultimate fulfilment of a human's capacity for self-transcendence. All love amounts to self-surrender, and being in love with God is a "being-in-love" without limits, qualifications, conditions or reservations. Just as unrestricted questioning constitutes the human's capacity for self-transcendence, so too does being in love in an unrestricted fashion bring about the proper realization of that capacity (Lonergan 1972:106). Being-in-love with God is therefore basic to self-realization which is manifested in a deep-seated joy that can remain despite humiliation, failure, privation, pain, betrayal and desertion. It brings about radical peace, love of neighbour and of the Kingdom of God on earth. In Lonergan's (1972:105) view, the lack of love opens the way to the trivialization of human life, ruthless exercising of power and meaninglessness of life.

Love is always relationship; the self that loves and is in relationship, reaches out to others. It is evident, since persons belong so deeply to, and are inextricably linked with others, that an individual's self-realization does not occur in isolation but requires the self-realization of others. Human love, deriving from God's love, has as its richest commonality the human person, who is made for love. The urgent desire to share in a loving relationship, is God's most innermost self within the person.

For self-realization to be authentic, it has to occur in freedom, and Rahner (1978:38) is very precise in the manner in which he defines this freedom. He describes it, not as the power to refrain from doing this or that, but as the power to decide about oneself and to realize
possible by virtue of the "supernatural existential"\(^\text{11}\), the openness to
the divine source of meaning and fulfilment, which affects the whole
self. In seeking self-realization the person has to be attentive to the
transcendent within and beyond himself or herself. This demands
openness to the transcendent in the act of knowing and loving, and
the cultivation of a graced nature, which enables one to listen and
hear God's word within oneself and in one's world. This self-realization
which leads to a deepening of one's experience of God and self, is
apparent in an enhancement of freedom, the upliftment of
consciousness, the provoking of awe, unrest, questioning, and
movements of love.

It is clear that for Rahner (1969:178-196) freedom is that created
capacity for God in a movement of self-realization, and this only God
can orchestrate. The human person has the choice either to respond
to, and turn towards God or to turn away. The totality of freedom is
incorporated in what Rahner terms the "fundamental option" which
implies the human choice towards the fullness of life. The proper
exercising of this option orientates the person towards God and
shapes the self towards the good. Self-realization is this inner
yearning of the self and can be fulfilled in some concrete, somatic way
in God. The transcendent experience of truth, goodness, beauty,
freedom from suffering and for love, is what constitutes the human
that Christ is illustrative of the transcendent openness of God's self-
communication, and this, in Rahner's theology, is also characteristic
of the human person.

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\(^{11}\) Rahner uses his theological construct of the supernatural existential to indicate that human nature
with its openness to being, a scholastic term "obediential potency" for fulfilment of being. A person's
concrete existence becomes ordered by God Rahner 1978:126-133 as well as T.I. 1: 297-317.)
4.3.1. Human self-realization in freedom

In terms of Rahner’s theological anthropology, freedom manifests the same transcendentality as knowledge. This is due to the fact that the free person has a necessary orientation of self towards God. Rahner (1961:123) points out that freedom involves taking responsibility for oneself by employing the ability to create the self. This ability is conditioned by a necessary orientation to the absolute good, and is thus not only rooted in God, but gravitates towards God as its goal. God is genuinely implicated in all human choices and a rejection of God, whom Rahner describes as the horizon of all freedom, is the ultimate act of self-contradiction. Freedom, in Rahner’s view, is self-realization, that is more the capacity to constitute oneself as person, rather than the ability to make choices. A series of decisions may appear harmless, yet it is in the very act of choosing that one becomes a person, or if one so chooses otherwise, one becomes a thing. In this sense choices serve as a witness to an individual’s yearning for life. Very apparent in Rahner’s writings is that he considers love at its deepest level, as the realization of human freedom. He regards love as a free bestowal, the giving away of self, an event of wonder and grace, the abandoning and opening of one’s innermost self to and for the uncontrollable mystery of the other. As knowledge, in Rahner’s terms, is possible only by a Vorgriiff, a going beyond oneself, so love is possible only by reaching beyond oneself in exstasis (Rahner 1973:249-251; 1974: 200; 1974:189). In that love for another is freedom’s fulfilment. Indeed for Rahner (1974: 231-249), love of God and love of neighbour are identical since the primordial relation of the person to God is love of neighbour. Loving the neighbour for his or her own sake is precisely what Rahner perceives as the love of God. The reason he does so is because the categorical act of love for another can occur only within the horizon of the transcendental love of God. It is “the sober service of political love directed towards all of humanity and making the most distant person one’s neighbour” (Rahner 1972:188). Love of God and neighbour is but one name for
the same reality – one cannot exist without the other. Human relationship with God can be mediated only through relationships with other people and the world.

Exploring Rahner’s views, Duffy (1993:278), a Catholic systematic theologian, asserts that the concrete, unconditional acts of a free person who mediates self-realization, are always novel and undetermined. Part of the self-realizing person is to be encountered in his or her free self-disclosure, and the fullest expression occurs in the act of love, where one gives oneself to another. Love is a free bestowal, not a natural flowing out of the self. The opening of one’s innermost self to and for another is always wonder and grace. Love of self is ultimately love of God. Freedom is also hemmed in by sense perception, for the spirit must turn to the sensible world to taste the good it must seek. God is known and loved when something else is known and loved; the infinite is found in the finite, the extraordinary in the ordinary. Being with self is essentially being with another in knowledge and love (Duffy 1993:280).

It is obvious from Rahner’s (1974:155) theology that human self-realization comes about both by the mediation of objects of sensibility, and above all through encounter with other persons. Because the human being is temporal, it never in any single moment, comes to complete self-possession. Self-realization, is therefore caught up in a process involving past moments of self-realization (anamnesis) and projected future possibilities (prognosis), and in a tension between person and nature.

*The human person’s search for self-realization is termed the search for salvation.* More specifically salvation is described as the definite validity of one’s true self-understanding and self-realization in freedom before God. Duffy (1993:281) reflecting on Rahner, says that salvation is “the acceptance of the definite self as it is conveyed to one in virtue of the categorical decisions through which one has
interpreted and lived out of transcendence. By reason of one’s concrete choices, an eternal self finds fulfilment”.

4.3.2. Freedom as self-realization.

From a calculated theological perspective and as previously mentioned, Rahner (1969: 211) defines freedom, as well as the exercise of human freedom, as the highest realization of the human person, particularly as it is terminated in love. He presents “freedom” first of all as “freedom of being”. He describes it not merely as the quality of an act, but rather as a transcendental qualification of being human. This is a gift from God that by itself conditions the orientation of the individual person towards God, is shaped by the fundamental option in which one’s destiny is bound up with God, or with the self alone apart from God (Kelly 1992:47). Rahner (1969:212) claims that if gaining eternity and determining one’s destiny depend on the choices that the human individual makes, understood as the ability to choose between good and evil, then freedom is first of all “freedom of being”. This is so because under normal circumstances, a person is subjectively concerned with his or her own being. For this reason everything that happens to a person takes place in relation to the self. Because of this freedom of being, the human person cannot be compared to anything else. It is untouchable, unsheltered and Rahner describes it as a lonely responsibility to the solitary self. Freedom as viewed by Rahner (1969:212), is “not the capacity to choose any object or mode of conduct, rather it is the freedom of self-understanding, of saying “yes” or “no” to oneself, the possibility of deciding for or against oneself which corresponds to knowing the subjectivity of humanity”.

It is apparent that freedom cannot be reduced or confined to a mere choice between individual objects, but it is the self-realization of the person who makes a choice. Only within this freedom is the individual capable of realizing him/herself and is free concerning the material of
his own self-realization. Rahner (1969:214) claims that the choices people make are inescapably linked to their self-realization. The human person cannot wish choices away, but will always be burdened with a decision to choose or not to choose God. This amounts to a radical self-realization or a self-refusal with regard to God. Understood in this manner self-realization is intimately connected with the freedom of making choices either for God or against God. “This self-perfecting of freedom into the eternal moment” says Rahner (1969:214), “is its self-realization before God”.

In sum freedom is always the self-realization of a person making his own choice with regard to his whole accomplishment before God. This is brought about by the capacity of the heart for love. It is a fundamental act of humanity whereby he can gather his whole nature and life, embrace all bliss, despair, sin, redemption, and the love of God, without which the human person will be horribly conscious of a radical void and nothingness (Rahner 1969:215).

The love of God is the only total integration of human existence. It gives content to human dignity, of temporal eternity as well as to the eternity which is born from being present to God (Rahner 1969: 215). Human freedom is to be integrated into the sovereign freedom of God. As Rahner (1969:217) says “human freedom is free self-realization towards achieving finality”.

Real freedom must be present in our experience, and the experience of freedom is transcendental. It precedes, governs and is present in the whole of our ordinary experiences. This transcendental freedom is present precisely through the medium of everyday experience: “freedom and responsibility, like self-awareness and personhood, are realities of subjective experience” (O Donovan 1981:24). Freedom is who one is, as one creates oneself in time and relationships, the person one has already become and the person one proposes to be in the future. Freedom is therefore not the ability to do this or that, but
the power to decide about ourselves and to actualize ourselves. The original freedom of the human person has to do with the whole person as whole person. All decisions about life, vocation, career, and family are only truly free if they mediate or concretize transcendent freedom. The purpose of transcendental freedom is the responsibility to create ourselves in the given circumstances of life and of this world. Only in eternity can human freedom exists as final, complete and fully actualized (O Donovan 1981:26).

Rahner argues that God is ever present in enhancing freedom, uplifting, consciousness, provoking awe, unrest, questioning and movements of love that lead to a deepening of one's experience of both God and Self. Kelly reflects that for Rahner, freedom is that of the created capacity for God in a movement of self-realization that only God can orchestrate, while allowing room for the individual to turn away from the very source and goal of the fullness sought. (Kelly1992:46). In other words the correct use of freedom is always a choice and a response to grace. This implies that the choice for self-realization, to reach authentic human completeness, is also a human choice. It is never a forced issue and neither coerced by God nor humanity.

Rahner has often been criticized for failing to develop human intersubjectivity in his theology. This is the case in his early theological writings where he left it implicit, but in his later writings he became more interpersonal. He did, however, in Hearer of the Word (1969), refer to the necessity of interpersonal becoming, but it was in later works that he dealt with it more fully. For Rahner (1963:265-282) a human being is never completely beisich because it is spirit and matter and can realize itself only through encounter with an 'other'. The person encounters the self only in encountering others. In this sense Rahner concurs with Heidegger who also claims that self-realization does not occur in isolation. Nevertheless, Rahner's analysis of human transcendence does not push far enough for theology, and as a philosophical reflection it shows God as the asymptotic goal of
human striving, but does not tell whether or not by some means the human ever reaches this goal. He does however maintain that grace is the *woraufhin* of the human drive in knowledge and freedom. While love is a free bestowal and not the natural outflow of the self, the opening of one's innermost self to and for another is always grace (Duffy 1993:278). Self-realization occurs only in relation of self to others and to God. Love of self is ultimately love of God.

4.4. **Love as the full realization of transcendental freedom.**

From a practical perspective Rahner holds that love, the full realization of transcendental freedom, and the good towards which free persons have a natural orientation, is the final fulfilment of the human person. Freedom is about taking responsibility for oneself and involves the ability to create the self by utilizing the natural orientation to absolute good (Duffy 1993:278). Since God is the source of freedom, it also gravitates towards God as its goal, and for this reason God is implicated in all decisions made by the human person. If therefore one's decision is to reject God, this serves as an act of self-contradiction. Freedom, which involves more the ability to constitute oneself as a person than to choose, is in itself, self-realization. Often a number of decisions may appear to be neutral, yet in the act of choosing, the individual becomes a person as opposed to a thing.

According to Duffy's (1993:278) interpretation of Rahner, the concrete, categorical acts of a free person, which mediate self-realization, are always novel and undetermined. Self-realization therefore, includes encountering a person in free self-disclosure, which in its fullest expression occurs in the act of love, where one gives oneself to another.

Rahner is often criticized for failing to develop in his theology, the question of human inter-subjectivity, which, it is claimed, was implicit in his theological analysis rather than explicit. This is not entirely the
case since he does refer to the necessity of interpersonal love, and the necessity of reaching fulfilment. He also uses the term ‘intrapersonal becoming’. This may not be evident in earlier writings, but it is definitely so in later works. He is strong in his insistence that the human person can only realize itself through encounter with another. One encounters oneself only in encountering others (Rahner 1963:265-287).

Rahner’s theology reaches the conclusion that love is the realization of human freedom at its deepest level. He describes love as the free bestowal, the giving away of self, an event of wonder and grace, the abandoning and opening of one’s innermost self to and for the uncontrollable mystery of the other. Love is possible, says Rahner, only by a reaching beyond oneself in _ecstasis_ (Rahner 1961:123). Love for another is freedom’s fulfilment. This includes love of God and neighbour, and Rahner (1974: 231-249) stresses that the primordial relation (of the person) to God, is love of neighbour. While the neighbour is loved for his or her sake, Rahner takes this love to be love of God. His theological reason is that the categorical act of love for another can occur only within the horizon of the transcendental love of God (Rahner 1972:188). Love of God and neighbour is but two names for the same reality. Human relationship with God can be mediated only through relationship with other human beings and the world.

The act of knowing and loving involves a return of the subject to itself, and a free constituting of the self by relating to others. It is this ability for self-constitution that brings about self-realization. While Rahner’s transcendental analysis of transcendence shows God to be the asymptotic goal of human striving, it does not go so far as to say whether or not human beings can ever reach this goal. Grace is that divine capacity which enables the human drive to search for self-realization in freedom.
Self-realization is embedded in the human spirit's desire for Absolute being, for infinite truth, for God, as a loving divine reality. It implies some spiritual self-awareness. The openness of the human being to the Absolute Being is possible only by the obediential potency, which according to Rahner, enables one to be open to God. This potency is the human person's in his/her self-transcending state.

Self-realization of a person is not given like a birthmark, it is the result of exercising one's freedom responsibly before God, and this implies becoming a person. Exercising one's freedom constitutes the making of one's selfhood.

4.4.1. Love realizes the self to God

It is evident that love is an important element in the human person's quest for self-realization and authenticity. However as a term, 'love' is ambiguous. It is and has been used as a label for much of what claims to be profound and meaningful. For the purposes of this research it is not necessary to develop an all-embracing definition of love. The present limited focus is the role of love as it relates self-realization. It would be impossible and irrelevant to study in the context of self-realization, the many different perspectives of love which appear to have been absolutized to fit many purposes and disciplines.

For the human person, the departure point is ordinary human love which can provide striking evidence of a self-transcendent desire for infinite love. In normal circumstances ordinary human love reaches its most edifying form of self-transcendence in the love of another human being. Human love is not a purely spiritual affair and neither is it expressed in exclusively physical terms. Essentially it is a dynamic exchange of two body-spirits releasing spiritual powers through bodily encounters. It is, as La Centra (1987:93, an American philosopher claims, a model par excellence of spiritual breakthrough, commonly referred to as conversion, both moral and religious, which
brings about a change of vision. According to Pittenger (1970:49) a British theologian, it is love-in-relationship that brings a human person to self-realization, and this implies fulfilling and satisfying potentialities. Love cannot be an outside relationship, as the self that loves is also the self that is loved. For the self-realization of one individual, the self-realization of the other is also a requirement, since in community one human belongs so inextricably to another. This is also a very African understanding of people, who become whole and real only through other people.

The love that leads to and brings about self-realization is not an emotion, but, according to Lieb (1961:66), is an ontological event. The most accurate characterization of love occurs in ontological rather than psychological terms. When love is an emotion it is felt, not for self but for the other, and this in itself is an event. This is so because love is a choice and self-realization is an event that is confirmed each day by personal choices. A person chooses to love or not, whom to love, how, when and why. In this sense, writes La Centra (1987:54), love is as basic a need as the human desire for self-realization.

Human love, in order to utilize its spiritual powers so as to bring about self-realization, must be purified of all its biases and distortions. Love and friendship favour spiritual powers and are capable of transforming one's need of human companionship into an appreciation of another, who shares a common understanding of important facts and values, common judgment and commitments. The realization of one's true identity is to be found in the mysteries of human love and this, says La Centra (1987:72), is always accompanied by the indestructible longing of the human spirit for transcendent love, the love of God.

'Love-in-relation' is not an accidental reality, but an eternal necessity. People-in-relation are internally constituted to one another in a structural way (Lieb 1961-66). The experience of 'love-in-relation' is
what Kierkegaard calls the fulfilled moment, and Nietzsche calls the “Great Noontide”. Human love fully experienced and understood is a contact point between God and humanity. According to La Centra (1987:106), falling in love with people is “a bit more frightening than falling in love with God, for loving people challenges our grasp of ourselves and our willingness to discover and accept others as they are. Lovers must be willing interpreters of each other’s experience, the inward experiences of fears, moods, fantasies and the outward experiences of everyday living”. While human love is a dim reflection of the love of God, it is nevertheless a critical point of contact with the mysterium tremendum. In human love one has the unique opportunity of recognizing one’s true self in and through one’s devotion to the other (La Centra 1987:116).

In terms of the theology of symbol, human love serves as a sacred symbol of Divine love. The mystical dimension of the human person, which is the transcultural phenomenon of God’s gift of love, is available to all who are willing to accept faith and hope as the mystery of that love. The human person is made for love, the image of God in him or her is the urgent desire to share in loving relationship in God’s most innermost self (Pittenger 1970:50). In the act of self-realization, all penetrating and all integrating love unite the person with others and with God, the source of love. By allowing oneself to be grasped by the love of God, is to realize what it is to become in full freedom the expressive agent for the deepest and highest love, God-self (Pittenger 1970:84).

Love is not the only factor at work in the process of self-realization of which faith forms an integral element. The act of faith allows one to be grasped by love, which is to grant oneself the freedom to be grasped by God. Faith, since it holds an inherent element which enables human self-transcendence, brings the individual to the point of self-realization and beyond. In this sense one could say that faith transcends self-realization.
4.5. Faith as an act of self which transcends self-realization.

Not many theologies of faith take cognizance of the importance of the understanding of self, and this despite the fact that from a Christian perspective faith is a total act of unconditional, infinite and ultimate concern, and a gift from God. In this act a person gains an understanding of the meaning of the ultimate, the unconditional, the absolute, the infinite. In this sense faith is a human potential and human potentials are powers that strive towards self-realization. According to Droege (1978:35), faith is not only the means to self-realization, but it is the Christian term often employed when there is talk about self-realization in relation to God.

Self-realization would normally have psychological connotations, while faith is associated with theology or spirituality. Consequently there are practical difficulties in combining the various components of the two sciences. A successful association depends on the nature of the understanding these sciences have of both self-realization and faith, and this, argues Droege (1978:35, entails knowledge of the psychological and theological views of humanity. While it is understood that the common denominator between psychology and theology is the self of the human person, the whole act of faith is regarded, not as an isolated occurrence, but an act of the total personality. This act includes all the unconscious and conscious elements of an individual’s personality structure. However, the question is, are the theological and psychological experiences of the human person fundamentally the same kinds of experience as those that facilitate human self-realization?

J. Forsyth (1997:133) observes that the call to faith is considered as an invitation to self-realization, insofar as it is understood to be the effort of an individual towards authentic humanity. Self-realization in this faith-context is understood as a move forward towards fullness of human life. This requires a kind of self-transformation or self-
transcendence, seen by Forsyth (1997:134) as analogous to the Christian experience of redemption. Forsyth asserts that faith, when experienced authentically, is a *theonomes*, that is a religious experience. It is, at the same time, an expression of authentic human growth, the goal of which is self-realization rather than *homeostasis*. Forsyth (1997:134) grounds his argument on the understanding that faith is a process of self-transcendence which involves a kind of self-transcending transformation of motives, posited as an element of psychological adulthood and maturity. However, while the experience of faith is regarded as intrinsic to the attainment of human maturity and fulfillment, it does not reduce faith to a humanistic value. What it does is to restate in contemporary terms, the traditional theological theme of the relationship between nature and grace. Many psychologists such as Erikson, Piaget and Kohlberg, reiterate that healthy human development provides a natural foundation for sound religious development, and for the achievement of religious maturity. It follows therefore that a commitment of faith would require a degree of personal maturity so as to provide direction and orientation to personality growth and human self-realization (Forsyth 1997:XV).

It follows that since the same self relates both to God and to other human beings, the individual knows him or herself in relation to God, as well as in relation to others. Faith, as trust in God, has similar qualities and dynamics as trust in another human being. While the relational dynamic of trusting God and human persons is acknowledged, the differences that exist between trusting God and trusting fallible human beings, should not be disregarded. The important factor here is that the development of trust is the beginning of selfhood, and self-realization can be defined in terms of authentic human selfhood. Trust as an act of faith, has both theological and psychological connotations, particularly when it is defined within interpersonal relations. For this purpose it is functional to utilize contemporary psychological insights on self-realization as a help to a better understanding of the dynamics of faith. It is imperative
therefore, that since both theological and psychological experiences are consistently involved in human self-realization, an understanding of self should, of necessity, be implicit in the relationship of an individual with God.

4.5.1. Faith as an act of self.

Paul Tillich (1957:4), a Prussian born, United States citizen, and systematic theologian, presents faith, which involves the individual’s entire personality, as a free act of the whole self. The individual’s spiritual life is fully engaged and the act of faith constitutes the unity of every facet of that life. He defines faith as a personal relationship with one’s ultimate concern, in this case God, who requires personal devotion, attention, total surrender and commitment. In this sense faith is an act of the total self, because it participates in the dynamics of the individual’s entire, personal life.

Tillich (1957:4) believes that because in the act of genuine faith the whole body participates, it is a passionate act that involves the instincts of a person’s entire psyche. Faith is therefore not just a belief in something, but as understood from a Catholic perspective, it is the human person’s response to the gift of God’s grace. Droege (1978:ix) endorses Tillich’s position, stating that while faith has in fact no existence apart from a relationship with God, it is at the same time also an “act of the self”.

To view faith as an ‘act of self’, implies that it is not just an arbitrary occurrence, but involves the essence of one’s life and constitutes the most centred act of the human mind. Present in the act of faith is an intellectual element affirmed by the Second Vatican document on Revelation (Dei Verbum: 3008) as “the full homage of intellect and will to God who reveals”. The Catholic Church teaches that the obedience of faith (Romans 16:26) must be given to God who reveals. It is an obedience by which one entrusts one’s whole self freely to God,
offering the full submission of intellect and will to the One who reveals, and freely assenting to God-given revelation (Dei Verbum 5). Vatican II, despite the fact that it made a special effort to build trust, commitment, obedience and submission into the statement on faith, did not minimize the intellectual element of assent. Dulles (1991:105), the American Jesuit and systematic theologian, explains that with every assent of faith the believer intends to achieve union with the mind of God. It is a mysterious union since God, is both the formal and the primary object of faith.

In respect of faith as a free act of the whole self, Tillich (1957:6) asserts that such an act involves a person’s entire personality. To describe faith as a free act of the whole self is justified in that such an act encompasses the person’s spiritual life, and constitutes the unity element of the core of the self. By virtue of the fact that it is a free act, it provides steadiness, direction and purpose to human life, and places the person in a living relationship with aspects of the revealed mystery. It enables the individual to understand, in an immediate way, the meaning of the ultimate, the absolute, and the infinite, that is, God. This of itself makes faith a human potentiality, that is, according to Tillich (1957:9), the power that drives towards self-realization. Entering the sphere of faith, is for the person concerned entering the sphere of life, and this provides him/her with an awareness of holiness. The act of faith also enables one to be grasped by the infinite. In this sense the act of faith is an infinite act with all the limitations of a finite act. However the infinite participates beyond the limitations of a finite act. During the act of faith the individual surrenders his/her self, and the very act of transcending the self is hardly possible without faith. Transcending the self is to experience the holy, and in this sense the act of faith brings about the integration of the personality. Faith, as ultimate concern, serves as the integrating centre of personal life, and to be without an integrating centre is to lack the fullness of humanity. The centre unites all elements of the person’s life, corporeal, unconscious and the spiritual.
In the act of faith every nerve of a person’s body, every striving of a person’s soul, every function of a person’s spirit is operative. Faith, argues Tillich (1957:106), is therefore not only a matter of the mind or soul in isolation from the body. It is the centred movement of the whole self towards something of ultimate meaning and significance. The integrating power of faith has healing power, hence the term “faith healing”. The healing takes the form of uniting the personality: spiritual and physical. This integrating power is an ultimate concern and the driving force behind self-realization, and the individual by seeking the infinite, discovers his/her own self-realization. Therefore it is essential that faith be realized as a living reality, and because faith participates in the dynamics of personal life, it is expressed in action. In this sense faith implies love because love lives in works, and faith is actualized in works (Tillich 1957:115).

In the struggle towards human self-realization, love and faith are not separate entities. The love-concept, as an inner movement of the heart, brings the individual to self-realization and all personal potentialities are considered. To have faith in the actualization of a deep, all penetrating and all integrating love, unites one with others as well as with the source of love, namely God. The path of true self-realization is through the actualization of one’s human possibility towards God, who energizes, nourishes and creates human life in action. In this sense each person is responsible for his or her own self-realization. Yet faith is a call that goes beyond the ordinary, it transcends all that is mundane and even that which is most significant.

4.5.2. Faith transcends self-realization

While self-realization is indeed the goal of spiritual and personality growth, it can also be self-defeating, when without any spiritual reference, it becomes psychologically fixated on a consciously sought goal. According to V.Frankl (1969:38) the Austrian psychotherapist,
(with first hand experience of the inhuman conditions of the German concentration camps), the achievement of an authentic human existence, tantamount to self-realization, depends on the extent to which a person transcends the self by responding to an objective world of meaning and value. In this sense faith not only facilitates a person’s effort towards self-realization, but it enables the individual to transcend the striving for self-realization. In the milieu of faith the motivation for self-realization is replaced by self-transcendence. By virtue of its transforming and liberating quality, faith can empower a person of faith to go beyond or transcend the attempt to authenticate his or her personal existence. In this regard faith is perceived as a radical alternative to all human efforts towards self-realization and self-authentication, whether it is religiously inspired or not. Forsyth (1997:94) points out that faith offers a radical choice to be exercised within freedom, and represents the transcendent goal of the self-realization drive. In this context the human person comes to the understanding that the realization of authentic living comes as a gift from God, and that it is not an end in itself. Frankl (1969:38) who argues that self-realization is not the individual’s ultimate destination, not even the primary intention, agrees with Forsyth on this point. He says if “self-realization becomes an end in itself, it contradicts the self-transcendent quality of human existence”. He argues that self-realization is the effect of meaning and of fulfilment. A person should first find meaning, because the pursuit of self-realization loses its justification if it is without meaning. He claims that if a person becomes over-concerned with self-realization it is because he or she suffers from a frustration of the will to meaning. For this reason Frankl suggests that the human person goes beyond self-realization to self-transcendence in the ambience of faith. He states that self-transcendence is possible only when both the self and the conscious pursuit of self-realization are abandoned. This is possible by committing oneself to some ultimate concern, or to something or someone beyond oneself. In this context the Christian faith provides the human person with a radically new understanding of personal
existence, given in the light of the New Testament images such as one can only “find oneself” by “losing oneself” (Matthew 10:39). The seed that dies is the one that bears fruit, forsaking one’s goals for the sake of the kingdom and thereby receiving the very things one has forsaken. The one who loses his life will find it. Matthew (10:39), expresses the paradoxical Christian view that the fullness of life is not merely achieved by self-realization, but through faith as an act of self-transcendence. A person finds this authentication of life by transcending the self in faith. It is by looking into the depths of reality that one discovers one’s own finitude, and only by discovering the boundary or limit of one’s personal finitude can the unconditional infinite be discovered. According to Karl Barth, the Swiss Protestant theologian, only at the boundary of human possibility does one discover divine possibility. This “boundary situation” as Tillich (1962:153) calls it, or the “abyss” of the mystics, is described as the ‘nothingness’ which threatens finite existence. It is in the realization of the finite, the limited nature of all human activity and fulfilment, that the threat of ‘non-being’ is experienced. For Tillich (1962:153), this is the point at which genuine faith becomes a reality, for to have faith means “to be grasped by the power of being itself”.

Self-realization, when understood from a psychological perspective, as attaining a sense of perfection or superiority for personal gain and not related to other human beings, becomes a form of egocentric self-enhancement and self-serving. A person’s life has meaning only when it is authentically other-centred. The purpose of a faith experience is precisely to lift the believer out of self-preoccupation and beyond the pursuit of perfection. This permits the self-transcending quality of faith to liberate the individual from egoistic motives thus enabling him/her to move towards true love.

Faith, as an act of self-transcendence and transformation, liberates the individual who is rendered capable of a self-transcending commitment. Faith, which involves an experience of self-
transcendence, takes place as a result of a relationship with God. Self-realization without any reference to God qualifies as a humanistic pursuit and is in itself self-defeating. Through faith the person enters into a personal relationship of trust with God, trust similar to all human relationships. Forsyth (1997:197) points out that "the purpose of the transforming experience of faith is to liberate the believer from self-preoccupation so that he becomes capable of some degree of altruistic, self-transcending love and service towards others which is free of egoistic motives...". Faith as an act of freedom implies that self-realization takes place in freedom if it has to have any significance and meaning. Freedom, which plays an integral part in the process towards self-realization, is a theological theme already explored in this thesis. It has very deep implications for personal growth, spiritual development and the exercise of freedom.

4.6. Evaluative commentary.

Significant theological insights on concept of self-realization which have emerged in this chapter will make a relevant contribution towards the formulation of a theology of self-realization. Certain characteristics which are central to the theological anthropology of Rahner, need additional theological unwrapping in order to clarify and make more comprehensible the concept and implications of self-realization.

The theological principle: God is Mystery, which serves as the foundation of Rahner's theological anthropology, also determines the starting point for the formulation of a theology of self-realization. If God is Mystery then the human person is also mystery, and all aspects of human life are attuned to God as mystery. By virtue of the fact that the human's entire existence is a reference to God who is Infinite Mystery, the human being as mystery, is also difficult to comprehend. Rahner (1966:36; 1989:57) is justified in saying that God remains Absolute Mystery and as such will always remain
unintelligible to the human person, who is experienced only as the horizon and goal of human transcendence in knowledge and freedom. Motzko (1976:61) also maintains that any understanding in the search for a theology of human self-realization should therefore consider and incorporate the direct reference to the mystery and incomprehensibility of God.

Bearing in mind the notion that the essence of the person’s nature, linked as it is to the incompressibility of God, is mystery and therefore indefinable, it is reasonable to conclude that the human person exists at all times out of the mystery of God. This implies that human self-realization will not be without elements of incomprehensibility and mystery. Even though Rahner’s anthropology presents the human person as mystery, it is not a mystery equal to God, the only Divine Mystery. Nevertheless, God as Mystery constitutes the primordial and necessary conditions of the very mystery that each person is. The human person as mystery, is in a humble, conscious state of reference to the fullness of Divine Mystery. Because personal self-realization does not occur by human effort alone, this awareness is imperative. Rahner’s theology makes clear that sensibility and intellect collaborate together in human cognition. In more precise, metaphysical terms it can be said that the human person has a distinctive human self-realization capacity. Understood in this sense the self-realization of the person also bears reference to God, and thus is not unrelated to the fullness of God as Divine Mystery. This connection between God and the human person ensures that the human being will always remain a mystery, and it is in this theological setting that self-realization takes place.

Rahner’s (1966:108) theology argues that just as the human person, by freely allowing him/herself to be grasped by this infinite mystery, is understood only in reference to the Infinite Mystery, so too is the process of self-realization, which forms part of this act of being grasped by God, is a mysterious surrender to God. “Mystery”, in this
instance does not, as in the popular understanding of the term, imply something that is provisionally "unknown", impenetrable, incomprehensible, or negative. It is fundamentally positive and signifies the horizon of all human knowledge and the fact that the human person is capable of knowledge precisely because s/he experiences the self as incomprehensible. It is from this understanding that Rahner's (1968:408) description of the human person as Spirit-in-the-world derives. He says that the human person possesses absolute openness of being, the distinctive transcendental quality that constitutes the natural, human capacity for self-realization. However, this transcendental property of being, which has a bearing on all other aspects of the person, needs activation. Despite the notion that the human person is mystery, human historicity and social nature cannot be bypassed, since the human person is also a biological and social organism. Consequently self-realization takes place in the world, in time, in history.


While authentic humanization is an important factor in the self-realization process, so too is divinisation, which forms part of the act of being grasped by God. This implies that the individual needs some basic structure or capacity that can facilitate self-realization. The supernatural existential, a phrase coined by Rahner (1996:126), gives expression to the basic structure of the whole person's existence, and permeates every experience in which a person is impelled towards the divine. The gift of the supernatural existential is a dynamic quality that brings a person's whole being into intimate contact with God. It shapes the whole of the individual's personhood by structuring into human nature the gift of openness to divine sources and to self-realization (Carr 1973:362).

Rahner (1968:37) identifies this distinctive capacity of the human person towards self-realization as receptivity for being. It means that the human person has the capacity to know any being, any particular
concrete object, as well as prior knowledge of being. As previously stated, Rahner refers to this as Vorgriff, which means the possibility of knowledge of any particular thing. This Vorgriff, or "pre-concept" of being, enables the human person, not only to know concrete objects around him, but also God (Rahner 1968: 63-64). By virtue of this pre-knowledge of being, the human person has already experienced God in a dim and unreflective way. God, although Absolute Mystery, is often unknown and hidden to the human, He is experienced as the infinite horizon glimpsed in the knowledge of concrete things (Rahner 1973:362).

Rahner’s (1985:65) anthropology portrays the human person as a self-transcendent being, capable of reaching to the infinite ground of all reality. It is precisely the ability to transcend, which forms part of Rahner’s distinctive belief that the human person has a basic capacity for self-realization, and he relates this capacity to what he terms the human person’s transcendental orientation towards God. He argues that the basic and original orientation of the individual is towards absolute mystery, which is a permanent existential of the person as a spiritual subject, and constitutes the individual’s fundamental experience of God (Rahner 1989:52). This transcendental orientation, as well as the human’s self-experience, is described by Vass (1985:3) in his reflection on Rahner, as an experience of grace. Rahner maintains that because the human person had a prior, pre-conscious, unthematic experience of God as self-transcendent being, he/she is always orientated towards the holy and absolute mystery. It is for this reason that Rahner encourages people to enter into their innermost depths so as to become fully self-aware, free to relate with God and so become self-realized.

It is clear that Rahner operates from the understanding that matter and spirit do not exist apart, unrelated to each other. Nevertheless he believes that the human person has a tendency to progress by means of self-transcendence, from spatio-temporal reality to finding the self
in the Spirit, and arrives at a point where there is a definite breakthrough in the human person to the level of being Spirit-in-the-World. While Rahner (1967:88) recognizes the human person as spirit, he does not claim that he functions outside the concrete realities of life. As spirit the individual exists on the border between God and the world, time and eternity. However, it is precisely through the spatio-temporal realities that God is encountered and the human realized. The individual’s categorical encounter with concrete reality in this world of things and persons, forms an intrinsic part of self-realization and the concrete living of the human person.

Rahner makes a distinction between the Absolute Spirit of God and the Finite Spirit of humanity. While the Absolute Spirit refers to God’s Infinite Spirit and the Finite Spirit, refers to the spirit of human beings, nevertheless these are very intimately related. The human spirit is spirit, because it is created with the capacity to experience and discern the Infinite Spirit of God; it originates from God and returns to God. Hence God remains the ultimate goal of the person’s growth and self-realization. As “spirit-in-the-world”, the human person knows and experiences in and through the world, but being spirit, indicates the person’s self-transcending capacity. It can be concluded that since Rahner maintains that self-realization occurs in and through experiences in the world, it can be inferred that it forms part of spatio-temporal realities. This appears to be in total contrast to the Platonic stand. Here self-realization applies only to the spiritual dimension of the person and consequently only to a spiritual or otherworldly experience. Being spirit, the person has the ability to be open to the infinite, self-transcendent, a questioner, free, immortal. However the fact that the person is also material, severely limited, historical, temporal and subject to death, does not prevent self-realization. Rather it constitutes the surrounding substance or existing conditions in which self-realization takes place.

As the whole of a person is endowed with the gift of self-transcendence and the ability to be conscious of both self and the Absolute/God, and
the human being is both physical and spiritual, these dimensions would feature equally in human self-realization. Motzko (1976:63) agrees that self-realization is not the result of human endeavour alone. The person is the incarnate possibility of transcendence into God. It is endowed with openness for the Divine, waiting at all times to be filled with ‘grace’ and God’s glory. Grace is the catalyst in seeking union with God, the highest fulfilment (self-realization) possible for human nature. It can therefore be deduced from the above argument that grace operates as the means that seeks and assists towards actualizing self-realization.

While grace enables a person to be orientated towards God, it also brings about an altered state in humanity, referred to by Rahner as humanity’s entitative alteration. This transformed state of the human person alternatively known as humanity’s graced nature, provides a deeper understanding of the individual’s supernatural orientation towards God. This existential orientation also penetrates the conscious existence, including both the knowledge and experience of the human person. The conscious awareness of this orientation provides the person with the knowledge of transcendent beings that are always striving beyond personal limits. While the individual is a questioner, possessing an unlimited ability to understand, finite capabilities are used to achieve this. As historical creatures the human persons operate in space and time, and existence in concrete reality is not an accidental addition to humanity’s transcendence, but the actual situation through which the human person comes to self-realization. It is within the concrete reality of the human situation that self-realization is considered both within the context of spatio-temporal limitations of human creatureliness as well as the unlimited drives of the transcendental dimensions of being human.

4.6.2. Self-realization as the transcendental fulfilment of love.

Self-realization needs reflection, and this form of religious experience is an essential component of the transcendental realization of love. Love is engendered by the human person’s encounter with God and it
is precisely in the transcendental fulfilment of love that the human
person experiences the act of self-realization. The very act of self-
realization which is experienced in the individual’s transcendentality,
manifests to the person the very essence of his/her self. In this entire
process a person is open to being grasped by Mystery, by God (Vass
1985:6). The essence of being for Rahner (1969:39-40), is to know and
be known. It is the “being present to itself” which refers to the self-
realization of being. A person achieves self-realization through its
expression, which is always in derivative agreement with its origin. It
is this knowledge of its original sense, namely self-knowledge,
explained by the relationship that exists between the degree of being,
and the degree in which it is able to be present to itself. For Rahner
being is both the knowing and being known, the self-realization or the
being present to itself as an existent being, since this self-realization
must occur by means of the symbol that becomes the central element
in his whole metaphysical synthesis. It is by the very process of self-
realization of being that one comes to know it.

The more a person gets to know God the more he knows himself. This
knowledge provides the person with insights into the inner structure
and limits of God’s self-realization (Vass 1985:3-4). The individual is of
necessity, the “Hearer of the Word” (1969), and this is regarded as a
pre-condition of revelation. God assists us in our self-understanding.
The human personhood coincides with the self-reflecting capacity of
the human spirit.

Rahner is of firm opinion, that only when the individual risks himself
radically for another, does he really discover his true self in a genuine
act of self-realization. If this is achieved, the individual grasps,
unthetically or explicitly, what is meant by God, the horizon and
the guarantor. It also facilitates a realization of the radical depth of
the love of the One who is existential and historical self-
communication, and the realm within which such love is possible.
This love is to be understood, both in an interpersonal and a social
sense, and the radical unity of both of these is the ground and the essence of the Church (Rahner 1978:456). Salvation amounts to the ultimate validity of our real self-understanding and free self-realization before God. It is the confirmation of our self-understanding and what we have chosen to be, not only in actions and ideas, but also within ourselves (O'Donovan 1981:26). It is only in the horizon of transcendence that we are really able to know ourselves and thus assume responsibility for ourselves as persons. If this is, then the experience of transcendence, it is not one moment among many in a lifetime, but is present in every experience. The human person, a spiritual being, discovers through personal transcendental experience that he/she is orientated to the mystery of God, and that this is the ground of all human knowledge and personal responsibility for doing good. It is thus that self-knowledge and the loving possession of the self constitutes the content of being and hence self-realization (Rahner 1966:229).

The feature of transcendence, characteristic to being human, is deeply imbedded in an authentic experience of faith. A legitimate faith experience is a religious experience, which at the same time has human growth components. This claim is based on the knowledge and insight that a faith experience involves a kind of self-transcending transformation of motives, posited as an element of psychological adulthood and maturity. Faith, when authentically experienced by a believer, involves a transformation of personality, forms part of sincere human existence, and takes the individual beyond self-realization.
SECTION TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

SELF-REALIZATION AND THE WOMAN.

5.1. Introduction

It must be recognized that a study on the self-realization of the woman is not simply a new formulation of contemporary feminist theories. Coming to terms with self-realization may demand the revision of Christian categories in ways that appreciate and take seriously the experience of women. It may include reconstructing the doctrine of humanity so as to reconsider the affirmative understanding and holistic growth of the female. It may also necessitate a positive deconstruction of feminism in an effort to establish a constructive theology that will facilitate the self-realization of the woman. While the feminist struggle to achieve equal status and recognition of woman is in itself noble, an inclusive theology of the self-realization of women, is of even greater importance. A theology that fosters self-realization, and in particular that of women, should be both interdisciplinary, and creative. This demands of theologian a preparedness to cross borders, establish new themes, formulate new problems, follow fresh approaches and discover new connections. While a theology of women should take cognizance of both past and contemporary approaches to theology, psychology and spirituality, a doctrine of self-realization should focus on what is essential for woman to develop a deeper sense of personhood, which in turn will enable her to integrate the depths of human understanding and freedom of spirit. By expanding the accepted idea of the spiritual psychology of Being that sustains an inclusive theological anthropology, a theology of self-realization should be such that it takes the woman beyond a sense of liberation to a wholeness of the human spirit. Self-realization of woman occurs at the level of being, not as is usually assumed in psychological theory, at
the level of the mind. It is essential that theology opens a new pathway designed for a more integral realization of the woman. This should be done in such a way that, without defensiveness, she would have the possibility of experiencing her own essential being as a full presence. This pre-supposes a concept of self-realization, based on a theological anthropology that involves the pursuit of a deep understanding of the nature of woman's true being, and a true experience of essence of being a woman.

5.2. Towards a theological anthropology that authenticates the self-realization of women.

While feminist theology tries to address and resolve the conditions that prevent women from realizing their full potential, a theology of self-realization seeks to transcend such a situation and focus on the essence of being. Since the goal of humanity is to realize the truth about being human, self-realization here implies an understanding of the reality of what it is to be a 'woman human being'. The truth about the humanity of a woman has in a sense gone astray, is in contradiction and in need of reconstruction. The Personal Essence of a true human being, which is neither spiritual nor worldly, is devoid of all sense of falsehood (Almaas 1988:17). The qualities of personal essence are fullness, autonomy, competence, respect, dignity, integrity, excellence, maturity, harmony and completeness. While it is very difficult to develop into a true human being, even under normal circumstances, it is compounded for women who struggle against misguided views concerning the essence of womanhood. Consequently women settle for an imitation or incomplete development of "woman growth". While feminism has created a progressive awareness in this regard, it has not done enough to enable women to transcend all sense of falsehood concerning their personal essence. One possible way to make provision for a theology of the self-realization of women is to deconstruct even feministic views in an effort to create a theology of self-realization that will facilitate the fullness of being woman.
According to John D. Caputo (1997:10) in dialogue with Jacques Derrida, a French-Algerian philosopher, the latter maintains that deconstruction is something that happens from the inside. For deconstruction to be at work from within feminism implies that the functioning and dysfunctioning of this theology has to be analyzed from inside its own position. This deconstruction from inside may facilitate the creation of space for the self-realization of the woman. For the purposes of self-realization, feminism ought to deconstruct itself so as to uproot, and to become independent of its own ground. The process of deconstruction which implies interest in new things, could assist in the inauguration or construction of new cultures and perceptions. Since it transcends the feminist struggle for liberation, deconstruction could provide the impetus, the drive, and the movement towards liberation and self-realization. Caputo (1997:17) says that deconstruction is "a call for justice", a call that is never fully answered. He explains that to speak of justice is not a matter of knowledge or of theoretical judgment. Justice is the relation of one person to the other. Once one relates to the other, as the other, then something incalculable occurs. Deconstruction gets its momentum from constantly suspecting and criticizing the given determinants of culture, of institutions and of legal systems. This is done to ensure that justice is applied justly, and to respect as justice, this relationship to the other (Caputo 1997:18).

To construct a theology that would facilitate the self-realization of woman, may necessitate both the deconstruction of the traditional understanding of women, and the formulation of another paradigm in terms of which women could be interpreted. Deconstruction functions on exposure, expansion, complexifications, and towards releasing unheard of possibilities to come. The very meaning of deconstruction is to show that things, texts, institutions, societies, beliefs, cultures and practices, do not have definable meanings. Deconstruction bends all its efforts to stretch beyond boundaries and transgress all confines.
It cracks open and disturbs tranquility. Regardless as to whether it means good news, it does not leave behind a path of destruction and smoldering embers (Caputo 1997:37). The business of deconstruction is to open and loosen things up and it is bent on giving our understanding of things a new twist.

Feminism as a complex socio-political theory, is not in itself equality. Neither does it guarantee equality, nor indeed self-realization. It needs to become a subject of endless analysis, critique and deconstruction. Deconstruction, before it can facilitate the self-realization of women, needs to open feminism to its own promise and enable it to become what it promises. Only then can it facilitate the self-realization of woman. Deconstruction can question feminism, even transform it, but because of its justice motive it will not demolish it. Deconstruction is a way of releasing and responding, listening and opening up. It is responsible not only to the dominant voices, but also to other voices: those that speak more gently, more discreetly and more mildly (Caputo 1997:57). It has to do with the oldest of the old and with what is to come. It is the welcoming of the other. Deconstruction can help feminism to examine its conscience and purify its motives, since feminism should be more than just an inner attitude or a personal stance. It should not limit its intention to the subversion of patriarchy, or the liberation women from social, cultural and religious oppression. It should transcend any fixation on areas that do not acknowledge the necessity of woman’s realization of her own humanness.

No doubt construction, without which humanity could not survive in this world, is a basic human act. Deconstruction, on the other hand, is a kind of dismantling of old structures, using available resources but re-organizing them differently. The processes of construction and deconstruction form part of the inescapable paradox and ambiguity of human activity. Hodgson (1994:40) claims that while a constructive theology will try not to waste any of the traditional resources, it will attempt to build these resources into new wholesome wholes oriented
to the redemption of humanity. Just as Christ enacted his own self-meaning, so too is it part of the anthropological challenge of the woman to reconstruct theological space which will facilitate her own self-realization. God is the inwardly felt lure or attractant of each person towards self-realization, and this does not take place in isolation, but in communion with the whole cosmos. Theology is grounded in human experience, which is the experience of being-in-the-world. The reconstruction of a theological anthropology will place emphasis on the psychological and sociological integration as well as the rejection of gender dualisms; good and evil, superior and inferior, male and female, which are rooted in early human consciousness. The underlying structure of the woman as a human being needs to be identified as finite freedom. Christians understand Christ’s humanity as the model of all authentic humanity, and by implication, the self-realization of the woman is to be discovered in Christ whose humanity presents us with an anthropology that accommodates the dignity of all persons.

Self-realization of the woman requires a sound and meaningful philosophical vision of human nature, society and of the general principles of life. A distorted theological anthropology underpins the woman’s unconscious internalization of inferiority and poor self-understanding. This thesis holds the opinion that the genuine self-regard of a woman is protected and facilitated by a transformed theological anthropology which will authenticate her dignity, and liberate her from distorted self-perceptions in respect of self-realization.

Anne Carr (1988:8) an American theologian and specialist on Karl Rahner, endorses his thesis that it is women themselves who ought to determine their own experience and create the means of their own self-realization. Carr (1988:8), following Rahner, also calls for the reconstruction of theology, which starts by viewing critically the traditional anthropology, including the doctrine of sin and grace. Carr
(1988:8) asserts that while sin was regarded as pride, self-assertion and rebellion against God, grace was seen as the gift of self-sacrificial love. Self-assertion and rebellion however were, according to Carr (1988:8), the sin of men/males. Part of the deconstruction-reconstruction process of feminism is that women, in turn, have to look at the nature of their own sin, which relates to lack of self-assertion in relation to cultural and familial expectations. This involves failure to assume choices for themselves, or to discover their own personhood and uniqueness. Instead they find their whole meaning in the too easy sacrifice of self for others. She points out that traditional theological formulations that viewed sin primarily as prideful self-assertion and grace as self-sacrificial love, failed to speak to the experience of women who sacrifice too much of their own selves. Carr (1988:132) reflecting on Rahner, maintains that the latter emphasizes the importance of human self-creation by means of human freedom and decision-making, and this characteristic determines what the human being is and can become.

While woman may be called to be more reflective in the appropriation of what she is, this cannot be done exclusively. In this regard Carr (1988:132) suggests that Lonergan’s (1984:1-20) principle of mutual-self-mediation may be a useful model from which to operate. Lonergan is of opinion that self-mediation occurs in community, in love, in loyalty and in faith. The process of self-mediation enables a person to grow in the fullness of the Body of Christ where there is neither female nor male. As an individual, each person is striving to become his/her authentic self, and both male and female qualities are included in being human. This specific study does not concentrate exclusively on feminism or on masculinism. It is about both, each in relation to the other. An encounter with the mutual self would form part of the woman’s experience of self-realization. Just as there is a self-mediation towards autonomy, so too is there mutual self-mediation and its occasion is encounter in all its forms.
In effect, encounter appears to be the key word that links mutual self-mediation, the meeting of persons and appreciation of the values they present. Self-mediation is perceived as the invitation to become, and mutual self-mediation is continual self-making. Honest encounter is a process that challenges personal understanding and growth. Lonergan (1984: 1-20) asserts that mutual encounters such as meeting, falling in love and getting married, are examples of mutual self-mediation which take place between equals, between males and females and between superiors and inferiors. These encounters are of such a nature as to equalize people through mutual love and affection.

Before embarking on the issue of woman's self-realization, it is important to reach a full and more determinate understanding of what it is to be female, and then apply the general to the particular. To apply the lessons of appropriation of self-realization to woman implies moving from the categorical to the transcendental and perhaps *vice versa*. This implies determining what it means to be human and female, and while this cannot be done in isolation from the male, the deconstruction of both theological anthropology and feminism would provide the material for the construction of a theology of human self-realization.

Feminism takes as a starting point the experience of the woman, while on the other hand, self-realization, which has in itself a God dimension deeply imbedded on the anthropological composition of the person, is an integral component of the existence of the woman. Self-realization in the woman is in part grounded on the fact that she is made in the *Image and Likeness of God*. It does not exclude her relationship with the source of all being, that is God. The self-realization of the woman will become possible when all the cultural, social and religious realities that militate against the woman imaging God, have been transformed. These realities must fall in line with the Gospel of Christ, so that woman is acknowledged as created in the Image and Likeness of God. The feminist reconstruction of the Image
of God starts by seeking a just and trustful anthropology of the human person. It must construct a unitary view of human nature, which rejects a male-identified unitary anthropology and a dichotomous complementarity (Børrisen 1995: 275). This deconstruction implies looking at the manner in which woman was portrayed as being, or not being, in the Image of God. Deconstruction of the theological groundwork that fostered the deceptive views about woman, should facilitate the reconstruction of a truthful anthropology which will promote the self-realization of the human potential of both woman and man.

5.3. Towards a truthful anthropology that promotes woman's self-realization.

The deconstruction and reconstruction of the theology of the Image of God starts by seeking a just and trustworthy anthropology of the human person. In the past the “Image of God theology” which was strongly influenced by the philosophical, cultural and social norms of the day, misconstrued the theological anthropologies of woman. As already noted in this thesis, the biblical concept of the Image of God is theological in derivation, though philosophical in specification. It is metaphysical because it points to a certain kind of being, described by scholastics as an intellectual being. However, any true philosophy and theology of woman has to appreciate her as a being, as a person. It is essential for female self-realization that the fundamental being, the global personality of woman, and her unique stance in relation to God, should not only be understood, but also observed. Wrong conclusions have resulted in the formulation of a misguided theological and philosophical anthropology of woman.

A theological anthropology, which will facilitate the self-realization of the woman, has to recognize her personhood in the Image of God. As a person who is loved, lives in a free society and exercises her intellectual and emotional capacities, woman has the potential for
self-realization. Intellectual integrity and responsibility are also integral to the woman’s search for self-realization and happiness. In fact woman’s self-realization is found in the intelligible merging of her being with the being of God and this vision will satisfy her every desire for both the good and for happiness. Hartel’s (1993:5) study of the feminine in terms of Thomistic theology, reaffirms the scholastic understanding that woman, like the male, images God by using her mind, intellectual powers, and by the very act of existing. By this he concludes that God is in the woman by His very efficient causality, and the woman images God by her dignity and causal activity.

Although there is in the biblical tradition an understanding that women are less than fully human, less than rational and like slave, herds and material things, are classed as a possession of man, today women are currently experiencing their own emergence into fuller personhood. This is so, says Carr (1988:30), because the message of Jesus Christ has taken on a new power for women who are searching for ways to express full personhood adequate to their own experience of themselves. Women are becoming ever more conscious of their human dignity and are asking for recognition of their full humanity so that they may reach full womanhood. Genesis 1:27 affirms woman’s creation in the Image and Likeness of God: “Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness”. The human race, which was created in the Divine image, was created both female and male. This implies that something in the transcendent God must correspond to both masculinity and to femininity. Neither male nor female is exclusive to the Image and Likeness of the Divine: but as individuals and together they image God (Rae & Marie-Daly 1990:10). Paul, in 1 Cor. 11:7-8, presents a different view. He states: “For man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man”. This text has caused much confusion, and theologians as early as Augustine, as well as of later centuries, claimed that women are not the Image of God. Theological allegations of this nature, which have
contributed to the befuddled theological, philosophical and anthropological formulations, need to deconstruct. In the effort to reconstruct an appropriate and inclusive theological anthropology, it is well to take cognizance of erroneous readings of the past, starting with the relevant theological writings of both Augustine and Aquinas.

5.3.1. The distorted anthropology of Augustine.

Augustine struggled to reconcile the Genesis and Pauline readings concerning woman as the Image of God. Børresen (1995: 26) notes that Augustine proposed a gender-free image of God, a notion that was later taken up by Aquinas. He sees man and woman together, as representatives of complete human nature, and therefore the Image of God, because woman on her own cannot image God. This interpretation is based on Paul’s theological statement that only when woman is united with man, do they together constitute the image of God. However, man on his own, that is without woman, is an image of God. Augustine was of opinion that St Paul denied the image of God in woman, and for this reason he had difficulty in reconciling the Pauline and Genesis versions. To accommodate this discrepancy Augustine proposed that only together with man is the woman the image of God, since, according to Paul, her image derives from man. In his effort to reconcile the Genesis text with the Pauline version, Augustine divided the human soul into two parts namely the interior and exterior man. The interior man (homo interior) represents the superior part of the soul. This part contemplates eternal truths. It is identified as the masculine element. The exterior man (homo exterior) is the second part of the human soul. Its function is to provide for earthly needs and is identified as the feminine element. The masculine element is the only part of the human soul that is in the image of God and according to Hartel (1993:285), Augustine taught that only the human soul consists of both masculine and feminine parts. Accordingly Augustine holds that the woman is an Image of God, because her soul is the same as that of the man. However, she is an
image of God only because of the masculine part (homo interior) of the human soul which consists of both masculine and feminine parts. When the woman’s body acts in accordance with the masculine part of the soul, she is an Image of God. When her body operates according to the feminine part of the soul, she is not in God’s image. The feminine body with the feminine part (homo exterior) is not an image of God. The male part of the soul (homo interior) and the male body is an image of God, and it is just as much an image with or without the homo exterior, that is the female part (Hartel 1993:283).

What Augustine says is that the woman with man in the totality of human nature, is an image of God. By this he means that the rational soul which woman possesses ensures that she is in the image of God. When he says that woman alone is not the image of God, he refers to the body of the woman, together with the homo exterior of her soul (Hartel 1993: 283). Augustine, viewing humanity in Platonic terms, distinguishes between the male and female and the image of God in a manner that demeans the female body. Nevertheless he does hold that woman is an imago Dei.

A close reading of the texts makes clear the fact that Augustine favours the Genesis, rather than the Pauline version. Paul, whose philosophical explanation is inadequate, says that the image of God is allegorical. His theological position is based on a wrong anthropalogy, which divides human nature into body and soul. Ultimately the upshot of his position is that only in their souls, are men and women in the image of God. It is very apparent that Augustine’s anthropology was influenced by Plato, who held that in the human composite the soul was the permanent or real element. The body he presented as a transitory element and the soul as independent of the body and emancipated when separated from the body (Hartel 1993:283). The sex distinction is peculiar to the body and as the soul is essentially distinct from the body, it is difficult to depict it as male or female, masculine or feminine. This was Augustine’s problem: the female soul
with a feminine quality and no gender. Hartel (1993:284) maintains that Augustine, defeated by his own words, failed to unite the being of the woman.

Augustine’s failure to resolve the unity of human nature resulted in a false dichotomy in his doctrine of the *Imago Dei* which led to an understanding that man and woman are the image of God only in their souls. Presently theological anthropology defines the human person as more than just soul, and as fully God-like. Although Augustine’s effort to find a solution is enlightening, it did lay a complicated foundation for the concept of woman as the image of God. This formula, which denies the full image of God in woman, not only served as a problem for Aquinas, but the ensuing debate and interpretations of Augustine’s theological anthropology contributed to the probability that for woman, who is co-dependent and subservient, self-realization is meaningless.

5.3.2. Aquinas’ ‘intellectual’ theological anthropology.

In his *Summa Theologica* (ST 1,93,4), Aquinas asserts that the image of God is not found in all members of the human species. His scholastic milieu claims that the *Imago Dei* principally signifies intellectual nature, which is found in both men and women. So when the image is understood as “an intelligent nature”, the woman is an Image of God. However, woman is only God’s Image by grace for it is grace that accords an intellectual nature to every human being. According to Thomistic theology, grace can only cause woman to be more perfectly in God’s image, which she already is by nature. If grace builds on and perfects nature, it completes that which is already there.

Aquinas disagreed with Augustine, stating that it is absurd to say that the image of God is not found individually in the woman, but only when she is united with man. Both man and woman individually possesses an intellectual nature, and the distinction between man
and woman is based on the *external physical sexes*. Hartel (1993:291) following Aquinas' reasoning, asserts that woman is the image of God because part of her essence is an intellectual soul or form. The body individualizes the rational soul, and the body is an image of God because it shares the act of existing (*esse*) of the soul. As the image is shared with the body, the latter is elevated to the image of God by participation. The soul is only part of a complete being, hence the woman is a total being and her body as well as her soul images God. Thus woman as a whole, as a person, images God in her very personality of a subsisting feminine spirit; in fact she images God by her very existence. Hartel (1993:293) points out that according to Aquinas' ambient factors imaging God, which is understood as an active process, woman images God by her spiritual activity in the world. She images God not simply by being, but also by her act of understanding and making free choices. The self-realizing activity of the intellectual soul takes place in freedom proper to the female soul. She images God by the intellectual act of existing, of understanding and free will. This means that by knowing and loving, the woman exercises the image of God. In this sense it is understood that while all women image God in essence, they do not all actualize this image to the same degree, as some women do love God more than others. In the scholastic sense self-realization depends on the *actualization* of the powers of knowing and loving.

It is evident that Aquinas was historically limited by the culture of his time, as well as by the contemporary ideas about the biology of reproduction. Both Aristotle and Aquinas postulated a sub-specific difference between male and female by proposing the biological difference in the generative power, and the appetitive difference in the internal sense power. This very issue contributed to the devaluation of the status of woman, which in terms of self-realization, lowered her standing as a person moving towards human wholeness.
As a being, the woman is an incarnate, feminine spirit, whose meaning and value are found in a real relationship with God. Hartel (1993:275) is convinced that Aquinas saw woman as an end in herself and not merely a means towards either the material production of the social/political state, or as the one whose function is to provide for the needs of man. While Aquinas affirmed woman’s creational Imago Dei, he did so with pseudo-Augustinian emphasis on male priority. As noted by Børrisen (1995:275), while Aquinas makes no distinction between male and female in God’s image, since he regarded the image of God to be an egalitarian concept, this cannot be substantiated as an accurate account of the meaning of scripture. The image of God in humanity denotes existence, and it means that the human person possesses openness, which is the best clue to the mysterious affinity of God and humanity. The woman realizes herself and her essence in the openness to existence. It is therefore important, in Macquorie’s (1981:231) opinion, to view Imago Dei more in terms of a potentiality for being, rather than a fixed “endowment” or nature. This openness implies that the human person has the ability to participate in God’s existence. The openness signifies the self-transcending the nature of the human person, the potentiality for becoming the “offspring” of God. This concept of openness to existence is intrinsic to Rahner’s theological anthropology and is dealt with later on in this chapter.

In can be concluded that as a human being, woman is first related to God and then to the common good of the material universe. Since woman, whose very personality, which is that of a subsisting feminine spirit, transcends all else, it follows that any true philosophy or theology must make her personhood the starting point. Her value, like that of everyone else, is determined by the ability to see God, by the way she experiences God, and others see God in her. Hence the importance for any feminist theologian to capture the woman’s rightful disposition as the Image of God. Woman’s self-realization is evident in the intelligible merging of her being with God’s being, and it is precisely this vision that satisfies her every desire for personal good
and happiness. Women realize themselves in the existential source of all being when they actualize their own freedom. Woman’s sense of freedom is not always recognized as an independent gift because she is perceived as subordinate to the male, hence the false understanding that her self-realization is dependent on her affiliation with the male. It is precisely the gift of freedom that constitutes her transcendence and nourishes her self-realization. In the fine reading of Aquinas’ theology it is evident that the gift of freedom has always been the forgotten silver lining, as it is over-shadowed by extraneous, and often erroneous, theological considerations.

5.4. Woman’s self-realization as a free subsisting feminine spirit.

Traditional anthropology, which presented woman as being of lesser value, hampered her true self-realization, and hindered her in process of encountering herself as a free person. Freedom, as noted earlier, is one of the chief blessings that form an intrinsic part of the state of human nature. While Aquinas in Aristotelian terms, recognized the supreme value of the gift of freedom, he restricted the freedom of woman by proposing two kinds of female subordination. There is a division, the difference between the state of human life, and the two kinds of subordination, before and after the Fall. Aquinas claims that the first form of subordination in that the physical stature of the female is different from that of man. This natural form of subordination of the woman to the man, is in Aquinas’ opinion reinforced by the sin of humanity’s first parents. However, Aquinas emphasizes that the subjection of woman, whether before or after the Fall, is that of a free person, not of a slave. In other words, according to Hartel (1993:213), the woman is free to follow her own conscience, to make decisions concerning the governance of the man, and to determine whether the governance of the man is for her good and the good of the family.
In Hartel's (1993:202) thesis he argues that Aquinas interprets the subjection of woman as a punishment for sin. As subjection was not a reality in the state of innocence i.e. the time before the Fall, it can be read that in the original state of existence the woman did not live in subordination. Subjection as the result of sin is therefore an immoral situation. Lack of freedom implies pain and this is not analogous with the original state of nature. Aquinas, in trying to make sense of woman's freedom, contrasts the state of a slave with the state of a free woman. In this way he argues that woman is free while being subjected to man. Hartel (1993:203) interprets Aquinas' view on male governance to be of such a kind that it promotes both the woman's own particular good and that of her family. Comparing the freedom of a slave to that of a woman, the good of the slave is transferred to the proper good of the master. This, according to the judgment of Aquinas, is not so in the case of the woman. Even though the man governs the woman, she remains a free subject since she retains her own good and her own free conscience. The Fall has not altered this position. As stated by Murphy O'Connor (1984:108), an Irish theologian, freedom is the dignity of authentic humanity, and before the Fall, all humans were endowed with the privilege of incorruptibility and total freedom. It is precisely on this issue of freedom that the woman ought to stake her right to self-realization.

Aquinas differentiates the punishment after the Fall, as it relates respectively to body and soul. In the body woman is punished in her begetting of children, by the weariness and pain she suffers in giving birth. As indicated in Genesis 3:16, she was punished by being subjected to her husband's power. The husband was punished in three ways regarding the body. Just as it belongs to the woman to be subject to man in regard to matters pertaining to the family, so too does it belong to the husband to provide, by external work, the necessities of this life for the family. The man was punished by the barrenness of the earth, by the cares of his labour, and by the obstacles encountered in the working of the soil (Hartel 1993:207).
According to Aquinas, the punishment of the woman after the Fall does not change the category of subjection, as the woman was subjected to the husband before the Fall. As the nature of the subjection did not change, it is therefore unsuitable to propose it to be a punishment for the first sin. Aquinas argues that if this were so, it would not be a punishment, but rather a continuation of a condition that existed before the Fall. The only difference is, that the subjection after the Fall is greater in degree in that the woman has to obey the husband, even if it goes against her own will. Hartel (1992:209) points out that man's authority was at the same time reinforced and strengthened. The husband is master only in the sense that the woman is governed for the common good, of which her own good forms part.

Aquinas' maintains that the two categories of subjection existed after the Fall: the first being that of a free subject already in existence before the Fall and reinforced after the Fall. The second category, which came after the Fall, is that of the painful existence of a slave. However, the punishment of the woman after the Fall did not result in the loss of her freedom. She remains a free subject and her subjection after the Fall has limits. It is limited to the particular good of the woman; her own good and the common good of the family. In whatever way the woman's is interpreted, it is apparent that her self-realization subsists in herself as a free being. For the benefit of personal self-realization, woman ought to be freed from the implications of the so-called punishment after the Fall, and so be able to recapture the worthy disposition of authentic humanity evident before the Fall. It is precisely to this worthy disposition of authentic humanity that the self-realization of woman applies.

It is obvious that Aquinas, who in his doctrine concerning women, was influenced by Aristotelian theory, did not consider woman as a slave, and indeed, held the view that woman and man, friends by nature,
have in common this inherent freedom. Because of this natural friendship, woman, a free intelligent being both before and after the Fall, cannot be the slave of man. In addition this insight also has implications for the self-realization of the woman.

It is clear that the traditional understanding of the woman that came as a result of an erroneous interpretation of the Fall, cannot make provision for her full self-realization. The inference is, that for the woman to be self-realized, a situation similar to the original state of grace, needs to be reconstructed. Her self-realization will not be true if it is to form part of a context created as a consequence of punishment and sin. Self-realization calls for the woman, created in the image of God, to be released from a position that deprived her of her original status before God. Self-realization would therefore imply freedom from a traditionally sinful situation that keeps her in bondage. It is part of the woman's anthropological challenge to be liberated from a punishment that robs her of a life of wholeness. This, after all, was the intention of Christ's incarnation and an intrinsic dimension of the Christian message. Submission is acquiescence with or accommodation to the dominion of another, and submission, as a sin, prevents the self-realization of most women. Submission as sin, calls for freedom, and for a woman to be liberated from this particular sinful condition, she needs to appeal to the primordial community where man and woman were free for each other.

The doctrine of original sin has always been questionable, and Rahner (1969a: 329) is of opinion that original sin is neither identified with, nor has its origin, in human nature. Original sin comes to humanity that is already in the order of grace. He claims that this supernatural, existential (grace) was with humanity prior to original sin. For Rahner (1969a: 329) original sin is to be inserted into the context of grace, that is God's Self-communication prior to all sin (including original sin). Knoebel (1980) explains that according to Rahner's theological system, the human is always within the open horizon of
transcendence towards the God of the supernatural life. It is in the context of grace and self-transcendence that the woman discovers her real self, and liberation from a sinful situation. Before exploring the relation between freedom and self-realization of the woman it may be well to look at the issue of transcendence as part of the Image of God in humanity.

5.4.1. Human freedom and transcendence in self-realization.

Transcendence is housed in God's Image, and the self of the woman as the Image of God, is where God's likeness to her as a person can be recognized most distinctly. If self-realization is regarded as the full actualization of the wholeness of a person's being, then it is essential that the woman becomes conscious of her true nature. As a true image of God, the transcendental element postulates the consciousness of her life. In this sense, according to Johnson, the way to self-realization is a spiritual act, an act of illumination, which confers a new spirit on humanity. Self-realization assists the person in becoming aware of herself as a transcendental being, a being that realizes Christ as the symbol within herself. The goal of self-realization enables a person to experience the Godlike or Christlike quality within herself, as the experience of self is similar to the experience of God. The true image of God appears within a person by means of the process of self-realization, and according to Johnson the self that is realized is the one that recognizes God, the Christ within itself (Johnson 1974:138-139).

The self-realization of woman involves overcoming all obstacles that prevent self-transcendence and self-knowledge. It is essential that the woman be provided with the means to cross over (trans) and also of the ascent (scando) in the process of free self-becoming. According to William Desmond (1995:387), a professor of philosophy in the Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, the process of self-becoming the primal integrity of the self is pre-objective. There is also dynamism of self-transcendence as well as achieved integrity of selfhood. Here the
self tries to realize the full promise of its own originative being. The woman, in order to realize her own human wholeness, needs to understand her original self in an affirmative manner, since this will form the determining source of her own free becoming. As it is one of the functions of a theology of feminism to bring the woman to mindfulness of being, this awareness would assist her to image the absolute original Image of Being.

The fuller and richer realization of being is contained in the primordial nature of God who is free and gives freedom. Human beings, including women, whose freedom is both finite and fragile, image the freedom of God. Freedom, according to Hodgson (1984:84), is the defining quality of divinity, and divine freedom is emancipatory, because God is the giver of freedom. It is a freedom that is oriented not to divine self-transcendence, but to giving freedom to creatures, first by calling them into being out of nothingness then by preserving and liberating the gift of freedom from destructive human encroachments upon it. He says: “The God whose freedom is emancipatory is the God of the basileia vision of Jesus. In the basileia-event something happens that radically restructures human relations, reversing all the privileges based on class, race, sex, wealth, ethnic identity, religious piety and social acceptability. In the basileia the last shall be first, the poor are blessed, women are liberated and sinner forgiven” (Hodgson 1994:85). As the basileia vision restores women, it is necessary, according to Hodgson (1994:180), to develop a concept of freedom that affirms the repressed intuitions of the ancient text, replacing hierarchy by equality and dominion by reciprocity and mutual responsibility. The human being created in God’s image is Homo sapiens, but also homo liber, first liberated being in creation. Hodgson (1994:199) stresses that freedom is the image of God in humanity and should be the central theme of theological anthropology and of human self-realization. As noted earlier, Rahner’s theological-anthropology describes self-realization as a free act of human nature. He expounds this idea
extensively, stating that in discovering her own transcendental nature, woman discovers her personal sense of being.

Freedom is characterized as an ultimately irreducible element in the constitution of the human person. Rahner (1969a: 39) says that freedom is fundamental to humanity due to the transcendence of the human spirit. The self proceeds from an act of creative freedom, and a free act is the self-realization of one's own nature. It implies taking possession of oneself, of the reality of one's own creative power over oneself. *Self-realization involves a coming to oneself, a self-presence in oneself.* Rahner (1963:235) claims that as a being of intellect and will, a person must be a being who is essentially free. He refers to human freedom as one of human's existentials. Freedom is intrinsic to the nature of the woman and inherent to her dignity. Because of this intrinsic freedom, the human person “is a being which has of its very nature a determined objective position within the manifolds and heterogeneity of being. This demands respect and protection as well as realization both in its relations to others and in itself” (Rahner 1963: 235-6). However, freedom for Rahner is always freedom under grace.

In clarifying Rahner's concepts, Knoebel (1980:200), an American Rahnerian student, acknowledges that the human person is finite, and freedom of choice is an intrinsic and necessary element in the process of taking possession of the self and also in taking up a position vis-a-vis God. *The human person comes to possess and realize the self slowly by individual choices.* By the free performances of good and bad deeds the human becomes good or bad. It is ultimately freedom, which allows an individual to stand before God as a responsible person. When woman chooses God as the object of her individual free acts, it is precisely through these free acts that she becomes a free being, participating more and more in the essential characteristics of Absolute Being itself (Rahner 1966:183).
Freedom, an existential of all human beings, provides woman with the ability to make a truly "fundamental option" by declaring herself fully and unalterably for God. The true object of freedom transcends the finite act in which it is approached, because the full reality and dignity of human transcends the finite. Freedom, according to Rahner, is primarily a freedom of being, the human responsibility to decide for and against the self. This is essentially the fundamental option. Self-realization is to decide for God and the opposite is a radical refusal of God. Freedom is for the woman a fundamental self-choice, and it is through this freedom, which is directed towards God, that woman actualizes her basic orientation. It is an individual act: just as God surrendered God-Self to the human condition in the free act whereby he realized himself, so too the woman's free act assists her in achieving her own full self-realization. In scripture freedom is a calling within one's heart, deep within one's nature, a divine vocation to respond to God's loving initiative. Human freedom is characterized as a freedom from sin, the flesh, death and the law, so that one may be free to follow the urgings of the Spirit within oneself. The human person is not called to an absolute freedom, though surrendering to the Spirit makes one free. Freedom is thus the transcendental element in the human constitution and the foundation of personal liberation.

5.4.2. Liberation and self-realization.

As has been determined, it is the gift of freedom and the exercising of free choices that forms the basis of woman's self-realization. In his study of Aquinas, Hartel (1993:248) highlights the point that if the conditions of her freedom are violated, woman may liberate herself from whatever authority. What follows from this conclusion is that the woman is morally entitled to act against any form of domination, ill-directed authority, or situations of oppression that obstruct her personal liberation and growth towards self-realization.
Hartel (1993:248) points out that according to Aquinas, the problem of woman's liberation is co-extensive with her status as a free person. The source of woman's freedom is to be found in her own being and in the manner in which God created her. Hence the metaphysical starting point of woman's freedom is in the notion of herself as person, and as Aquinas (ST 11-11, 104,5) maintains, the woman is one of the most noble of God's creatures.

Aquinas argues that anyone may be liberated from the commands of an authority that contradict or opposes the authority of higher power. If, therefore, the attitudes of society, of humanity and cultural customs contradict God, then woman, in Aquinas' (ST 11-11, 104,5) opinion need not stand in obedience to such a situation. A woman's mind is her own, so with regard to the movement of the will, a person does not have to obey any 'master', but God alone. No individual is obliged to adhere to situations and beliefs, whether they are cultural, social, economic, political or religious, if they are contrary to God. Should this be the case then woman is obliged to obey God rather than the created status quo. Aquinas regards authority and subjection as correlative terms. Woman is liberated from male domination by her very subjection to God, and the quality of freedom is dependent on her quality of subjection to God, not man. She is free to act against man's direction, because God has absolute and total lordship over creation. Woman is free to think and believe as she wishes and so to follow God (Hartel 1993:253). A free person does not possess the authority to take away the freedom of another, although there is no freedom responsibility. Woman's freedom is liberation for what is morally good and based on the authority of God.

Aquinas' (ST 1-11, 94,2) theology states that the first of all women's natural inclinations is to seek the good. He proposes three levels of good whereby she perfects her being. The first is to preserve her own being, to protect her life and ward off obstacles. In other words she seeks to preserve her existence. The second is an inclination to have
children, to educate them and to generate and maintain a family. The third is the natural need to use her mind as she contemplates transcendent truths, especially the truths about God.

Woman has human rights, which are to be respected and needs ample space in which she may realize her natural inclinations. Human rights are grounded in human nature and natural needs make natural rights. Therefore because our nature needs certain goods, it has a right to them. It is the very human rights of woman that safeguard her right to self-realization. According to Aquinas, woman has the right to maintain her existence and to use her mind in the free pursuit of truth. Natural rights are grounded on natural inclinations, which are proportioned to human nature (Hartel 1993:262). The natural rights of woman stem from her true being as the image of God and consequently she has a right to maintain her existence, and of personal liberty before God in the political-social structure in which she lives. She also has the right to pursue the perfection of a moral life, to be treated as a person and to determine her right for self-realization. Hartel (1993:262) emphasizes that the source of woman’s freedom is precisely the source of her dignity, and dignity consists in the fact that woman is a subsisting feminine spirit-person.

In the effort to give recognition to woman as a person with an individual substance and rational nature, Aquinas (ST 1,29,4) elaborates on her personhood. The term ‘person’ signifies what is distinct and whole in its very individuality, specific matter (flesh) together with particular form (intellectual, sensitive and vegetative powers). Hartel (1993:264) explains that because woman’s substance is spiritual, her individuality also signifies femininity and dignity.

For term person, used to identify a spiritual creature the term, signifies a metaphysical whole, and by nature the human is an incarnate spirit. This point made by Rahner will be taken up later and explored in greater detail. While human freedom is an embodied
freedom, it is, according to Hodgson (1994:199), an incarnated, contingent and finite freedom. By virtue of the fact that woman is a spiritual creature, her dignity lies particularly in personhood, which signifies the very subsistence of her spiritual soul (Hartel 1993: 267). Hartel says that a woman's true being and her rights are misunderstood, and the latter are often even denied (1993:268). Woman is not a means to an end, but in her very individuality as Aquinas (ST 11-11.64 1) affirms, she is one of the most perfect aspects of the whole of nature. She is a person and the term person signifies woman's whole being including her gender. She has rights, those which stem from her body, namely health, life, happiness, and rights, and those which stem from her spirituality: the rights to truth and freedom.

5.5. Evaluative commentary.

Having considered some traditional theological views concerning the position of woman as a person created in the image of God, it is clear her personhood, personal dignity and her spirituality are beyond question. The image of God in the woman constitutes the divine spark of her personality and the very subsistence of her soul. This depends on an understanding of God in whom masculinity and femininity are in equal proportion. The self of the woman is that point where her likeness to God can be recognized most distinctly, and this is by virtue of the fact that she is the image of God in her own right. As a person she is neither bound to the direction of male authority, nor to the determinism of the physical world. The deepest level of her personal dignity consists in the fact that her person comprises of the Imago Dei. Femininity, which grounds itself in the very person of woman, remains open to the supernatural. This integral form of feminism locates the woman's centre neither in herself, nor in man, but in God. She is theocentric, and consequently woman apprehends her individual self when she is centred on God, and her liberation is a freedom in relation to God (Hartel 1993:270). The self-realization of the woman
depends not only on an anthropology that makes provision for her image and likeness to God, but also on a renewed understanding of the Being of God that makes provision for feminine imagery.

If woman images God, as is testified in Genesis, then God should also be understood as a ‘transcendent feminine’. Though the divine masculine aspects of God were emphasized throughout the ages, contemporary biblical scholars are uncovering the feminine imagery of the Divine. There is no shortage of images that reflect the feminine qualities of God in the Bible, in particular the Old Testament. The term Spirit of God, ruah, which depicts His life-energy, is a feminine term, and God as Wisdom is also personified as a woman and, as is evident in Wisdom 7:27-81, is spoken of in terms that are usually reserved for God alone.

The self-realization of woman forms part of the deep-seated need to experience God as feminine. Rae and Marie-Daly (1990:12) claim that when the feminine in God is addressed, then woman as being in the divine image, is also addressed. Both male and female have to discover, experience and acknowledge, without any reservation, the femininity of God. The feminine conceptualization of the Divine has implications for the self-realization of the woman, as there is a clear correlation between religious experience and religious-social norms and practice.

The rediscovery of the Feminine Divine, will determine a theology, which will make provision for constructive personhood, hence the self-realization of woman. As suggested by Donald L. Gelpi (1984: 215-217), an American Jesuit theologian, to rediscover the feminine archetypal images of the Divine is not enough, it is necessary to transvaluate the archetypes of the feminine, and view them in such a positive, life-giving way, that they become a transforming presence.
Authentic womanhood and the self-realization of women are built on a doctrine of God that acknowledges the feminine aspects of the Divine. This, together with a feminine anthropology, makes provision for the full humanity of the woman. Though women in the feminist field call for transformation of the patriarchal worldview, it is for woman herself to articulate a new understanding of the female psyche, and recover of her own sacred image as depicted in the feminine Divine. Women are responsible for restructuring their own worldview. By so doing they gain individual self-knowledge and insight into their personal essence. A reconstructed anthropology should make provision for woman to have a personal experience and understanding of her own essence, that is of Being. This personal essence, says Almaas (1988:59), is "an ongoing sense of Beingness, completely independent of mind and memory, and hence completely free". Being as "pure consciousness" is completely capable of direct self-awareness. A being's perception of itself is immediate with awareness. It is of the essence that a woman experiences herself as a human being, as true personhood. Her essential realization is the actualization of Being in all its various aspects of personal essence.

To understand one's personal essence is a distinctly human characteristic. According to Rahner's anthropology, the human person possesses a unique quality, namely *potentia obedientialis*, which is the actual aptitude to discover his/her essential nature before God and to be open to God's revelation. *Self-realization is the woman discovering her transcendental nature and exploring the mystery of being woman.* God grace-fully created the woman in her own right as a human person, and it is up to each woman to discover her own transcendental nature and to be the one who is to ask questions about her own sense of being. While she is the one who has the freedom to ask questions about her being, she needs at the same time to be open to the answer. This openness, says Rahner (1963:66), is what "makes her into a person: that she is already on the way to God, whether or not she knows it expressly, whether or not she wills it. She
is forever the infinite openness of the infinite God". The woman (like
the male) is ordered to a supernatural end by a real ontological
existential. This existential, which historically is never absent from
humanity, is called supernatural because it orders all humanness to a
supernatural order. The human person is not merely openness to
being as such, but also a “burning longing for God in the immediacy
of his threefold life” (Rahner 1966:178).

Rahner’s (1966:180) makes no differentiation in his concept of the
human person. He claims that the goal of the transcendental
movement of intellect and will, which is that of the graced spirit; the
God of Absolute Being, the God of grace and glory, is the same for all
human persons. The supernatural transcendence is always present in
every individual who has reached the age of moral reason. Each one is
constantly within the open horizon of transcendence towards God in
the supernatural life. This is not only a male prerogative or a female
privilege. It is grace and in this instance grace in relation to nature.
Transcendence is achieved by totally fulfilling the possibility that
nature has been actualized by grace.

Woman is directed by the nature of her own metaphysical being, that
is spirit in transcendence and freedom. By virtue of the fact that God
created one human nature, woman has not a derivative identity and
role in the image of man. Being part of human nature she is
constantly determined by supernatural grace, which is offered to it. As
Rahner (1966:183) points out, human nature is “installed in a
supernatural order which a person can never leave, even as a sinner
and unbeliever”. The natural being of woman is experienced in her
desires, longings, acts of freedom and grace. Through all of these she
is called to be in union with God, the Absolute Horizon, and this call
to union, which constitutes the final end of all human beings, is
determinative of human nature. The positive ordering for union with
God, called the supernatural existential, a grace, a gift freely to
humanity in the very constitution of its being, is natural to all
persons. Reflecting on Rahner’s writings, Knoebel (1980:47) explains that nature and grace must always be distinguished, even though they cannot be separated. Grace is grace in relation to nature, but transcends nature. Transcendence is achieved by totally fulfilling the possibility that nature is, thus actualizing it by grace. Woman as spirit in the world, must give concrete expression to what is inmost in her, and this is only possible by means of love. Love, in Rahner’s terms, is a free self-bestowal, the giving away of self, an event of wonder and grace. It is the act of opening one’s innermost self to and for the uncontrollable mystery of the other. Duffy (1993:280) says that according to Rahner, a categorical act of love for another can occur only within the horizon of the transcendental love of God.

Self-realization includes a basic experience of transcendence. Human freedom and the ability to choose self-transcendence are deeply influenced by cultural expectations and limits embedded in the institutional contexts of any society, including churches. Carr (1988:102) argues that it is essential to ascertain and unmask the symbols that denigrate the humanity of woman, and by retrieving the genuinely transcendent meaning of symbols, to affirm her authentic selfhood and self-transcendence.

If cultural and religious ideologies that deny woman’s full humanity, discouraging her from attempting to achieve full personhood and womanhood, are to be unmasked, this implies that it is no longer possible to use traditional, conservative biblical injunctions that support the subordination of women. The church and religion which are significant cultural forces, form attitudes, self-understandings and the expectations of women, men and society. Theologies, languages, and structures have done a lot of damage to the self-realizational capacity of women. Certain cultural and religious ideologies have prevented women from participating in and providing opportunities for both self-realization and self-transcendence. The mystical tradition bears special importance for women today, as it is based on personal
experience rather than on authority. The mystical tradition refers to God as one whose essence is not patriarchal power, might and dominion, but love (Carr 1988:212). This specific context brings the thesis to its next query, which is to ascertain how the Consecrated Life has helped towards the self-understanding and self-realization of woman. In what sense is Religious or Consecrated Life a way that facilitates the full personhood of woman in the grace of God?

It is presently important that Catholic feminist theology, by exploring the Consecrated Life, should reformulate and modernize, in the context of the present century, the theology of the institutional life of the Catholic Church. This should reflect women in the Church, their experience of the gospel, and their need for self-realization. A study of the personal and collective experience of women will include reflection on woman’s personal and collective experience, cultural creations, and the religious and theological interpretations of the personhood of woman as dictated by inner image. The following section is an investigation into the life style of the Catholic woman who embraces Religious, Consecrated Life in community. In this context she searches for her personal self-realization. Traditionally, vows have been experienced as a form of restraint and limitation rather than a means towards the fullness of life and human self-realization.
CHAPTER SIX.

SELF-REALIZATION IS HOUSED IN THE DIGNITY AND VOCATION OF THE WOMAN.

In contemporary Catholic teaching on the theology of the “Image of God”, as laid down in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Vatican II document, is firmly established. While this theology stresses the dignity and vocation of the human person, and the “Image of God” is expressed in terms of the essence of man and woman, it also refers to the right to life and the inalienable dignity of the person. This includes the principles that foster, protect and express the dignity of the person in the exercise of freedom.

*Gaudium et Spes*, Article 12, reads:

But what is man? He has put forward, and continues to put forward, many views about himself, views that are divergent and even contradictory. Often he either sets himself up as the absolute measure of all things, or debases himself to the point of despair, Hence his doubt and his anguish. The Church is keenly sensitive to these difficulties. Enlightened by divine revelation she can offer a solution to them by which the true state of man be outlined, his weakness explained, in such a way that at the same time his dignity and his vocation may be perceived in their true light. For scripture teaches that man was created “to the image of God”, is able to know and love his creator, and set him over all earthly creatures that he might rule them, and make use of them, while glorifying God. ... But God did not create man a solitary being. From the beginning “male and female he created them (Gen. 1:27).

Reflecting on the above extract with reference to the *dignity and vocation* of the woman, Pope John Paul II (1988:25-26), states: “Man - whether man or woman - is the only being among the creatures of the visible world that God the Creator has willed for its own sake”; that creature is thus a *person*. Being a person means striving towards self-realization (the Pope uses the term self-realization and the Council speaks of self-discovery), which can only be achieved “through a
sincere gift of self”. The model for this interpretation of the person is God as Trinity, as a communion of Person’s. To say that man is created in the image and likeness of God means that he is called to exist “for others, to become a gift”.

In the encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul II (1988:3) makes a categorical statement that “the hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved”. However, before discussing the means to be used to achieve this end, it is well to note that John Paul II asserts that ‘being a person implies striving towards self-realization’, and it is by this that the individual becomes a sincere gift to his or her own self. Personhood, which gifts the person with his or her authentic self, is fundamental to self-realization. This giftedness is related to the God-given human rights of the woman. Self-realization also implies being brought into personal relationship with God the Father in Christ, through the activity of the Holy Spirit. The realization of one’s potential takes place in the context of considering God’s will and the needs of other people. An individual’s dignity and human rights are affected by restraints preventing self-realization. Francis Martin (1994:294), an American New Testament scholar, argues that the notion of human rights is derived from the Christian understanding of ‘person’, which is itself based on the dignity of the human being who is called into relationship with God.

**6.1. **Woman’s self-realization relates to genuine personhood.

Self-realization is based on genuine personhood, if this is not the case then it is a not authentic. The notion of personhood is a result of the confluence of the Biblical and Greek (Hellenistic) thought. Martin (1994:295) points out that personal identity grew as a result of the understanding that each human being has dignity and a covenant responsibility to God in worship, trust, gratitude and obedience. The
rights of woman are grounded in human worth derived from the Priestly statement, which claims that both man and woman were created in the "image and likeness of God" (Gen.1: 26-27). Martin (1994:303) recognizes that the one unique feature of this statement, which is made with regard to every human person, irrespective of race culture or sex, is its inherent democratization of the idea of personal dignity. The notion of humanity's dignity, and the value of human life as created in the divine image, is also presupposed in later Jewish tradition. In Genesis 9:6 it reads: "If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God has man been made".

The New Testament radicalized the sense of human worth by bringing all human beings into relationship with Christ, and conferring upon them the possibility of eternal life; that is, life in the Son of God. In the Christian sense, human dignity is inextricably interwoven with the mystery of salvation. While Catholics read that rights are grounded in human nature (based on Aquinas' idea that grace builds on nature) rather than on the person, the focus of Gaudium et Spes is directly on the person. In this sense John Paul II (1988:66) sees Gaudium et Spes as providing an essential indication of what it means to be human, while emphasizing the value of the gift of self, the gift of the person. Martin (1994:327) accepts without hesitation, that in the Christian understanding of rights, the focus is on the dignity of the person, and this includes subjectivity, consciousness, self-realization and autonomy.

In Martin's (1994:318) view, personhood should have an ontological basis, otherwise it is in danger of being reduced to persona, a role that exists by common consensus and laws. In his opinion it is only 'relation' that can ontologically ground uniqueness, and only 'eternal life' that can give substance to personhood. In Martin's differentiation between person and persona, he claims that it is the blood family, the society and the state that creates the latter. 'Male' and 'female' are
considered as *persona*ae when the norms of the world are taken to be definitive. Jung (CW 6:425) likens the *persona* to a mask, a role that one plays in society, and often this assumed role can be mistaken for the individual's identity. The *persona* says Jung "feigns individuality". Every profession or calling has its own *persona*, and the danger is that people become identical with their personas. When self-realization is based on *persona*ae, it is artificial, but when it is founded on genuine personhood in Christ and gospel values, then it is authentic. Martin (1994:318) suggests that to reach an understanding of the meaning of man and woman in Christ, it is better to make the contrast between *persona* and person, rather than to argue about gender and sex. Receiving one's substantial, immortal personhood in union, with and through the risen Christ, enables one to move from *persona* to person.

6.1.1. Personhood as the relational act of existence.

Human personhood is grounded on the fact that people receive their uniqueness from a creative act of God. Consequently humanity can only be realized in the act of giving and receiving, which form part of relationship. Personhood is the relational act of existence based on an intrinsically physical being. Without relation "the woman remains inchoate, the dignity of personhood remains insubstantial. And despite the quasi infinity of its spiritual nature, which is *capax Dei*, the human person can find no other essential ground for the recognition of its dignity" (Martin 1994:324). The relationship with God is the foundational relationship. To constitute personhood requires a self-constituting act, in accordance with the primary constituting act of creation. The human being is endowed with a spiritual interiority that possesses uniqueness. This interiority finds itself placed in a network of relationships which are realized in an act of freedom (Martin 1994:323). The constitution of the person derives its very uniqueness from relating to God and to other persons with whom s/he comes in contact. It can be concluded that human personhood is conceived in relational rather than in substantialist
terms. Martin (1994:323) suggests that in terms of this view, the human personhood is to be conceived in a manner analogous with the subsistent relations of the Trinity.

Human personhood can be described as the dynamic, integrative, relational act of being which sublates the physical, psychic and interior into one unique human being. Maleness and femaleness, while grounded in the bodily existence, are modes of being that are realized in the person at every level. This is why the body is the sacramental expression of the whole person. Martin (1994:404) claims that there is a personal and therefore relational aptitude in female and male body persons to sacramentalize aspects of Christ and of the Christian mystery. Being made in the Divine image endows the individual with a receptive capacity and an openness to participate in the Being of God.

While self-realization, in either woman or man, takes the physical, that is the masculine or feminine dimensions of human existence into account, it depends wholeheartedly on one’s sense of personhood. Pope John Paul II (1988:32) is convinced that women ought to be self-realized as women, otherwise they will “deform and lose what constitutes their essential richness”. As human personhood is grounded on the fact that humanity receives its uniqueness from a creative act of God, this can only be realized in the free act of giving and receiving. Therefore men and women ought to define their own personhood in freedom and in their manner of relating.

Human freedom in personhood is the spiritual ability to recognize and experience the freedom of a personal God. A woman becomes aware of her personhood through her free self-determination and responsible behaviour towards God. This includes a free and accountable attitude towards self, the environment, and God who defines her human personhood. Self-relatedness is only possible when an individual experiences transcendence, the ultimate object of which is God. Hence
Vass's (1985:73) claim that a woman is free insofar as she is able to be in relation to herself.

6.1.2. Personhood and the conscious experience of freedom.

Reflecting on Rahner, Vass (1985:74) states that only when the individual is open to and becomes conscious of mystery, can she be introduced to the experience of freedom. The transcendent experience of freedom is a precondition for all concrete and categorical choices which the individual encounters in her life, and in space and time. In this sense freedom is not a neutral concept, but rather an inalienable characteristic of personal existent. The object of freedom is the woman herself, that is she has the power to decide about and consequently to actualize herself (Rahner 1996:38-49).

Freedom is a fundamental option, (Rahner's terminology), and the core of freedom concerns the whole person who is answerable to God for her choices. Woman is responsible for whatever she freely wills and objectifies (Vass 1985:80). In this sense it is understood that personhood is not given, like a birthmark, it is a process. This is well illustrated by Simone Beauvoir (1953), a French feminist writer, who claims that a person is not born a woman, she becomes one. The freedom of her action contributes to the making of her personhood. A woman's will to selfhood derives from her autonomous freedom, encountered with others who challenge her to become freely personal in her relations with them.

From a theological perspective it is clear that there is no self, no personhood, no distinctive identity, personality, no meaning and no real life, without freedom. It is the experience of freedom that is required for someone to become a real person. Yet the actual situation of human existence is one in which the self is not really free. Often, people have no clear sense of who they are, and the true personality is lost in various forms of enslavement to conventions and mass-
mindedness. According to Haught (1993:196), to accept our freedom means to live with a certain kind of anxiety, and this requires a degree of courage that is not always available. Accepting freedom means accepting the future as open and full of unknown possibilities. Personhood does not mean adopting stereotypes or roles, but rather being open to recognizing the possibilities of identity, of realizing one’s potential, and of relating to others in terms of personhood which leads the vision of future orientation, with infinite openness. In this sense self-realization is always open to new and eternal possibilities of becoming. This is borne out by Marjorie Scuhochi (1981:66), an American Process theologian, who views the actuality of God as the locus of self-realization that has a pervasive openness to self. Self-realization demonstrates the supreme openness to possibility. God is the ground of openness and the source of all new possibilities. When people begin to act upon the ideals of openness, turning what is possible into actuality, then God can integrate that new actuality with a vision that will elicit still further relevant modes of openness for the world.

Jean-Paul Satre expresses the parallel conviction that God and human freedom are incompatible notions. For this reasons he and many atheists sense an antagonism between God and full human self-realization. They argue that there seems to be no choice between God as a form of enslavement, and the option for freedom. Many find it difficult to reconcile human freedom with the existence of God. Haught (1993:197), however, argues that God, the ontological foundation of freedom, abhors any form of religious slavery. Human freedom is rooted in God’s creative style, which he describes as loving “letting be”. It is freedom that opens the way to human dignity, and the right to self-realization.
6.2. Woman’s right to self-realization.

As mentioned earlier, any form of restraint on an individual’s right to unimpeded self-realization affects human dignity and human rights. The foundational value that underlies the self-realization of woman is freedom; in fact self-realization capitalizes on the spirit of freedom. A spirit unencumbered is truly free, and even if the body is enchained, the spirit can be free. Self-realization is deeply entrenched in the exercise of freedom. Each person is regarded as an agent with a capacity for free choice and self-development. In this regard all people are equal and have the right to exercise their individual capacity for self-realization. Thus it can be argued that there are no grounds to make gender the basis for differential rights to self-realization. The equal rights of women and men are grounded in the nature of the human agency. Reflecting on *Guadium et Spes*, Pope John Paul II (1988:40) claims that the personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity, they are merely different. Hence a woman must understand her self-realization as a person, her dignity and vocation on the richness of the femininity which she received on the day of creation, and which she inherited as an expression of the “image and likeness of God”.

Gould (1983:5), however, argues that free choice, as the characteristic of human agency, although it is necessary, is not in itself sufficient for freedom towards self-development. For this free choice to be effective, both material and social conditions, through which agents can achieve their purposes, must be available. Material conditions include the means of subsistence, access to work, and the means of activity. Social conditions include education, which is necessary for realizing one’s purposes. Freedom from domination constitutes a social condition for self-development. Gould implies that to achieve self-realization a woman needs social, economic, cultural and religious, environment that will enable her to exercise her capacity for freedom.
He claims that to realize goals and potentials requires respect, recognition and the forbearance of others.

It can be argued that freedom expresses the nature rather than the limitations of a being. Constraints are part of human existence, but freedom is an impetus from within, not a reaction to what is outside the person. Freedom of spirit is expressed and evidenced in the capacity to formulate purposes and perform acts. It does not follow that these purposes are always successfully accomplished, but freedom is not necessarily denied (Hilde Hein in Gould 1983:139).

What women need is a habitation that frees them and provides them with the cultural and symbolic possibilities, including that of divinity. Margaret Whitford (1991:48), an English philosopher, suggests that the "sensible transcendent" is that ability which makes provision for such a possibility. She maintains that the "sensible transcendent" incorporates the idea of becoming and also the search for the divine. The divine provides a non-restrictive horizon for identity, while the 'sensible transcendent' brings opposites together such as mother and father, male and female, material and divine, immediate and transcendent. The intention of the concept "sensible transcendent" is to integrate and go beyond divisions. It can also be called God, or love (Whitford 1991:167). There is a sense in which this love is the becoming, or the motor of self-realization. God is the source and end of human self-realization and calls humanity in all its distinctions into being. As a person, striving for full humanhood, woman reaches for her transcendent centre, and it is that centre that enables her to transcend the distinctions of male and female. It is from her spiritual personhood that she claims her rights to self-realization. However, this does not mean accepting oppression and decadence, nor does it imply that the woman's dignity should be compromised by the spiritualization of her rights.
Woman, who claims her rights in freedom, finds therein new ways of loving others, her own self and God. God is unique, an inexpressible wonder, a creator that loves human beings. For the Christian, self-realization participates in the eternal act of love of the Jesus, available to the Holy Spirit through the transformed humanity of Christ. For fear of absolutizing the self, love is the possibility of allowing the self to go outside itself. Agape, which is not achieved by human resources, is such a love. Its origin is always God, and to regard God in a relational sense is to experience God as a friend.

6.3. Woman’s relational aptitude and self-realization.

Self-realization is not an isolated, self-oriented process. While it is essentially relational, it does not occur at the expense of other human beings whether male or female. According to Rosemary Radford Reuther (1983:18-19) an American feminist theologian, “women cannot affirm themselves as imago Dei and subjects of full human potential in a way that diminishes male humanity”. Insofar as the person is a rational and free creature capable of knowing and loving God, being in the image and likeness of God, involves living in a relationship (John Paul II 1988:21). Pope John Paul (1988:22) explains that both man and woman, individually, are like God: free and rational beings. However, this also means that man and woman “created in a unity of the two’ in their common humanity are called to live in a communion of love, the Trinity” (Pope John Paul (1988:22). This “unity of the two” which is a sign of interpersonal communion, shows that the creation of man and woman is also marked by a certain likeness to the divine communion.

It is in the field of relationship therefore that the humanity of woman is to be realized, and an understanding of the feminine self provides her with a set of conceptual tools. These are needed to understand right relationship as an interactive and inclusive embrace of differences. The full humanity of woman is implicit in imago Dei...
theology, which indicates the attributes that make her capable of relationship with God. Most important, it conveys the theologically appropriate affirmation of the goodness of finitude of creatures (McClintock Fulkerson 1997:108). It is essential to the self-realization of woman that she is in relation with God and others. The function of woman's self is to promote and facilitate mutual, cooperative and complementary encounters. Since the self of woman is an experience of cooperative, mutually enhancing encounters as the core of self-cohesion, congruence and coherence, this will assist women in general, and more specifically feminist theologians, to overcome the tendency towards exclusivity. Debates about reclaiming the "womanness of females" are valuable, but such debates must not be confused with their ground, that is the intermediate area of experiencing a full encounter with life. As all real living is relational, the magisterium of human knowledge affirms the self of the woman. In this sense self-realization of the woman does not depend on the social definition of feminism but rather on her natural essence. It can be concluded that self-realization of woman is not based on a theology that is established on the notions of separation and difference, nor on extreme feminist solidarity that makes self-realization difficult to defend. Self-realization calls for a feminism that is non-dualistic, which affirms unity and relationality to be at the core of human experience. Woman's self-realization is deeply imbedded in her personal relationship with her own self and her fidelity to the calling of being truly woman. It is with this in mind that Pope John Paul II states in Guadium et Spes, that the woman's self-realization resides in the recognition of her own dignity and vocation.

6.4. Self-realization exist in the woman's dignity and vocation.

The extraordinary dignity of the woman has been revealed "in the fullness of time" when God sent forth his son, "born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). While history, as well as present-day reality, does not always testify to this remarkable fact, it cannot be denied that the vocation
and dignity of woman is found at the centre of the salvific event, in which Mary, the Mother of Jesus, attained a union with God that exceeds all the expectations of the human spirit. It confirmed that the dignity of the woman formed part of the supernatural elevation. John Paul II (1988: 13) notes that when the “word is truly made flesh” (Jn.1: 14). Mary determines the ultimate finality of the existence of every person both on earth and in eternity. The call and dignity of both man and woman is to share in the intimate life of God-Self and in each other. In *Muliebs Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul (1988:36) reflects that the human person can only find self-realization through a sincere gift of self. It is “in relationship of ‘communion’ that the personal dignity of both man and woman find expression. Only the equality which results from their dignity as persons can give to their mutual relationship the character of authentic “*communio personanum*” (John Paul II 1988:37).

When this equality, which derives from God the Creator, and is both a gift and a right, is violated, this is to the disadvantage of woman and a diminution of the dignity of both man and woman. Pope John Paul II (1988:39) singles out the Gen. 3:15 statement to be of particular significance. He claims that the mutual relationship of man and woman in marriage, is expressed in the woman’s sincere gift of self is responded to and matched by a corresponding “gift” on the part of the husband. Only on the basis of this principle can both discover themselves as a true unity, according to the dignity of each. For this reason, says John Paul II (1988:39), woman should not be reduced to an object of “domination” and male “possession”. This is sinfulness, that is a tendency to go against the moral order and thus violate the dignity of both man and woman. In this regard John Paul II (1988:39) counsels, “in the name of liberation from male domination woman must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine “originality”. It is feared that if women resorts to this they will not “reach” self-realization, but instead will deform and lose what constitutes their essential richness. The personal resources of femininity are no less than the resources of masculinity, they are
merely different. It is thus imperative, writes John Paul II (1988:40), for a woman to understand that her self-realization as a person is founded on her dignity and vocation. For Catholics, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, by being true to her dignity and vocation, epitomizes woman’s calling to self-realization.

6.4.1. Mary as the paradigm of woman’s self-realization.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, assumed in herself and embraces the mystery of womanhood whose beginning is Eve, the “mother of all the living” (Gen. 3:20). Mary is regarded as the full revelation of all that is included in the biblical word and the symbolic term “woman”. Theologically speaking she is the “new beginning” of the dignity and vocation of each and every woman. While it is up to woman to discover the richness of her feminine humanity, it is God’s desire for her to discover her own self as a “means of a sincere gift of self” (Gaudium et Spes 1965: 24). It is this feminine humanity that shapes the heart of every woman’s vocation. Reflecting on this statement of Gaudium et Spes, John Paul II (1988:54) points out the way in which Jesus Christ, in the face of a culture that often dictated otherwise, was a promoter of woman’s dignity. Both in behaviour and teaching, Jesus did not adhere to the discrimination against woman so prevalent of his time, instead he accepted all women, in his interaction with them confirmed their dignity, recalled it, renewed it and made it part of the Gospel, and of the Redemption for which he was sent into the world. It can be said that Christ’s way of acting was a consistent protest against whatever offended the dignity of women. John Paul II (1988:57) teaches that those women who are close to Christ discover themselves in the truth, which Christ “teaches” and “does” even when the truth concerns their sinfulness (Jn. 8:3-11). Women experience liberation when they encounter the truth, and Jesus entrusted divine truths to both women and men. Woman’s dignity is entrenched in the life-giving events that unfolded in Jesus’ ministry. It was a woman who first met the risen Christ and bore witness to him before the Apostles (Jn.
20:16-18), and the truth about the equality of men and women is established and clarified in the Holy Spirit. Both are both equally capable of receiving the outpouring of divine truth and love in the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:28). Gospel equality constitutes the most obvious and fundamental basis for the dignity of women in the Church and in the world. Mary the Mother of Jesus embraces the two dimensions of the female vocation which, according to the Church fulfil the woman’s personality. John Paul II (1988:64) says that these two dimensions of the female vocation were united in Mary in an exceptional manner and in a wonderfully complete way.

6.4.1.1. The two coexisting dimensions in the female vocation.

Generally Catholics believe that virginity and motherhood coexisted in Mary, the mother of Jesus, and that these two qualities do not mutually exclude or place limits on each other. The truth about the personhood of woman also opens up the path to a full understanding of motherhood, which is the fruit of the mutual “knowledge” between man and woman. This is the result of the marriage union of man and woman, which corresponds to the “union of the two in one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). It brings about, on the part of the woman, a special “gift of self, as reflected in Gaudium et Spes (1965:24). Biologically and spiritually speaking the mutual gift of persons in marriage makes possible the gift of a new human being, a child, and in the openness of conceiving and giving birth, the woman “discovers herself” through a sincere “gift of self”. The words of Genesis 4:1: “I have brought a child into being with the help of the Lord”, expresses the woman’s joy and awareness of sharing in the great mystery of eternal generation. In John Paul’s (1988:68) reflection on Gen 4:1, motherhood is linked to the personal structure of the woman and to the personal dimension of the gift.

On the other hand virginity for the sake of the Kingdom, based on Mt. 19:12, offers the invitation of another vocation equally precious in the sight of God, namely: voluntary celibacy chosen freely for the sake of
the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ said twice: “The one who is able to receive this let him/her receive it” (Mt 19:11). Only “those to whom it is given” understand it. Celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven is the result not only of choice, but also of a special grace given by God, who calls the individual to live a celibate life. While this is a special sign of the Kingdom of God to come, John Paul II (1988:75) points out that it also serves as a way to devote all the energies of one’s soul and body during one’s earthly life, exclusively for the sake of the eschatological kingdom.

Mary is the first person in whom the new awareness is manifested: “How can this be possible ... since I have no husband”, she asked the angel (Lk. 1:23). Virginity is a sign of eschatological hope, and in terms of the Gospel, the meaning of virginity was developed and better understood as a vocation for both women and men, one in which they, like Mary, find confirmation of their dignity. As noted in *Muliens Dignitatem* (1988:77) the Gospel puts forward the ideal of the consecration of the person to God by means of the evangelical counsels: in particular chastity, poverty and obedience. Whoever wishes to follow Christ in a radical way chooses to live according to these counsels.

In this sense the Catholic Church advocates that virginity, rather than marriage, has to be considered as an alternative way in which woman can realize herself. In the quest for true personhood, some women freely choose the alternative way of virginity, a choice that is neither inferior nor superior to any other way. Women, when they give themselves in Christ as a “sincere gift” to God, should be aware of the true personal value of their femininity. John Paul II (1988:78) says that a woman’s consecration in virginity makes sense and can only be understood in the context of spousal love with Jesus as a “spousal gift” to humanity.
The Church teaches that the woman who is called to a life of virginity, that is to love and be loved, finds her self-realization in Jesus the Redeemer who “loved until the end”. Through this total gift of self, a woman is graced to respond with her whole life to Christ who is sincere gift. By becoming one spirit with Christ, she gives herself to Him in a union that is properly spiritual in character (1Cor. 16-17).

The evangelical ideal of virginity, in which the dignity and vocation of woman are realized in a special way, is not based on a mere “no” of self, rather it is based on love. Tradition has it that since physical motherhood is renounced, a call to spiritual motherhood takes its place. Spiritual motherhood, in the mystical sense, in its concern for others, takes in a profoundly personal way, different forms and expressions. Since a woman can only realize herself by giving herself in love to others, it is believed that whatever choice is made, motherhood or virginity, it is love that constitutes a woman’s vocation.

6.5. Evaluative commentary.

By virtue of the fact that the woman is a relational being whose creativity and moral integrity are both developed and realized in and through relationships and practices, it can be stated that self-realization of the woman does not and could not be minimized to a gender-war or to gender identification. The act of self-realization acknowledges that while differences exist between male and female, the most obvious of which are the physical, this does not determine mastery or control of one over the other. On the contrary it promotes creative engenderment of self, self-blessing, self-nurturance, receptiveness and sensibility. While it rejects subordination, servility and the mechanical system of reward and punishment, self-realization enables the woman to surmount all these negativities and claim her transcendent rights. Self-realization is supported by a compassionate analysis of woman’s cultural, religious, social and economic experiences, and benefits by, but is not dependent on collaboration.
Although feminist theology should promote the full humanity or the self-realization of the woman, it does not actualize self-realization by itself. Self-realization may appeal to the experiences of woman as a mode of consciousness that provides knowledge. But it responds to an innate call to transcend ‘feminism’ as a ‘means’ of experiencing the divine. While self-realization is based on the experience of God and self, it takes cognizance of the fact that God is incomprehensible mystery, beyond feminism and masculinism. Appealing to the feminism in God as a means of self-realization “is based on a theory of analogical predication which is an attempt to validify tenets of faith-knowledge” (Martin 1994:228). He argues that since human beings have no direct knowledge of the referent, God, who is not visible to the human eye, it is an ineffective exercise to attempt to pronounce God as feminine or masculine. Martin explains that humanity cannot conceive of the way (*modus significandi*) in which the term is applied to God since it refers to an identity between femininity and masculinity of God. Hence the understanding that the full meaning (*ratio nominis*) of the term feminine/masculine as applied to God escapes us. It is well to take note that God is the “causal principle in whom all the perfection of things pre-exist surpassingly” (Martin 1994:228). Therefore the noetic predication and our reflexive epistemic judgment which are grounded in reality, conclude that it is appropriate to say “feminine” or “masculine” of God.

Analogical terms apply primarily to God and secondarily to creatures. Metaphorical terms apply primarily to creatures and secondarily to God. Martin (1994:228) explains this as follows: the meaning of the term “Father”: source or creator, is applied metaphorically to the divine nature as shared by all three persons in the Trinity. The authority of the names by which Christians call upon the persons of the Trinity, derive not from a faith experience of the created world, but from the teaching of the New Testament which directs and conforms the faith experience of the church and of individual believers. To use the “anthropomorphic way of speaking about God”, says John Paul II
(1988:29), “points directly to the mystery of eternal ‘generating’ which belongs to the inner life of God. In itself this ‘generating’ has neither “masculine” nor “feminine” qualities. It is by nature totally divine. It is spiritual in the most perfect way since “God is spirit” (Jn. 4:24) and possesses no property typical of the body, neither “feminine” nor ‘masculine’. Thus even ‘fatherhood’ in God is completely divine and free of the ‘masculine’ bodily characteristics proper to human fatherhood”.

Consequently when the Old Testament speaks of God as Father and Jesus Christ in the New Testament calling God “Abba-Father” (Mk 14:36) hereby establishing the format as the norm for Christian prayer, it in fact refers to fatherhood in an ultra-corporeal, superhuman and completely divine sense. Jesus spoke as the Son, joined to the Father by the eternal mystery of divine generation, and he did so while being at the same time the truly human Son of the Virgin Mother. God is the absolute mode of all generation, and man and woman’s generation is likened to that of God (John Paul II 1988:29).

In a sense, therefore, to appeal to the feminine images of God, such as those that appear in Is 42:13-14; 45:9-10; 49:14-15; 66:13, can often lead to interpretations that are misguided. Martin (1994:237) argues that in particular, feminine images of God are prone to such misunderstandings of the roles of images and metaphors in speech. The images of Isaiah mediate a new dimension of the tenderness and bondedness of the love of God for his people. This, however, is true revelation in the sense that it manifests something about God and not merely about an individual’s experience of the Transcendent. Martin (1994:239) points out that the term “gave you birth” is in fact a masculine principle form of the root hyl. This evokes the notion of the pain in the loins that woman experiences in labour and which can be applied to other similar pains. These words, however, do not describe “a woman in labour pains”. The important point made by Martin
(1994:240) is that there is a difference in understanding images as mediated by evocation, rather than by the representation of direct referential illusions.

Therefore to cite feminine images of God in the Christian tradition, the function of the image is to create an interior space that mediates some facet of an object, an event, a person, or an experience. One of the secrets of the power of imagery, writes Martin (1994:231), is that it draws energy from that mysterious inner point where body, psyche, cosmos and society meet. The body supplies the basic sensible forms through its interaction with the cosmos; the psyche transposes and combines these into images, while at the same time participating in the communicated image world of human intercourse. He argues that images can only be classified according to the degree of their interiority.

Martin (1994:240) points out that while feminine images are extremely rare in the Bible, those that are there are mostly used as poetic images. It is well to distinguish between the poetic uses of these images and an interpretation which reveals much deeper things about God. These feminine images create within the person a space that adapts the human imagination to some aspect of God, or they hint at or disclose something that the more frequent, male images of God about God himself, are not able to do.

However, while self-realization *per se* does not depend on either the use of feminist terminology in relation to God, or on a linguistic mediation of God, it is nevertheless to the advantage of woman's self-realization to discover her own female self in God, and God within her own self. This brings together for woman the feminine dimension of the self and the divine, which in turn stimulates interest in reconciling the mind-body split by exercising more responsibility towards the earth and environment, or by using sacramental liturgies more frequently; issues that are instrumental in female self-realization. This
search, argues Engelsman (1994:7), a specialist in Psychology and Spirituality, "coincides with and underscores a search for self-understanding and self-realization. It represents a quest for meaning in this world".

Self-realization is fostered when woman experiences herself as connected to and in relationship with the divine. For this reason Engelsman (1994:41) advocates that it is to the benefit of both man and woman to connect with the "feminine dimension" of the divine. For this purposes he engages Jung's discovery of the feminine side of man's psyche and the masculine side of the female psyche. She warns that the repression of the feminine dimension of the divine created poignant problems for women in particular, and its restoration may be necessary for the psychic health of all people. Repression of the feminine dimension of the divine is something that was based on the interpretation of the early church which adhered to the belief that anything feminine cannot be divine, and anything divine must be masculine. Hence the fact that until after the promulgation of the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1950, followed by the feminist movement in the 1960's, the feminine went unrecognized in the Western theological tradition. According to Engelsman (1994:149), it became a psychic necessity for the feminine dimension of the divine to emerge and rise to consciousness.

Apart from the understanding that self-realization of woman will benefit by rediscovering the divine dimension, theology as a whole stands to gain as well. The doctrine of the Trinity alone gained much by allowing the feminine dimension of God to be expressed. Because this age has begun to give recognition to the androgynous nature of all human beings, the disclosure of the feminine nature of the divine as reflected in Christian anthropology, should affect the image of woman. It should give her insight into her dignity and provide support for her efforts towards self-realization. Engelsman (1994:156) suggests that that although there is no evidence to support such a claim, it is
possible that a narrow view of the feminine image in the divine may have limited women's experience of God. Nevertheless it can be argued that recognition of the feminine in the Divine could create better space in which woman can recognize and realize her own sacred self as depicted in God, and within herself. To be filled with feminine inner strength creates space, allowing the woman to realize her own potential.

By discovering the feminine divine within herself woman realizes that she is the sacred symbol of the sacred body from whom all come. The holy work of "birthing" identifies woman with the cosmic cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Rae and Marie Daly (1990:49) assert that woman learns to be with mystery when she is involved in life-giving mysteries expressed through her body. This gives her a deeper understanding of self as Sacred Presence.

Feminist theology has helped women to become more conscious of their human dignity and call to full humanhood. The idea of self-realization is not focused on changing the role of women. Nevertheless it would have important implications for the conceptualization of women's roles, as it portrays women as partners in the social, religious, ecclesial, economic, and cultural arenas, in which both male and female are necessary components. Feminism has provided a powerful first step for women towards the possibility of self-realization since it has brought them back into touch with their disowned personhood, and has legitimized for them the search for identity. It can open the way for women to lead self-actualizing lives, claiming both their rights to self-realization, to their own reality and dignity.

As is manifested in various lifestyles that foster self-realization, the world is in need of feminine holiness. The focal point of this research is Consecrated Religious Life which has been selected as a self-actualizing life-style that assist woman towards human wholeness. It
is generally believed that the lifestyle of Consecrated Religious women lacks self-nourishment, and deprives them of the means to support wholeness of life. The following chapter will concentrate on Consecrated woman, vowed to live according to the principles of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, and it will indicate the ways in which such religious institutions can assist woman in her growth towards personhood.
CHAPTER SEVEN

SELF-REALIZATION AND THE CONSECRATED WOMAN.

7.1. Introduction.

The Consecrated Life, alternatively called, Religious Life, is a Christian life form or state in the Catholic Church, entered into by perpetual profession and constituted by lifelong consecrated celibacy. This state can be described as a permanent and public form of life in the church. It renders visible in a special way, certain dimension of the Christian mystery that all the baptized are called to live. Traditionally Religious Life has been understood as a striving for perfection according to the evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity and obedience. These counsels were viewed as gospel directives towards a more “perfect life”. The long-standing and widely accepted interpretation of 1 Cor. 7-8: “This is a suggestion, not a rule: I should like everyone to be like me, but everybody has his own particular gifts from God, one with a gift for one thing and another a gift for the opposite. There is one thing I want to add for the sake of widows and those who are not married; it is good for them to stay as they are, like me”. The Church, in terms of Mt 19, holds voluntary chastity in special honour and recognizes that those who choose it are seeking a “higher way” (Casey 1988:870). In addition voluntary poverty was understood in terms of Mt 19:21. Obedience was the imitation of Christ who humbled himself and was obedient unto death [Phil.2: 5-8]. Living radically according to these evangelical counsels was expressed in the profession of vows. Voluntary celibacy of widows and virgins was first praised in the apostolic age, and has been at the heart of religious life since its rudimentary stages. Poverty and obedience, although recognized as fundamental to a consecrated life-style, were fully accepted only in the 13th century. While the presence and importance of women in the history of religious life in the church is evident, it has been overlooked
frequently, and this despite the fact the vast majority of consecrated religious in the Catholic Church are women.

No event has challenged Religious life so radically as the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Vatican II documents, Lumen Gentium (Constitution of the Church), and Perfectae Caritatis (Decree on Religious Life), deal specifically with Consecrated Religious Life. Vatican II, by affirming that all Christians, by virtue of their baptism, are called to holiness and participation in the mission of the Church, made a major contribution to Christian self-understanding. Lumen Gentium (42) reiterates the universal call to holiness, mission, fullness of life and the perfection of charity for all Christians. Recognition of this call (Lumen Gentium 40), has challenged consecrated men and women to examine the meaning of their life, which, for centuries, has been erroneously defined in terms of separation from, and superiority to, the life of the Christian laity (Schneiders 2000:124). The teachings of Vatican II make it clear that the Consecrated life is part of the grace and mission of the Church, but it is not "higher" or "more perfect". Vatican II points to a new vision of Church, which marks a radical break from the past. The Council broke quietly and dramatically with the traditional theology, which supported the particular values and aims of Consecrated Life. The new vision of the Council is to have a church that is participatory, consultative, community-based and critical of how power is used and exercised at every level (Gottmeroker 1997:225). The challenge facing Religious Life is the construction of a way of life that will reflect more clearly the unique dignity and value of each person called to serve God as a Religious. An Irish priest, Connolly (1983:8) says that the real challenge for the consecrated men and women who promise to observe celibacy, obedience and poverty, is to contribute to the creation of a milieu which promotes the human and spiritual self-realization of religious.
All Christians are incorporated into Christ, the Son of God, and share in His identity and mission as prophet, priest and king. Consequently the choice to live the Consecrated life does not imply that the Religious have a claim to be more consecrated than other baptized Christians. The primal vow for all Christians is baptism and the religious vows have no independent meaning separate from baptism. The vows, in themselves, do not constitute a distinct form of life, since they form part of the fundamental experience of being Christian. By virtue of baptism, a Christian is once and for all consecrated to live according to the gift of the Spirit. Every calling and every other vow in the church is rooted and takes its meaning from that initial experience (Connolly 1983:18). Consecration is a characteristic that belongs to the whole people of God, and as such is not limited to any exclusive form of Christian life. However the theological meaning of the term “Consecrated life”, is derived from the consecration of an individual’s life by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, which are based on the evangelical counsels. The one who is called to the vowed life accepts the challenge of allowing the vows to shape her into becoming a Gospel person (Connolly 1983:19). The Consecrated life is deeply rooted in the teaching and life of Jesus Christ, and according to John Paul II (1996:3), it is a “gift of God the Father to the church through the Holy Spirit”. This life is not something isolated and marginalized, but a reality, which affects the whole Church. It is at the heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission (John Paul II 1996:5). As Schneiders (2001:127), an American woman religious and theologian points out, the Consecrated Life is not a hierarchical state, nor an ecclesiastical “class”. It is recognized by the Catholic Church in both, Lumen Gentium and Perfectae Caritatis as a state of life, which is distinct from both the ordained and the lay states of life. Those who choose the consecrated life, by virtue of this choice, form a distinct category of persons in the Church.

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12 Religious is the general term used for Consecrated men and women, or members of a Religious Order or Congregation. It is generally understood that a Religious lives a vowed life, the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.
This specific state of the Consecrated Life is a public, institutionalized, permanent structure in the Church. One enters (or leaves) this life by public juridical acts. The act by which one solemnly, formally and publicly undertakes or enters the Consecrated Life is termed 'profession'. Religious profession is not a casual undertaking; it is deliberate act requiring mature reflection and discernment, lengthy probation and preparation followed by a definite solemn decision. Entrance into Consecrated Life cannot be done implicitly or by mere association with a congregation, or simply by virtue of long participation in some aspects of the life. It is done at a particular moment, by the public act of profession, before which the person is not a Religious, but thereafter, in a formal sense, she or he is (Schneiders 2000:128).

By the act of profession the individual acquires certain rights that others in the church do not have, but have an obligation to honour. Among these rights is an active and passive voice in the affairs of her Religious Congregation. A professed Religious undertakes certain responsibilities and obligations, such as sexual abstinence demanded by the vow of celibate chastity, poverty, that is simplicity of lifestyle, and the common sharing and use of goods and money. Those who share with her in the Consecrated Life have a right to expect her to fulfil these obligations (Schneiders 2000:128).

The question pertaining to this thesis is: how does the Consecrated Life facilitate the self-realization of the woman who embraces the evangelical counsels and has made profession freely? It is an undisputed fact that consecrated women have been at the cutting edge in unmasking symbols that denigrate the humanity of women. They have worked to retrieve the genuine symbols that affirm the authentic selfhood and self-transcendence of women. They broke boundaries by unmasking cultural and religious ideologies that deny woman their full personhood. In order to facilitate as a life-form, true
self-realization and human wholeness, Christian feminist theology should explore the Christian religious life of women.

7.2. The theology of Consecrated Life.

The Consecrated life, which assists the Church in carrying out the saving mission of Christ, is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Casey 1988:871). It is imperative that the theology of Consecrated Life which has a necessary relationship with the theology of the Church in general, should not be perceived as an isolated entity. Implicit in the term “consecration”, is the question of the place of Religious, and more specifically of women religious, in the Church. What is their distinctive identity? Gottemoeler (1996:218) states that the very word “consecration” symbolizes the ambivalence of the position of Religious in the Church. After Vatican II the term ‘consecrated’ came into general use. In the papal encyclical Vita Consecrata (1996), Pope John Paul II teaches that there are three fundamental vocations or states of life in the church: namely lay, clerical and consecrated. He says: that the Consecrated life, which resides at the very heart of the church and constitutes a decisive part for her mission, is not something remote, nor an entity that exists on the periphery, but a reality which affects the whole church. John Paul II (1996:5) describes it as “an intimate part of the church’s life, her holiness and her mission”.

The theological foundation of the consecrated life is rooted in the very mystery of Christ and in scripture. Living according to the evangelical counsels is the fundamental norm of this lifestyle. Accordingly it can be separated neither from the following of Christ nor from the gift of consecration. It can however, be questioned as to how valid the concept “consecration” is in describing the dedication of people to the mission and holiness of the church? The argument holds that through baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, all Christians form part of the consecrated people of God, and as a consequence, can make an evangelical and filial response in imitation of Christ.
(Instrumentum Laboris 1994:53). Does the act of religious profession constitute a new sacrament? And does it mean that all those who profess the evangelical counsels are more consecrated than those who are ordained to the priesthood, or who receive the sacrament of matrimony? In this regard Vita Consecrata (No 30) speaks of "a special and fruitful deepening of the consecration received in baptism". By inserting the theology of Religious Life into the sacramental dimension of the church, the Second Vatican Council has highlighted the relationship between religious consecration and that of baptism, of which it is an inclusive expression.

As Vita Consecrata (1966:31) clearly states, the consecration at baptism and that of religious profession are not in opposition. Baptism and confirmation constitute the first and fundamental consecration of Jesus' disciples. Consequently by these sacraments they participate in the paschal mystery, and in the mystery of Pentecost. It is by this participation that they live as members of Christ's faithful in the Church. Consecration is also a gift of the Spirit, according to the solidity and stability of the vows. It unites the individual to Christ's mystery and mission. By publicly vowing themselves to the evangelical counsels, consecrated women are called to give radical expression to these counsels in their lives. This special consecration, though it is not sacramental, commits the vowed religious to live in conformity to the personal life of Jesus, which He proposed as a model to His disciples.

Significantly, Vita Consecrata uses the Transfiguration of Christ as the "special icon" of consecrated life; a depiction of the three persons manifested to a chosen few. Peter, James and John received the gift of special intimacy with Jesus, and both the Transfigured Christ and the consecrated life foreshadow the eschaton (Gottemoeler 1996: 220). Since an icon is not a picture, a portrait or a photograph, its metaphor provides an opening onto mystery. An icon renders present, in limited scope and concrete material, that which is not concrete, but richly
mysterious in its spirituality. Religious life, says Schneiders (1986:118), is a kind of existential icon. Those who are captivated by the reality of consecrated life, produce something in the material of their lives which even they themselves never fully understand.

While the consecrated life is marked by the vow of celibacy, poverty and obedience, these evangelical counsels should not be considered to be a denial of the values inherent in sexuality, in the legitimate desire to possess material goods, or the right to make decisions for oneself. Insofar as these inclinations are based on nature, they are good in themselves. Schneiders (1986:114) argues, that strictly speaking, since celibacy is a response to an invitation addressed to all Christians, it is the only vow of the three that is an evangelical “counsel”. Although poverty and obedience are structured differently in the life of the Consecrated Religious than they are in the life of a married or single Christian, religious are certainly not the only Christians to whom the evangelical challenges of poverty and obedience to God are addressed. It can therefore be stated that consecrated celibacy is the defining character of Consecrated life (Schneiders 1986:114).

Celibacy requires interior honesty in human relationships, and there is no contradiction between obedience and freedom (Vita Consecrata 1996:159). It is however, precisely because consecrated women commit themselves by vow to a life of chastity, poverty and obedience, that the very nature of their self-realization comes into question. In what sense does a life, vowed in terms of the evangelical counsels, provide the consecrated woman with the environment that will facilitate growth towards a strong sense of self? Is she able to assume responsibility for herself, and make reasoned and free decisions? By virtue of the fact that so much contemporary value is placed on the importance of sexuality in human life, together with the irreplaceable role of friendship with members of one’s own and the other sex in affective growth, a serious revision of both the theology and the
practice of consecrated celibacy is to be considered. However, according to Schneiders (1986:92), "religious are realizing the corporate significance of their chosen lifestyle as a form of witness, complementary to that of Christian marriage. They tend to see their celibacy less as a renunciation of marriage, and more as a commitment to growth in love dedicated to the development of a world characterized by unselfish service and mutual care". Celibacy, the essential gift in the vocation of consecrated religious, is lived in community, which according to Connolly (1983:19) is the essential framework of the other vows. He states that: "Celibacy lived in community, as it actually faces life in the world of material things, results in poverty. Again, celibacy lived in community, as it addresses itself to the actual service of the Church and of people, opens into obedience" (Connolly 1983:19).

7.3. Consecrated celibacy as a constitutive feature of Consecrated life.

As already stated, consecrated celibacy, as a commitment to Jesus Christ, constitutes one of the most decisive features of Consecrated Life. There is a distinction between celibacy and consecrated celibacy in that a religious takes a vow of celibacy, while celibacy per se is simply the state of being unmarried or sexually inactive. The celibate by definition, is free to marry if and when she or he chooses to do so. In the Christian context celibacy ideally involves as its appropriate from of chastity, abstention from sexual relations. Schneiders (2001:117) describes consecrated celibacy as "the freely chosen response to a personally discerned vocation to charismatically grounded, religiously motivated, sexually abstinent, lifelong commitment to Christ that is externally symbolized by remaining unmarried". All these features must be present simultaneously when referring to consecrated celibacy, which is characteristic of Religious Life. Consecrated celibacy is a charism, a call from God to certain individuals. It is a free gift of God and a vocation, similar to that of
vocation to marriage. Religious men and women do not undertake celibacy as an imposed condition for entrance into Religious Life; rather they enter Religious Life because they feel called to give themselves freely to Christ in a way that excludes other primary commitments.

Often the “vow of celibacy” is also termed the “vow of chastity” as it is not easy to find an appropriate term for religious celibacy. The term chastity is, however, certainly inadequate, since all Christians, married, single, or consecrated by vows are called to be chaste. It follows therefore that religious chastity is not chaster than married or single chastity. Consecrated celibacy involves a free choice to remain unmarried for the whole of one’s life i.e. to make non-marriage a state of life (Schneiders 1986:208). So though all are called to chastity, celibacy is a state of life to which only some are called (Schneiders 2001:125). For greater accuracy it can be said that consecrated Religious are called to be “chaste celibates”, as one could be celibate and not chaste, and chaste and not celibate.

The nature of the celibate commitment of the religious is not different to that of the constitutive feature of matrimony, which is the lifelong commitment of the spouses to Christ, and to each other, in faithful sexual monogamy [Schneiders 2001: 125]. As a constitutive principle of Religious Life, consecrated celibacy is based on an intimate interaction between God and a human being, which elicits the voluntary commitment of lifelong consecrated celibacy. In itself this vocation is as unfathomable as the attraction between two people that leads to marriage. These mysteries, says Schneiders (2000:126), cannot be explained, only reverently explored.

The deepest meaning, in fact the raison d’etre of consecrated celibacy is the love relationship between the Consecrated Religious and Christ, but this does not imply the renunciation of the need to express and receive human love. This love relationship is lived in the context of
community, both in that of the church and in a particular congregation of one's choice, for example Dominican, Franciscan or Jesuit. Celibacy is oriented towards the service of others; hence it is not an isolated entity. Nevertheless, Schneiders (2000:129) maintains that celibacy, chosen as a public and permanent state of life, establishes the Religious Life as an existential solitude that no bonds, however deep, of friendship, community, or solidarity in mission can mitigate. Aloneness is, in a certain sense, the inner structure of the life of the Religious, just as faithful and fruitful mutuality constitutes the inner structure of matrimony.

Although all consecrated men and women profess celibacy, the explanations and motivations for this choice are not always analogous. The following are among the traditional reasons used to explain the choice of religious celibacy: it has been perceived as a marriage to Christ, and it secures freedom for contemplation and ministry. It also serves as eschatological witness as well as a countercultural stance, and it is a condition for prophetic community life (Schneiders 1986:114-115). In one sense, as Schneiders (1986:114-115) points out, the established motivations for consecrated celibacy could be grouped into two categories. The first category, consecrated virginity, was understood in nuptial terms and referred to a mystical marriage to Christ. The second category of motivation for consecrated celibacy was ascetical /apostolic.

The first category, non-marriage for the consecrated virgin, is a form of total personal dedication to Jesus, just as marriage is the form of lifelong personal dedication to another individual. Abstaining from sexual relationships forms part of this total life-stance, but by no means its major or defining characteristic. Chastity for the consecrated virgin, involves abstaining from sexual relations, just as chastity for a married person involves abstaining from sexual relations with anyone other than one's spouse. But chastity hardly exhausts
the meaning of virginity any more than sexual fidelity exhausts the meaning of marriage (Schneiders 1986:115).

In the light of the above observations, it is difficult for most people, including many religious, to understand this particular concept of consecrated celibacy as a nuptial experience. While this may be the case, it is important not to negate the explanation, because the nuptial experience of virginity is the first celibate experience described in ecclesial literature, and it is still the experience of some consecrated men and women. Nevertheless, this explanation according to Schneiders (1986:115) is as much subject to misunderstanding today as it was in the past. Though the term virginity is appropriate to describe one of the conditions for living this kind of religious life, it remains open to misunderstanding. Virginity, because it refers literally to a state of never having been married or having had sexual relations, suggests the totality of the self-dedication, which includes not only the whole of a person’s life from a temporal point of view, but also the entirety of one’s capacity for love. Ever since the time of the early Church Fathers, consecrated virginity had essentially to do with the spiritual rather than the physical condition of the person who makes profession. Physical virginity was eminently appropriate as a sign of the integrity of the profession, but perfect continence after the profession was also required. However, not being physically a virgin at the time of profession, which was the case with widows who were often foundation members of religious communities, was not an absolute impediment to entering religious life. (Schneiders 1986:116). Nevertheless, as the situation developed over the years, it seemed preferable not to raise the question of the sexual experience of the religious prior to admission, but all religious came to make profession of celibacy, rather than of virginity. Schneiders (1986:116) argues that while many religious today may use nuptial language to express religious commitment, it does not reflect their experience. The mystical/nuptial terminology has been the preserve of mysticism, and
it still nourishes those who can understand from their own experiences, what is being described.

The second category of motivations for consecrated celibacy, which centres on the ascetical/apostolic explanations, as reflected by Schneiders’ (1986:117) findings, is acceptable to most contemporary religious. Those who undertake lifelong celibacy, do so, not as an end in itself, but because it fosters asceticism and promotes the apostolic ministry of the Church. Celibacy is not only a means to an end, but it is important in that it gives definite form to the lifestyle of consecrated religious. The end fostered by celibacy includes a life of prayer and contemplation, ministry and community living of a kind that would be difficult in the married state.

That consecrated celibacy also facilitates ministry is apparent since the time of St Paul, when celibacy was proposed to Christians as a way of freeing themselves, in order to participate wholeheartedly in the quest for personal holiness, and for the ministry of the church (Schneiders 1986:129). This in itself also forms part of the theoretical justification offered for mandatory clerical celibacy. However, since for some clerics celibacy does not facilitate ministry, indeed constitutes a substantial obstacle to it, this argument is being challenged. The Christian experience testifies that married ministers, whether they are Protestant ordained ministers or Catholic non-ordained ministers, are often more, rather than less effective, than their celibate colleagues. Apart from the experiential arguments, there are also theological debates. To maintain that celibacy makes one more available for God or freer for mission, is to maintain that matrimony is an impediment to holiness and to ministry. Schneiders (1986:130) argues that this is an untenable theological position. Is not marriage a sacrament that, in the nuptial union between Christ and his body, manifests in itself the ministry of the church (Eph. 5:25-32)?
Since the early church celibacy was considered the strict equivalent of martyrdom. Not to marry, not to found a family, was a choice not to build oneself into the future of the race, not to immortalize the self in the only way known to human wisdom. It was to make one’s own death final from the human point of view. Such a choice was total in its intensity and extension because it involved the whole of one’s own life, and of one’s possible progeny. Just as the death of Jesus involved a rupture with all that he knew, humanly, as life, so celibacy involves a rupture with our own power to live on in this world (Schneiders 1986:128). The Christian challenge is to transform death, the inevitable, into life, as an act of ultimate freedom, the final act of love. Religious by their choice of consecrated celibacy, elevate that Christian choice to striking visibility in the Church. This is the context in which the Second Vatican Council proclaimed, “the religious state foretells the resurrected state and the glory of the heavenly kingdom” (Lumen Gentium VI, 44). Just as the quality of Jesus’ death made his dying a glorification, so too does the clarity of the witness of consecrated celibacy depend on the quality of the life lived by religious (Schneiders 1986:129).

Deeply embedded in the fallacious argument that the celibate is more apt for holiness and ministry than the married person, is a profound and un-Christian suspicion of sexual intimacy. Sexual intimacy between married Christians is not an obstacle to intimacy with God. It is both a divinely ordained, sacramental means to the experience of the love of God, and the normal path to human affective maturity, which in turn grounds the capability for love of God and neighbour (Schneiders 1986:130). This negative attitude towards intimacy has its roots in the semi-Manichean13 fear of the flesh, of women, of intimacy and of sexuality. This aberration had particularly noxious influences on both the theology of marriage and the theology of consecrated

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13 Although this thesis deals with the topic “Intimacy and Celibate Love” under the section 9.1.3.3, it is relevant to introduce the argument at this stage.

14 Manichaeism is a policy of life introduced by Manes in the 3rd century, an offshoot from Gnosticism.
celibacy. The task of re-establishing celibacy as a value in the church, and also for human self-realization, would demand the repudiation of these Christian fears and their destructive implications.

Can celibacy be considered as an essential means towards the facilitation of ministry for the sake of the Kingdom? If some people find it imperative to renounce all competing relationships in order to be totally involved in a life of ministry, then celibacy enables them to do so. This, argues Schneiders (1986:131), is entirely due to their personality and not because of the nature of celibacy, marriage or ministry. As a lifestyle, consecrated celibacy is inherently a choice of solitude, and it brings to visibility in the church something which must be true of every Christian and of every minister, namely, the final solitariness of each individual in his/her relationship with God, and the ultimate totality of those claims, which the Kingdom of God makes on each of us. When celibacy is freely chosen as a response to a personal vocation, and not imposed by law, or as a condition for ministry, then it can bring to consciousness the ultimate all-sufficiency of God as the centre of one's life, and the real possibility of finding full self-realization and meaning in the seeking of God's Kingdom. All Christians are called to personal holiness and participation in the life of the Church. Some, by a life of consecrated celibacy, choose to manifest visibly in the church the totality and exclusivity of that vocation. Others visibly manifest the faithful love of God by a life of married fidelity. The witness of both lives complement each other and as highlighted by Schneiders (1986:133) make essential contributions to the Church's self-understanding as mission, and self-expression in ministry.

Celibacy is not a simple reality; it is often described as a mystery that calls for more contemplation and appreciation. The voluntary choice of lifelong celibacy bears upon the most intimate core of human experience. Consecrated celibacy, since it touches on issues central to a person's humanity such as sexuality, corporeality and the need to
express and receive affection, demands clarity of mind and maturity (Radcliffe 1999:48). The celibate lifestyle symbolizes for all Christians both the final solitariness of one's relationship with God and the quality of one's human relationships. (Chittister 1999:67). When celibacy is lived with sincerity, it can serve as an important facilitator of human self-realization, which takes place in the form of self-gift to God and others in love.

7.3.1. Human self-realization and consecrated celibacy.

Although the Consecrated woman vows to live a celibate life for the sake of Jesus Christ, a celibate lifestyle is not confined only to Religious. Some degree of celibacy is part of every human life and is not a private preserve of professed religious. Joan Chittister (1999:67), a woman religious and feminist theologian, describes celibacy as "an attitude of life that strikes at the root of every human relationship, of every relationship with God". She goes on to say that celibacy is about something far more important than the renunciation of sex, just as right relationship is far more important than engaging in sex. A theology of negation is not the theology of celibacy. It is about purity of heart, and a single-minded search for God (Chittister 1999:71). Reflecting on the writings on celibacy by Timothy Radcliffe (1999:48), a well-known English Dominican's, Chittister (1999:67) accepts his analysis on the nature of celibacy; that it is about love, meaning and freedom. Celibacy, according to Radcliffe (1999:49), takes one beyond one's present self; one's best self and one's most transcendent self. For some people this journey to self-realization takes place in marriage and for others it can only take place in celibacy, which Chittister (1999:67) describes as "the posture of the soul alone before God, but not lonely". Be it in the celibate or married state, sexuality is integral to being human, and self-realization as a process of human wholeness acknowledges a full appreciation of human sexuality.
The value of celibacy is often confused with the negation of sex, and in such instances there is little room for an understanding of its wider meaning and greater depth. "Celibacy is far more important than sexual abstinence, more important than asceticism that is more disciplinary, more functional, more pragmatic than enlivening" (Chittister 1999:68). It is about the full growth of the human being beyond passion, beyond enslavement to personal appetites, beyond narcissism to a life that gives priority, not to the self, but to the very meaning of life. Celibacy is not non-love, it is another way of loving. Celibacy is about the centrality of the human relationship with God and about right relationships with other human beings.

Consecrated celibacy does not claim to be better than marriage, just as marriage is not better than non-marriage. It is about love and it is not so much a struggle of the body as it is the stretching of the soul (Chittister 1999:68). The first sin against celibacy, says Radcliffe (1999:50), is failure to love. The consecrated person, who is aloof, withdrawn, acerbic, unapproachable and unaware of the needs of the world, is not really celibate. Celibacy as a vow is meant to be the antithesis of isolation, and not a form of self-protection. Radcliffe (1999:50), argues that fear of one's sexuality or bodilyness, fear of the other sex can never be the foundation of consecrated celibacy. Only those capable of love can take on the vow of celibacy, and in so doing have something to bring to the Christian task of transforming the world. It is easy to turn celibate love into celibate alienation that masks holiness. However, this is insincere and it is not conducive to self-realization.

Radcliffe (1999:50) regards celibacy as the friendship of God, and he rests this claim on the teaching of Aquinas who maintained that the evangelical counsels are the counsels offered to Christ in friendship. Chittister (1999:69) argues that the consecrated celibate who fails to honour the sacrament of friendship, has chosen self-centredness over celibacy. Reflecting on Radcliffe, she says that celibacy has something
to do with restoring a sense of the sacredness of the other to a world intent on control, possessiveness and domination (Chittister 1999:69). One of the earliest guiding principles for religious on celibacy was to describe celibate love as non-possessive and non-exclusive, an outlook that, when taken to an extreme, militated against special and "particular" friendships. Yet it is the precise value of friendship that it creates an environment for self-realization, since the integrity of the self and the other is a demand of celibate love. In addition, the sacredness of the self and the other in celibate love, gives one pause in the face of any abuse, misuse, diminishement, any utilitarian consumption of another person, however elevated its rationale (Chittister 1999:69).

Celibate love is love that has no intention of annihilating the person of another for the sake of the self. It requires the kind of self-development that is able to stand alone, to be good company to the self, to love and let go. It is marked by freedom of soul that frees others to become themselves. Celibacy does not prescribe pleasure, it authenticates it, neither is it an exercise for suppressing desire (Chittister 1999:70). Celibacy is about right relationships rooted in God and to achieve self-realization in the celibate lifestyle takes time. It comes as a result of a series of choices. Because of human element that is in it, it is not an event. It is an excursion into self-realization which is in truth human wholeness (Chittister 1999:72). Chaste-celibacy, if it is to do justice to a meaningful existence for those called to the consecrated life, is not a cold, unattached form of loving, but a warm, affectionate attitude towards self, others and God.

7.3.1.1. Celibate passion and self-realization.

The pursuit of wholeness or self-realization, implies that the person involved is fully human and authentically religious. Self-realization forms part of the search for the meaning of life and the fullness of humanity. Wholeness, according to Janie Gustafon (1978:113) an
American contemplative writer, transcends all of life’s contradictions which have traditionally defined human existence. Celibacy and passion have been badly misunderstood for centuries. In Gustafon’s (1978:13) opinion, the meaning of both has been obscured and tainted by moral nuances. Celibacy, seen by many as an incomplete state of being unmarried and unloved, has often been defined negatively as a sober, sombre, bloodless virtue, which represses or denies one’s basic sexuality. The traditional view sees passion, which pertains to the weaker, “lower” self, as mortally sinful. To achieve self-realization as a consecrated celibate demands a rethinking of the vow of celibacy in the light of contemporary spirituality. This is the case since this vow requires an awareness of what an individual is permitted to become, rather than what is forbidden. Celibacy is about love, not lovelessness, and it is not about the repression of sex for its own sake. According to G.H. Chesterton it is “something flaming like Joan of Arc” (Chittister 1995:114). Chittister (1995:114) maintains that the kind of celibacy that makes love impossible, makes friendship impossible, makes personal feelings unacceptable, and defies the very purpose of celibacy. Chastity is about learning to love well, to love with sweeping gestures. “It provides adventure into the self for the sake of others that gives new dimension to life, breadth to relationships, freedom to the souls and availability to its demands” (Chittister 1995:119).

Gustafon (1978:13) maintains that passionate celibacy is the energy that drives one into relationship with others. It is an intense thrust for intimacy, a yearning for real living, which at the same time affirms one’s separateness and individuality. It is a passion that can integrate all inner forces into a single and all-consuming love for God and people. Life without passion is, for the celibate, a sorry thing, and self-realization is not possible without human emotion. To go through the motions of life without caring deeply for anyone else, robs the consecrated person of the very motives that inspired her to lay down her life. Chitterster (1995:120) is of opinion that a consecrated life without emotion borders on the brink of ‘dangerous’. How can people
who are supposed to be passionate mystics, live as passionless robots? She says, "a chastity that turns spiritual people into cement makes the spiritual life a tomb, not an invitation to resurrection at all" (Chittister 1995:121). Celibacy is not meant to stamp out emotions. "It is meant to direct them in ways that are magnanimous, in ways that are true, in ways that are freeing, in ways that are life-giving" (Chittister 1995:121). Chastity fosters self-realization as it enables the person to love freely, to love many people at once, and to bring them into a network of friendship. Freed from the need to possess, to control, to own, to absorb, the individual is also free to achieve self-realization, to see goodness anywhere. The chaste lover loves totally for the sake of the other, is surprised by beauty and finds life richer for herself as well. As Chittister (1995:122) aptly says, "Chaste love, glorious for its attentiveness, teaches a person the beauty of the loving soul and the fulfilment that comes with the transcendence of the self for the sake of another". To be chaste without love is tantamount to doing spiritual exercises without God. The combination of celibacy and love, which resides in the development of relationships and the corresponding growth that accompanies it, is a risk. The alternative is to live a superficial spirituality wherein one is physically celibate and emotionally untouched. The solution, according to Chittister (1995:123), is to choose wholeheartedly between the two situations, so that one’s love is real and celibacy fruitful. It is a matter of befriending one’s body long enough to find out what celibacy is saying to the spirit about love, about the self, about growth and about being self-realized. In order to explain the type of passion that facilitates human self-realization and growth in celibacy, it may be necessary to determine what kind of love best describes the celibate lover. Is it the Greek eros or the Christian agape? Both Greek words are commonly translated into one word "love". However, in the ancient Hellenistic world eros was used, as against the use of agape, in early Christianity. Plato’s "heavenly eros" refers to human love for the divine. It is an appetite, a yearning desire where the person seeks God in order to satisfy a spiritual hunger by gaining possession of divine perfections. The New
Testament usage, *agape*, indicated a whole-hearted surrender to God's will and a desire that His will be done (Nygren 1982:xvi-xvii). It is well to determine which of these two kinds of love is the fundamental motif of celibate love?

**7.3.1.2. Eros and agape in celibate love.**

There is no consistent use of the terms *eros* and *agape* in the biblical and later literature. The dominant trend regarding *agape* is that it is a distinctive Christian love, which originates from God, but is also truly expressed, in human love for God and neighbour. *Eros*, on the other hand, poses as a problematic concept in the Christian discussion of love, and particularly in contemporary cultures, is subject to gross misreading. According to Nygren, *eros* is love based on some need or deficiency in the lover which it seeks to fulfill. This love can be extremely intense and beautiful, and the lover may exhibit extraordinary devotion to the beloved. Nygren explains that for Plato and Aristotle *eros* is a longing for the divine, it is heavenward-directed desire. However, it does not seek God for His own sake, it "seeks God as a means to an end", for its own 'highest good', which it identifies with God (Nygren 1982:xx).

Nygren (1982:xxi) draws a sharp distinction between *eros* and *agape*. The love of God for human beings, and that of human beings for God are described by the single word *agape*. The love of God is known for its creative giving, and in this sense *agape* is a love that desires to give, freely, selflessly; *eros* is a love that desires to receive, to get: a highly refined form of self-interest and self-seeking. *Agape* is opposed to any form of selfishness, even the most refined. *Eros* provides the individual with abundant reasons to love God, since it is God who possesses all s/he lacks and seeks. On the other hand there is no reason why God should need the human person. *Agape* is by nature utterly self-forgetful and self-sacrificial. It means death, not to the self, but to selfishness; it is the antithesis, not of selfhood, but of self-
centredness, which is the deadliest enemy of true selfhood. The individual realizes her true self just in so far as she lives by and in agape. As long as she is self-centred, she cannot reach her human potential (Nygren 1982:xxii).

Jesus’ ministry was grounded in this creative love, (agape), consequently a follower of Jesus would follow this example and concentrate on the beloved. Rather than filling up “one’s own lack of beauty” with that of the beloved, one would fill the beloved “with beauty”. Instead of being attracted because of the beloved’s goodness, agape empowers the beloved to become good. Finger (1985:79), an American biblical scholar, points out that while agape is essentially divine, it does not make one anything other than human. It is precisely one’s deepest potentialities for being and becoming human that energize one to become like Jesus in self-giving love. Agape expresses extraordinary self-giving which refers chiefly to the Divine in the individual (Finger 1985:493).

Despite the selfish elements that Nygren suggests as intrinsically part of the eros-type loving, and the fear that some theologians express in eros as a form of love, in the Platonic understanding it is also a form of divine love. It can be argued that since it constitutes the passion or the zeal in a relationship, it has positive qualities. It possesses the desire for goodness, as much as for union and communion. As C. S. Lewis (1960:106), the English writer explains, eros includes not only passion, but the passion of eros differs from that of lust or libido in the sense that the latter is a biological drive towards sexual gratification (Gustafon 1978:75). Eros, in Rollo May’s (1978:73-74) opinion, is that which seeks an intimacy between persons, and which continually entices them towards realms of infinite possibilities. Eros, in Gustafon’s (1978:13) view, also cherishes tension and seeks to sustain homeostatic balance between relating opposites. Gustafon (1978:75) claims that it is essential that erotic passion be present in all people, be they religious, married, or single. However, libidinous
passion will serve as a deterrent in the effort to develop a mature and healthy relationship with God and other people, while eros allows one to transcend oneself. It is both the life-force of contemplation, true communion and heroic sacrifice, and the substance of real love (Gustafon 1978:75). Sexual union does not satisfy the human desire for wholeness; erotic passion moves people to union, while individual uniqueness is maintained. Eros seeks no termination, no absorption, but relishes the continual attraction between people. This type of relationship, argues Gustafon’s (1978:75), is foreign to libido. While eros is a need at its most intense, it sees the object most intensely as a thing admirable in itself and wonderfully transforms what is par excellence a need-pleasure, into the most appreciative of all pleasures (Lewis 1960:110).

It is believed that the progression of love found in any religious experience passes from libido (lust) to eros (desire for the beloved) to agape (the love God has for us). The struggle to become authentically human motivates the first transformation from libido to eros. The struggle to become fully divine is the challenge of the second transformation, from eros to agape. Both celibate and married persons are called to undergo these transformations. Agape and eros are both basic in our motivation to love. When one loves out of eros, one loves essentially because the loved one will please, or complete the beloved. With agape one loves because it will please, ennoble, or complete the beloved (Finger 1985:491).

Clearly celibate loving is not a love alongside agape and eros, it is an emotion that embraces both expressions of love. Just as eros is ultimately the energy of divine creativity, so too is celibate love creative, spontaneous, responsive and passionate. It sustains a divine-human relationship and responds freely to the love of God. It is a love that allows God to enter into one’s personal life, transforming it in love. Celibate love allows God to be God for humanity. This response of love to God is for God’s own sake and not simply as a way
of human satisfaction. This type of love, that could be described as *agape*, is creative as well as responsive and God-centred (McDonagh 1988:608). However, Nygren's criticism of the Catholic tradition of human love for God is that it is fundamentally *eros*, a form of love and desire. It can be argued that self-giving and authentic loving, which can provide the mutual letting-be, is the thrust of divine love for and in human beings. God's creative-responsive loving, results in responsive-creative loving by human beings (McDonagh 1988:608). The relational reality of love with its creative and responsive dimensions has immediate practical implications. The love of God and the human love for God and neighbour, are practical in the sense that they grapple with human failure and human weakness, indifference and rejection. Love implies vulnerability, and this offers a way beyond the search for the self-fulfilment of perfectible human beings. Celibate love is designed to assume the Christian characteristic of compassion and co-suffering, and this includes the love for enemies. Love engages the innermost centre of the person; whence it assists in the achievement of a sense of self, of intimacy. It also shows how by self-giving love one can transcend the self. Passion and intimacy are intrinsic to both *eros* and *agape*, and thus constitute, as a vital part of celibate love, an authentic form of Christian loving. Intimacy is also regarded as an important component in the psychological and emotional development of any human person. Since marriage is regarded as the normal context that supplies the framework for growth in intimacy, it can be argued that lifelong religious celibacy poses a dangerous choice, as there is a very real risk that the celibate will never develop the capacity for genuine intimacy. Schneiders (1986:219) reasons that it is simply not sufficient to affirm that the love of God fulfils all our human hungers, nor that fidelity to celibate obligations is a guarantee that God will protect the religious from any psychological harm their commitment could entail. Because intimacy and affectivity form constituent elements of human self-realization, it is crucial that in this thesis that the role of intimacy in celibate love be evaluated. It should be noted however, that in the life context of
consecrated celibacy, this is an approach neither encouraged nor understood. Schneiders' (1986:218) research indicates that, however, harsh it may sound, many religious are stunted in affective growth, and this could be connected with failure to engage in the challenge to intimacy. It is therefore essential to determine how consecrated celibates attain intimacy as a vital means towards self-realization.

7.3.1.3. Celibate intimacy.

Effective living of the celibate commitment requires an awareness of the drive towards intimacy, which is the vocation of every person regardless of his or her status in life. The word derives from the Latin intimus, which means ‘innermost’, ‘close familiarity’, or the state of being personally intimate in the sense of friendship, privacy, comfort and close connections. The opposite of intimacy is externality, superficiality, coldness or formality. Despite the universal call to intimacy, it intimidates and is feared. Paradoxes of inner depth appear to exist in intimacy in that it is missed when it is not there, and yet it can become unbearable when it is present. Still prevalent today are the remnants of an undeniable ambivalence in religious celibate communities regarding intimate relationships such as ‘particular friendships’. According to Ducko, Mclaughlin and Monaghan (2001:3) an American team of clinical religious writing, this emerges out of a fear that social intimacy may lead to crossing sexual boundaries. Unfortunately this fear of intimate relationships has led to inhibitions that narrowed the possibilities of self-realization in the chosen life of celibacy. Deprivation has never been a solid ground for holiness, and the ideal for a celibate lover is to love in an integrated manner. A consecrated celibate cannot be a detached or dispassionate lover, since celibate passion or intimacy is not sexless or bodiless. It is a love so real and so enormous that it takes one through and beyond the physical to more embracing forms of relationship and freedom. Gustafon (1978:97) argues that ‘passionate celibate love’ can drive one to the brink of divine love, and enables one to cross boundaries
without the loss of personal identity. According to O’Donohue (1997:39), whose focus is on Celtic spirituality, real intimacy is indeed a sacred experience [1997:39].

Ducko, Mclaughlin and Monaghan (2001:4) identify various dimensions of intimacy, each of which is important in the understanding of personal self-realization. It is intimacy with self, intimacy with others and intimacy with God. The capacity for intimacy with another person seems to depend on one's capacity for intimacy with oneself and with God. O'Donohue (1997:27) says that learning to love and be loved, brings one home to the hearth of one's own spirit. The ability to love God and neighbour wholeheartedly, the classical motivation for the choice of celibacy, rests on one’s personal capacity for human intimacy (Schneiders 1986:220). Although it sounds somewhat platitudinous to say that a person who cannot love human beings cannot love God, Ducko, Mclaughlin and Monaghan (2001:7) emphasize that human friendship is a gift that can enhance one's relationship with the Divine. A Consecrated Religious who has never loved or been loved with a warm, human, sexually alive affection by another human being, may be in a position to talk endlessly about the joys of divine love, but will do so unconvincingly, particularly in the face of those who have experienced the pain and ecstasy of the reality of love. The mystics and great lovers of God testify to this in their capacity for deep personal relationships and actual friendships (Schneiders 1986:220). An intimate understanding of one’s own self is based on true self-knowledge, wholeness from within, and sensitivity to another person (Gustafon 1978:76). Since intimacy with self, other and God are inseparable, intimate relationships can draw one beyond oneself to the infinite love of God. The love one receives from another is in reality God’s love, freely given to us as sharers in Divinity. Intimacy with God surpasses anything one could ever imagine in human relationships. Hosea 2:21-22 affirms precisely this sentiment saying, “I will betroth you to myself for ever, betroth you with integrity and justice, with tenderness and love”. Without passion, interpersonal
relations are shallow. Intimacy with God is this life is neither an exclusive nor a terminal relationship, and as the psalmist so aptly expressed it, "My heart grew hot within me" [Psalm: 39: 3].

It is believed that no one can achieve intimacy alone. While intimacy is based on a real capacity for solitude and a personal sense of identity, it develops a deeper dimension through the experience of intimacy with specific persons. This is precisely what constitutes the challenge for the consecrated religious who has vowed celibacy and who has renounced the normal path to human intimacy. This latter, according to Schneiders [1986:221] "is the lifelong, committed relationship with one other person, that comes to full symbolic expression in genital sexual union". Religious life is primarily about being human, and by virtue of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the consecrated religious is called to understand, appreciate and love human nature, emotionally and sexually, mind and body. Such a love promotes the process of self-realization. Sean Fagan (2001:11), an Irish priest, states that the idea "that God alone is sufficient for us is only a half truth and a dangerous one. We need others if we are to be fully human”.

The fact that the consecrated celibate is obliged to forego the normal path to affective maturity, poses a challenge to find an alternate means to human intimacy. Failing to do this would decrease the possibility of reaching full humanness and self-realization. In such a case the person will limit the very purpose for which consecrated celibacy is undertaken. It is for this reason, argues Schneiders (1986:221), that it is not viable for a consecrated celibate to circumvent the challenge of intimacy. The avoidance of human intimacy is tantamount to a deliberate withdrawal from the process of self-realization. The alternative to this is to find an authentic celibate way towards adult intimacy and consequently to affective maturity. This does not imply that the consecrated celibate must generate strategies for avoiding sexual relations, or devise rigid catalogues of what is and is not permissible. Neither is it the idea to get through life
without sexual intercourse, but rather to obtain adult intimacy and human self-realization.

There are two recommended components to the celibate quest for intimacy. The first is through deep contemplative, mystical prayer, and the second is by means of human friendship. In contemplation and mystical prayer, always a gift from God, the celibate experiences deep union with Christ. It has been described as:

"an affectively involving, psychologically transforming experience of the presence and activity of God in the very depths of one’s being. In its joyful moments it is an experience of being marvelously and intimately touched, cherished – and enabled to respond from the depths one does not control, did not know one possessed. In its moments of suffering it continues to involve the contemplative in an experience of the other, which cannot be escaped or relativized. Even in times of utter aridity the longing for the Beloved is a psychological involvement with God whose reality is not simply accepted in willed faith but experienced even in and through God’s felt absence" (Schneiders 1986:222).

In this regard Schneiders’ is in agreement with Gustafon (1978:76) who claimed that for the individual, real fidelity to prayer and real love brings about monumental transformations. The religious who experiences even brief moments of union with God, is sustained in dealing constructively with the absence of a human partner. The intimate prayerful experiences provide the context within which to integrate other human relationships into one’s personal celibate commitment. It is intimacy with God, and not dutiful performance of routine activities, that is required for living a meaningful, consecrated, celibate life, crucial for human self-realization. Intimacy with God is as essential for the consecrated person as it is for those who are married, and for the same reasons [Schneiders 1986:223].

The second component of the celibate quest for intimacy is that of human friendship. Friendship is not a new topic in the field of theology and spirituality. Jesus himself spelt out the value of
friendship and its implications in the lives of people. "I no longer call you servants: but I have called you friends" (Jn. 15:15). Friendship is essential for every person, and this is especially the case for consecrated religious, whose commitment is to the invisible God. In the traditionally cloistered way of life "particular friendships" among consecrated men and women, were met with strong disapproval. However the growing recognition of the importance of friendship in the life of the celibate, gives support to Schneiders' (1986:223) argument that for the celibate, friendship is the characteristic road to human intimacy, a kind of 'sacrament' of celibate love. True friendship is the climate for the total interchange of gifts both human and divine, the consequences of which result in an intimacy that surpasses that which can be achieved in sexual union. Even married people testify to this reality. True friends have the capacity to call a religious out of the isolation easily engendered by celibacy. A compassionate relationship between two people opens each one to fuller experience of intimacy in God. It is, says Keith Clark (1982:167), an American Capuchin friar, the fusion, not the obliteration of personalities, which is brought about by the mutual transparency of individuals to each other.

Schneiders (1986:226) is of opinion that if young religious could be formed to prayer and to friendship, they would probably be capable of developing happy self-realized lives. This would give them a realistic chance of entering into the depths of the mystery of divine love. Sexuality will not hinder the individual who loves chastely, from living in total dedication to God. Love, which is one's deepest nature, opens the way to a more authentic, more human and more religious approach to life. The challenge to consecrated women is to restore intimacy to its essential holiness and pricelessness, and to sanctify all that is deeply human. The consecrated religious is called to sanctify friendship, and O'Donohue (1997:37) describes the love of friendship as the most real and creative form of human presence. "Love" he says "is the threshold where divine and human presence ebb and flow into each other". In everyone's life, married, single and consecrated celibate, there is a great need for a soul friend, in Coctie an eternal companion.
demands that the individual must acquire the art of being open, while being at the same time sexually self-contained. She/he must be both warm, and at the same time reserved. Indeed this is something that any faithful married person has to learn. The vow of celibacy is not a mechanical and invisible shield from the normal interactions of a highly erotic, contemporary culture. Consequently it is imperative to learn behaviour patterns conducive to mature celibate living. Respect for boundaries, honouring commitments and believing in the goodness of others, is what underpins healthy and intimate friendships (Ducko, Mclaughlin and Monaghan 2001).

The celibate neophyte has to learn how to develop a right attitude towards deep friendship. Schneiders (1986:229) maintains that it is imperative for the religious to come to realize and interiorize that she is not single, but celibate. This internalization makes it possible to communicate with integrity the celibate life-form to which the individual is committed. Commitment to celibacy cannot be naïve or childish. In the event of a developing friendship, it is well that both friends are perfectly clear that the end of the friendship is not a genitally expressed, sexual relationship. In this way both will have a basis for some of the mutual decisions that will have to be made. The committed celibate, who intends to remain so, may by virtue of her vow not enter into a life-long partnership and genital, sexual union. In this instance where genital involvement is renounced definitively, and friendship is to develop and deepen, celibates are challenged to find alternate ways to express mutual love. In this expression of celibate love, the participants must guard against setting in motion a psycho-physical process, the suppression of which would lead to violent frustration. In Schneiders' (1986:229) opinion, vowed celibates have to find out how they can express affection without sexually arousing each other to an intolerable pitch. While it is a fact that no real human relationship of friendship can or should progress in the total absence of any kind of physical expression, there may have to be a developed preference for less physical kinds of expression in celibate
loving. The gospels suggest that Jesus was at home with physical expressions of affection, and modern psychology also endorses that human beings of all ages need to be touched at times to experience physical, emotional and spiritual support. In truth the celibate is not exempt from this particular need.

Part of learning how to relate to an intimate friend would include learning how to express affection in non-physical ways. For those involved in deep friendships there is great strength in the deliberate mutual effort to regard the other's primary commitment as fundamental to both. This is a form of affirmation which helps to keep the real identity of both friends active and productive. Those who enjoy a deep mature and intimate relationship, and who are committed to maintaining that relationship as an integral part of an uncompromised celibate commitment, will learn by real renunciation that they are neither a couple, nor life-partners nor lovers. In this sense they can be vigilant regarding signs of possessiveness and exclusiveness. They will be more fully aware that in surrendering to natural and spontaneous feelings, they may gradually transform a celibate friendship into an erotic, sexual involvement. Schneider (1986:234) suggests that conversation, writing, sharing aesthetic and intellectual interests about which one or both are truly passionate, and the discussion of ministry, are possible ways of intimate togetherness that can reach the depth of the other. To find other than physical paths to intimacy is not easy, but neither is it impossible. Schneider (1986:234) recognizes that the "easiest and quickest way to intimacy is sexual expression, and for this very reason it is also the way that can be most deceptive, and superficial and finally alienating". Real communication, which is of the essence in the development of intimate friendship, together with the deliberate foregoing of much of the physical expression of intimacy, can paradoxically, foster the level and quality of intimate communication. Human self-realization in the context of celibate loving does not imply that one's bodily humanity is to be intellectualized or spiritualized. On the contrary, it is to be
transformed into the image of Jesus who was fully human and who invited all of humanity to love deeply. The quality of this love is not dry and dutiful, sacrificing out of emptiness, but a full reciprocity of joy and delight. It depends on a level of mutual and authentic self-disclosure, together with sensitive discovery of the other. Ducko, Mclaughlin and Monaghan (2001:7) point out that this is a gradual process that unfolds with respect for mutual differences and boundaries.

From the above it is evident that true friendship provides opportunities for transcendence, because love in friendship, despite the fact that it recognizes the limitations of self and the other, continues to love. Celibate loving, writes Joyce Ridick (1984:53) a religious psychologist, is supported by affectivity which is the desire for the presence of another human being. This is not necessarily a desire for physical presence, but could also be for psychological presence. This kind of presence does not satisfy bodily needs, but rather affective needs, for example for affection, support, understanding and concern. To have these needs met is what determines self-realization.

7.4. Evaluative commentary

There is very little in the Bible, including the New Testament, concerning celibacy. Pierre Simson (1976:22), a biblical scholar from the Gaba Institute in East Africa, points out that the Old Testament has practically nothing to say about celibacy as it is understood in the context of consecrated life. Voluntary virginity was unknown at the time of Jesus. Traditionally, Matthew 19:12 has been quoted in support of voluntary celibacy. In this section on continence Jesus challenges his disciples who can to remain unmarried for the sake of the kingdom. “Let anyone accept this who can”.

However, recent scholarship suggests that Jesus had in view married
Schneiders (2001:127), in order to give oneself in love. Since the human person is creation become conscious and therefore relational, it is in this sense that the New Testament definition that “God is Love” (1 Jn. 4:16), establishes the pattern and the goal of human development.

How one lives determines the character and quality of one’s life as a human being and as a Christian. This is not only evident in Christian revelation, but the world’s greatest literature testifies to the fact that human existence is rooted and informed by love. Every significant life is the expression of a great love, and the absence of love marks any life as a failure. Hence the classic belief that even unwise or mistaken love is preferable to absence of love (Schneiders 2001:127). Those who choose Consecrated Religious life, and in so doing wish to become humanly and spiritually self-realized, need explicit knowledge of issues that face life-long consecrated celibacy. This includes a theological understanding, insight into psychological issues, clarity about motivation, the moral capacity, and commitment to such a vocation. As the person grows into a positive appropriation of celibacy, it takes on spiritual significance.

Consecrated celibacy is about who and how one chooses to love, and not first and foremost about what one does with one’s sexuality. For all Christians the ultimate love, the horizon of life towards which self-transcendence continually reaches, is God. The renunciation of the paradigmatic primary commitment to spouse and family is the symbolic expression of that exclusive commitment to the unmediated God-quest. Here symbol is understood in the Rahnerian sense as it relates to a perceptible reality that renders present what it expresses. Consecrated celibacy is not a partial or reversible choice, but a disposition of one’s relational capacity, one’s capacity for self-transcendence in love. This determines the shape and quality of one’s life. Consecrated celibacy carries the obligation of sexually abstinent chastity. This follows from and implies the exclusive love of Jesus
Christ that is expressed in the choice to remain unmarried for the sake of the Kingdom. In this regard, as reflected by Schneiders (2001:128), it is analogous to sexual fidelity in monogamous marriage.

While in essence Religious Life is not about abstaining from sex, genital abstinence does give expression to the lived choice not to engage, as a primary commitment of one’s life in a physically sexual relationship. It is the symbol of the immediate and total self-gift in love to Christ, and that, says Schneiders (2001:128), is what Religious Life is all about. Consecrated celibacy also has the greatest potential witness value of all the aspects of Religious Life. It makes a powerful statement about the autonomy and value of the individual person, and the capacity of the human being for personal self-transcendence in love. It also witnesses to the enduring quality of love as motivation for the whole of one’s life, and to the fecundity and value of such love for society and for the church. Consecrated celibacy integrates the person in terms of a supreme love that makes sense out of the life. It also has the capacity both to bring one into union with God, and the power to ground a life-form of service of Christ and neighbour (Schneiders 2001:132).

Without doubt feminist consciousness among women religious had a direct bearing on the issue of consecrated celibacy as well as on the sexual revolution of the 1960’s. According to Schneiders (2001:162) it brought about a more honest approach to sexual issues, and this in turn resulted in real growth in individuals and religious communities. The effect of feminist consciousness on Consecrated Religious women is especially evident in their self-understanding as celibates, and in their actual living of the charism. Schneiders (2001:164) defines feminism as a “comprehensive ideology which is rooted in women’s experience of sexual expression, engages in a critique of patriarchy as an essentially dysfunctional system, embraces an alternative vision for humanity and the earth, and actively seeks to bring this vision to realization".
Inherent in feminist consciousness, from the perspective of woman's experience, is the appropriation of an understanding of the dynamics of women's sexuality and consecrated celibacy. Women's experience is essentially different from that of men. In view of the fact that male experiences were regarded as normative and universal in the past, Schneiders (2001:169) is of opinion that the spirituality of religious celibacy is based exclusively on male experience, and this in general is the foundation of Catholic moral theology. The focus on celibacy as renunciation and asceticism, has its source in the male obsession with control. The externality and compartmentalization of male sexual experience has promoted an "act centred" or physicalist, rather than a personalist, sexual morality. This latter takes adequate account of the immensely complex reality of human sexuality as integral to relational life. The concept of male celibacy was more often presented as an asceticism of avoidance and suppression, rather than relationship with Christ.

A rich tradition of mystical literature has borne eloquent testimony to the female experience of sexuality and women's approach to consecrated celibacy. But this has played virtually no significant role in the official treatment of the subject. As the tradition of women's mystical literature testifies, relationship to Christ is central to the understanding of celibacy. Women understand celibacy, to some extent at least, through their own experience as sexual beings. Because women's experience of sexuality is not exclusively localized, as is the case with males, it is more pervasive and holistic, engaging emotions and feelings, intelligence and language, spirit as well as body. Women are thus more likely to experience the whole, rather than merely part of their selves as sexual and relational (Schneiders 2001:170). In this sense celibacy, is not simply a moral virtue to be practiced, but involves the entire self-disposition of the whole person. There is thus a subtle, but significant difference between the feminine and masculine understanding of celibate chastity. For males it is often
primarily about self-control on the one hand, and self-preservation for higher things on the other. Although for women religious celibacy is also for self-preservation, it is not limited to this. It is for relationship, which is experienced as calling for the totality of woman’s being, body and soul. Radcliffe (1999:133) warns that unless one allows oneself to be caught on the wave of that immense love, then all attempts to be chaste may end up as exercises in control. Celibate chastity as self-gift, is regarded primarily as fidelity to a relationship, rather than an exercise in self-control. It is for this reason, in Schneiders’ (2001:271) opinion, that due to the women’s experience of sexuality, their attitude towards consecrated celibacy differs from that of men. They are less focused on celibacy as ascetical practice or moral virtue, aimed at regulating behaviour, but regard it rather as an expression of personal commitment. It is with this in mind that Schneiders (2001:173) argues that if a convincing case is to be made for consecrated celibacy as a spiritually liberating and enriching reality in the life of Religious women today, it is imperative to take seriously the feminist critique and challenge. However Goergen’s (1998:164) point must be kept in mind: that celibacy in itself does not witness to anything, but celibates do.

7.5. Consecrated obedience and self-realization.

Within the structure of the Consecrated Life, religious obedience is perceived as a means towards loving, and desiring to be in union with God. Consequently obedience is perceived as complementing and confirming the vows of consecrated celibacy and poverty. One of the in-depth dispositions of obedience is freedom. As has already been noted in chapter three, freedom aspires to the self-realization and the quintessence of humanity. However, in the face of the present-day secular society, the vow of obedience serves as a counter-cultural challenge. Contemporary culture, with its dominant stress on individualism and personal freedom, looks upon obedience per se as a necessary evil and to vow one’s life to obedience, writes Radcliffe
(1999:34), is to compound the problem. This highly complex rationalized society that seeks freedom as its supreme value, regards obedience at best only as a functional necessity (Cossin 1988:720). In the face of the secularized cultural milieu which waters down the value and effectiveness of Christian obedience, the search for human and spiritual self-realization through the vow of obedience, does not only appear foolish and naïve, but also meaningless. In view of the fact that current opinion overwhelmingly favours freedom rather than authority, the church has renewed and enriched its critical appraisal of obedience.

In the traditional ‘religious-life-spirituality’, consecrated obedience, together with the whole area of freedom and authority, had very definite features. It was viewed predominantly in a negative fashion in that the individual surrendered her free will to superiors and religious communities. While the vow of obedience had as its primary purpose personal sanctification and union with God, traditional obedience meant largely yielding to God the supreme sacrifice of freedom (Connolly 1983:71). Terminology such as the ‘abandonment of one’s will’, and “submission of the entire will to the religious superior”, formed an intrinsic part of the traditional mentality of consecrated obedience. This terminology is also culturally inappropriate since it implies the abdication of one’s human status. O’Doherty (1971:164), a religious psychologist, claims that to submit one’s will absolutely to another’s is not only psychologically inept, but also immoral. To understand the vow of obedience as a renunciation of the will and judgment, is to restrict the true scope of evangelical obedience. Obedience is meant to enhance the dignity of the person by the proper exercise of the will, by accepting the consequences of choices. The virtue of obedience lies in the correct discovery of the self, which ought to initiate the kind of action that gives meaning to the whole concept of obedience. One is obedient to the degree to which one’s choices are free from emotional factors such as pleasure or reward, winning, avoiding punishment, and subjectivity, all of which prejudice
relationship, but with the harmony between a person's power to make life decisions and the loving purpose of God. In this sense, says Connolly (1983:78), obedience is more of a search than a sacrifice. It is the "movement of a human being who, in the full awareness of freedom, reaches out to the loving purpose of God". In one sense it can be said that consecrated obedience, since it encompasses all the Gospel values, is the most radically demanding of all the imperatives of Religious Life.

The difference between obedience to God in faith and obedience to human authority has often been blurred. Even though in the New Testament, there are no particular "proof texts" providing a consistent biblical reference to the vow and practice of obedience, as is the case with the vows of celibacy and poverty, it is by comparison with them the most biblical of the three vows. The call to follow the life-style of Jesus Christ, which is dominated by a profound openness to God the Father, underlies the Christian call to obedience (Moloney 1981:63). The Greek term hypokoe (obedience), expresses a religious attitude of faith in God and the corresponding verb hypakouien (ordinary) takes God or faith as its object (Lozano 1986:158). When reference if made to human authorities of any sort the verb used is hypotassein (to be subject to). Today it will translate in terms of "being accountable or responsible for" (Lozano 1986:158). The Latin word obedire coming from ob-audire, means to listen or to hear. It indicates the willingness to hear others, to let them speak and to listen to them. It is a call to be attentive to others rather than to submit one's will to the will of another (Radcliffe 1999:35). As the virtue obedience implies listening, loving, trusting and assuming responsibility, respectful and wholesome listening does not repress personal attention to reality. On the contrary, in daily life it fosters a personal inspired presence to reality, as a revelation of the Father's will. The virtue of listening facilitates the unconditional revelation to the attentive heart, of the God-self. If the Divine voice is to be heard, it is necessary that the individual listens respectfully, renouncing self-pre-occupation and
self-centredness. Adrian Van Kaam (1968:166), an American religious psychologist, maintains that obedience, in its true sense, should bring one in touch with one's true, unique self, the locus of intimate self-realization in Christ. An authentic life, lived in accordance with the evangelical counsels, does set in motion a movement towards the humanization and sanctification of basic human needs and drives.

7.5.1. Obedience as the morality of scripture.

Obedience is deeply rooted in Scripture; in fact the morality of both the Old and New Testaments is that of obedience. In the Old Testament the Israelites seeks to obey God's will in the context of the covenant: "And now, Israel, take notice of the laws and customs that I teach you today, and obey them..." (Deut.4:1). Jeremiah 11:4 reads: "It is the covenant I made with your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt ...I told them to obey me and do everything I had commanded. I told them if they obeyed, they would be my people and I shall be their God". The New Testament obedience focuses on Jesus who calls for a deeper adherence to the Spirit of the Law which he exemplified in his own life. As reflected by Crossin (1988:720) Jesus' full authentic humanity was rooted in his obedience to God, the Father. To this Hebr.3: 2-6 testifies that Jesus abided by generous obedience to God, and consequently had an extremely strong sense of identity and purpose. Jesus' obedience points to a very important consideration about his self-understanding. He saw himself as related to the God of Israel as an obedient son, intent on doing the will of his Father. The freedom, which Jesus' obedience gave him, led him away from self into the strange loss of himself in love: an obedient, suffering love that ultimately found meaning in the resurrection (Moloney 1981:69). For the Christian believer, obedience refers to hearing God and obeying the divine will, which may be manifested in the will of other persons. In Perfectae Caritatis (14) the attitude of Jesus is taken as fundamental to the vow of obedience. Christians, in imitation of Christ, are called to love as Christ loved, that is with a complete and
radical obedience to God the Father. Through the study of Christology it is possible to rediscover the meaning of the virtue of Christian obedience, which has always been seen as the imitation of the obedience of Christ. In Jn 8:29 Jesus informs his disciples of his obedience to his Father stating: “he who sent me is with me, and has not left me to myself, for I always do what pleases him”. “Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering, but having been made perfect, he came for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation…” Heb 5:8-9. Phil.2:8 also testifies to the quality of Jesus’ obedience, “even to accepting death, death on the cross”. However, as Tullo Goffi (1980:5), an Italian theologian, points out, the obedience of Christ has an aspect which cannot be imitated. He argues “Jesus was obedient through immediate contact with the Father, whereas human obedience must always be through the intermediary of a human person in authority”. Since obedience to God in Christ is through an earthly, ecclesiastical hierarchy, it cannot involve the total abandonment of self, even though it must always be obedience in the spirit of faith.

Christian obedience is always understood in reference to the mystery of Jesus, who ‘humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross’ (Phil. 2:8). The Christian life is nothing less than the imitation of Jesus, an imitation which is not a literal copy, but rather a personal effort to capture the immediacy of the inspiration which guided Him. According to French theologian Jean-Claude Sagne (1980:42), Jesus’ obedience to the Father was carried out in a climate of initial familiarity. However, we human beings have only a partial experience through the deepening of our love for God and the acceptance of death, the last word of freedom. Obedience is a human phenomenon which implies dependence on another person. Jesus is equal to the Father in all things and his obedience reached its culminating point in the acceptance of death. In Sagne’s (1980:47) opinion, death opened widely the door to life for Jesus, that is the deep, hidden life in communion with the Father. According to Sagne
the person who fears death is not free, and fear of death impedes life in the present.

Christian obedience sees the human person, not as an isolated individual, but always as a member of a community in relationship with others. It is in the context of the community of believers that the individual seeks to understand and to do God’s will. Obedience as a virtue is understood as a consciously willed and free choice. It molds the character to greater sensitivity and docility to God’s call. As a result of this, the Christian attitude to obedience can gradually penetrate one’s entire existence. Such obedience is ultimately a manifestation of love (Crossin 1988:721) as love is the only motivation for obedience to God’s will. It can be said that obedience is a vision of love in the Spirit of Christ.

The Catholic Church teaches that the virtue of obedience is not only discerning God’s will in obscurity, but also of following it in its clarity (Lumen Gentium 25). Such allegiance does not destroy the ultimate authority of conscience, but a personal spirit of faith and love seeks to accept, as indicating God’s will, the commands of spiritual authority. This allegiance is part of the individual’s overall commitment to seek the will of God in all circumstances of life. Some believers, as they develop in faith, experience a special call to obedience in imitation of Christ. Those who follow the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in Consecrated Religious communities, specifically solemnize such a call. Here the members submit themselves to discern God’s will, under the guidance of superiors, in a religious community. These believers hope that by so doing they are seeking to do God’s will, becoming more like Christ, and consequently being of greater service in building the Christian community (Crossin 1988:721).

The consecrated vow of obedience is deeply entrenched in the Christian’s imitation of the obedience of Jesus. This demands
complete docility to the Holy Spirit whose inspiration enables Christians, in terms of their own particular vocation, to follow Jesus’ movement to the Father.

7.5.2. The theology of consecrated obedience.

Christians are convinced that they are fully human when they are fully Christian. The commitment to obedience becomes ultimately a means to the fullness of life, Christianity, humanity, and of self-realization. Contemporary Religious Life is challenged to provide the milieu where the Consecrated Religious is completely free to become fully human, and to make the decision to commit herself continually, to imitation of Christ (Moloney 1981:79). When a person lives sinfully, filled with egoism and selfishness, s/he is in a continuous process of becoming less than human. Just as through self-realization the person becomes more and more human, moving closer to a life of the love and obedience of Jesus, so s/he aspires to a union of wills, implicit in the vow of obedience.

The vow of obedience, so integral to the Consecrated Life, has always been understood to bring about the fullest possible union of the Religious with the will of God. The effect of the vow, according to Schneiders (1986:140), is to incorporate all that the religious does into the search for the living out of God’s will, the source of all holiness. The Consecrated Religious, in vowing obedience, commits herself without reserve, to seeking God’s will in all circumstances, and fulfilling it with wholehearted dedication. This is done, not only because one’s personal holiness lies in total obedience to God, but also to extend the reign of God in this world (Schneiders 1986:140).

If all baptized believers are called to participate in obedience to the Father’s will, even unto death on the cross (Lk.14: 27; Mt.10: 38-39) what then is the added ‘benefit’ in taking a vow of obedience? As was previously noted, the Second Vatican Council explicitly recognizes the
help of God, and at any given moment, the most loving choices and
decisions of which one is capable (Schneiders 1986:142).

7.5.2.1. The art of discerning God’s will.

The most favourable source for discerning the wisdom of God’s will is
a profound personal religious experience, often related to mystical
prayer. The experience of transforming union with God is explicit
grounds for a convincing certitude that one has discovered God’s will.
Jesus in his earthly life, often appears to have acted with complete
assurance and certainty that he was obeying God, and out of such
direct, personal experience of the Father: Jesus prayed in the Garden
of Gethsemane, ”Not my will but Thine be done”. The mutual
knowledge of God the Father and Jesus was direct, intuitive, one
abiding in the other, each having direct experiences of the other.
Jesus’ direct experiences of God the Father provided Him with insight
into the Father’s will, and an understanding of His own mission. At
his baptism by John, Jesus received deep confirmation both of his
own personhood and of the will of God. This experience provided Him
with an understanding of His mission and a consciousness of the
Spirit. Jesus was “conscious of a direct and unmediated authority, a
transcendent authority which set him above party and even law”
(Dunn 1975:77) and provided Him with a powerful direct and
unmediated certainty that he knew God’s will. This certainty set Him
apart from other people of comparable significance in the history of
religions (Dunn 1975:79).

While most people do not experience the intense spiritual union
characterized by continual mystical experiences of God, they have to
resort, according to Schneiders (1986:43), to the normal course of
events, and be satisfied with less absolute indications of God’s will.
For example, in Acts 1:21-26 the community, by casting lots in a
prayerful way, sought to discover God’s will. Peter found a very
significant indication of the will of God in a dream (Acts 10:9-16), and
we are told in Gal. 2. 11-21, that he had a direct revelation from God concerning circumcision (Schneiders 1986:143).

The starting point of a theology of mediation is the common conviction that ordinary human realities can manifest God’s will to us. An example of this is the biblical experiences of visions, laws, dreams and the casting of lots. Jesus, as He continues to live and act in the church through the preaching of the Word and the celebrations of the mysteries of His life, is the true mediator of God’s will for the Christian community (Schneiders 1986: 144). The personal religious experience of the believer functions as a touchstone for the authenticity of that which presents itself through human mediation, and leads to a direct personal relationship with God in prayer. Schneiders (1986:145) is of opinion that the weaker one’s personal religious experience is, the more dependent one is on human mediation of the divine will.

It can be argued that obedience serves as a constant actualizer of love, and that love is the motivation for obedience to God’s will (Simson 1974:59). The only solid ground for obedience is freedom. Neither law structures nor authority figures can bestow genuine Christian freedom on anyone. Freedom is the gift of God to the person who no longer sees the law as justification, and who has given herself up to the infinite merciful God (Schneiders 1986:166). In the letter to the Galatians 5:1, Paul writes that when “Christ freed us he meant us to remain free”. This freedom implies obedience to God’s will, out of love and under the guidance of the Spirit. It is the Spirit of love that motivates the religious to take a vow of obedience. Crossin (1988:721) emphasizes that through “loving obedience a person is opened up to the fullness of self-realization”. Such self-realization is not in freedom from others, but in free choices exercised with and for others. Obedience in its fullest sense involves self-fulfilment and self-sacrifice. Paradoxically a person is most free when he or she is most compliant to the will of God. As in the case of Jesus himself, this can involve asceticism and crucifixion. In this sense obedience in the Consecrated
Life is caught up in the dynamism of the life of the Church, and is a response, in freedom and love, to the call to holiness. Christian freedom cannot be anything other than participation in the freedom of Jesus. Sagne (1980:48-49) says that human freedom has no other path than that of Jesus, as the obedience of Jesus destroyed the roots of sin and restored to humanity freedom to obey the Father totally.

7.5.3. **Freedom in consecrated obedience.**

Freedom is essential to human dignity, yet there is no clear distinction as to what freedom is. The freedom inherent in the vow of obedience is not such as allows for unrestricted choices between alternative purchases. It is, according to Radcliffe (1999: 34), a freedom to be, a freedom of one who loves. Neither is obedience a flight from responsibility, rather it is a self-gift, and like all vows, is ordered towards *caritas/agape*, an expression of love.

Freedom, in the prevailing Greek culture of biblical times, was chiefly a prerogative and concern of Greek males. It did not apply to women, slaves or aliens. Consequently it was fundamentally a matter of self-exaltation and exclusiveness for a single group, in an already exclusive society. Its moral purpose was mainly self-protection and self-fulfilment (Häring 1978:105). This is not the case with Consecrated Religious, as they should not be perceived as an exclusive Christian group within the body of Christians. Christ's gospel message called for a united family of all humankind, sharing the same dignity, in freedom and for freedom (Häring 1978:106). For Christians, Christ, by being obedient unto death in self-giving love, is himself the great event of freedom. In taking a vow of obedience, Consecrated Religious do not abdicate freedom, which constitutes an essential and inalienable property of human existence. What they try to do is to liberate freedom from the consequences of sin. Freedom is not autonomous, but when one allows one's egoism to be challenged by the needs of others, it is realized in service to others (Duffy 1993:
379). It must be seen, says Rahner (1977:61), that every use of freedom is also existentially, the acceptance of restrictions and constraints. Every act of freedom is always at the same time the rejection of another possibility that could have been realized. Religious Life should create wide fields in which the Consecrated Religious may exercise his or her own powers of decision, and in which freedom cannot, and should not be limited. The aim of obedience is not to restrict the freedom and responsibility of any person, consequently the one who vows obedience does not ‘sacrifice’ freedom any more than the individual who is married, or who holds professional responsibilities (Rahner 1977:62).

The essence of obedience is fundamental to authentic humanity and is a response to a relationship that is initiated by God. Consecrated obedience as vowed by a Religious, is not obedience to a set of rules, to authorities or to a superego. It is a listening process, not an accurate following of orders, or adhering to a fixed plan of action. If this were the case, says Finger (1985:95), it would indeed stifle creativity and self-realization, and the result would be behaviour locked in rigid patterns. Obedience he describes as a vision that attracts creativity and innovation, which calls forth self-realization in freedom (Finger 1985:95). Only when it is possible to respond creatively and freely to the will of God, as it is revealed in the existential situation of the concrete moment, does obedience become alive in one. The philosophical theologian Barbara Fiand (1993:124) maintains that freedom without obedience is not freedom. Finger (1985:96), however, claims that authentic freedom grounds obedience, and human obedience, fully realized by Jesus, bears similarities to the notion of self-transcendence common in modern anthropology (Finger 1985:96). The function of this freedom, which comes with obedience, is to make the individual’s life God-guided. St Paul writes, “When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free” (Gal. 5:1).
where love is given and received, behaviour becomes spontaneous and creative. The contemporary emphasis on self-realization often ignores and is regardless of concern for the needs of others. In contrast to this, it is imperative, in Finger’s (1985:101) opinion, that a biblical anthropology insists that true self-realization occurs only through self-surrender to God and mutual self-giving to others.

Authentic selfhood develops only within the framework of interpersonal relationships. An authentic self is not wholly independent, but is free for creative relationships with others. True servanthood may involve the sacrifice of pleasures, achievements, material goods and perhaps life itself, and contemporary anthropology insists on the paradox that self-realization develops through service, and even at times through self-denial (Finger 1985:102).

The depth disposition of obedience, which is a ‘listening openness’, requires discipline and a willingness to give of the self. This disposition is sustained by a spirituality of obedience situated in listening prayer, the prayer of stillness, of simplicity, of doing and saying nothing, which is conducive to holiness. It is precisely in prayer, which is an act of obedience that the true self resides. Prayerful obedience is, however, not just for personal holiness, but for the christification of the universe as well (Fland 1993:132). In this sense obedience, surrendering to the depth of one’s personal integrity, relies on the commitment to holiness in one’s life. Prayerful obedience implies being in touch with oneself, with the religious community and with the contextual world. Honest obedience lends itself to the humanization and self-realization of the person.

Reclaiming obedience demands viewing authority, formerly seen as the guardian of responsibility, as co-authority and responsibility for choices made and decisions shared. The freedom to make decisions within the integrity of obedience, appeals to the ultimate authority of conscience which is perceived as the inalienable core of the person; it
makes an individual human, and compels her to become fully human. As argued in Chapter One, the invitation to authentic humanhood implies adherence to the authority of conscience, the pinnacle of human functioning. According to the American systematic theologian, Avery Dulles (1973:115), conscience “is the conscious, deliberate commitment of the self and cannot be forced by an external authority”. As consecrated obedience operates out of the sacredness of individual conscience, it is of the essence that no form of human authority should violate the integrity. Consecrated obedience should at all times guard against placing the authority of the religious superiors over and above the authority of the individual conscience. Unless the individual conscience and the authority of religious superiors are in accord, the discernment of God’s will and the subsequent obedience to it, are not authentic and free. It is precisely in exercising and adhering to the pre-eminence of conscience, which summons the individual to authentic selfhood, that human self-realization resides (Macquarrie 1982:129). As there is a perception that consecrated religious are at all times obliged to adhere to the authority of religious superiors, it is fitting to examine the primary importance of the authority of conscience.

7.5.4. Consecrated obedience and the authority of the conscience.

According to Catholic teaching, the conscience, which is connected basically to human personhood, is located at the heart of Catholic, Christian morality. Gaudium et Spes (16) makes the following profound statement:

In the depth of their consciences, human persons detect a law which they do not impose on themselves but which holds them to obedience, always summoning them to love good and avoid evil ... For deep in the human heart there is a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of the person; according to it one will be judged ... Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of the person. There one is alone with God whose voice re-echoes in the soul’s depths.
Conscience is not a kind of superstructure of the personality; but rather the person's essential dynamism towards wholeness. The term derives from the Latin *cum* (together with) and *scientia, scire* (to know). The German moral theologian Bernard Häring (1978:224), describes it as a person's moral faculty, the inner core and sanctuary where one knows oneself in confrontation with God and with other human beings. In the depth of one's being conscience creates an awareness that one's true self is linked with Christ. It also helps the individual to find her uniqueness by listening and responding, in obedience to the call of Christ. In this sense conscience involves the question of what it means to be human, and refers to the inherent capacity of persons both to know and to do good.

Linda Hogan (1993:406), an Irish moral theologian, says that the conscience "encompasses the intellectual emotional and volitional capacities of the person. The integrated self is the valuing subject and as such is the context of all moral choice and action". Macquarrie (1970:113) in turn, describes conscience as the most fundamental mode of self-awareness, which he claims, discloses the gap between the actual self and the image of self that one already has, and this by virtue of the natural inclination towards self-realization. He maintains that conscience is the inalienable core of the individual which makes her human, and impels her to become more human. This invitation to authentic selfhood and self-realization is revealed in the inclination and desire to do good. The fundamental authority of conscience, in Macquarrie's (1973:158) opinion, is not *to do* certain things, but *to be*. It is a summons to full humanity, and consequently self-realization would imply possessing true inner unity, harmony, integrity and soundness.

Characteristically, being human is being an autonomous centre of discernment and action. However, for the consecrated religious the relational character of life is of intense value. This is based on an understanding that it is as an embodied, relational subject that a
has always been endorsed throughout the Catholic, Christian tradition. This is also why the Consecrated Religious is obliged to act in obedience to the dictates of the voice of conscience. In this manner the *vow of obedience is in service of authentic selfhood*, and it is believed that God is dynamically present within a person who is faithful and obedient to his or her conscience. By refusing to obey one’s conscience, the individual is already in a process of gradual self-destruction. As Heidegger (1962:316) points out, the voice of conscience is often drowned by the voice of society, its rules, values and standards. The true voice of the conscience must rise above the call of society, and listen to the voice of the authentic self. For someone who concentrates wholly on her own inner integration, self-realization, and fidelity to conscience, would mean openness to the Divine, to values and to others in community. The conscience is a summons to one’s authentic self-hood or self-realization and for this the person must choose freedom.

### 7.6. Evaluative commentary.

It is evident from the above that for Consecrated Religious, human self-realization is rooted in the gift of freedom which interacts in obedience to the voice of conscience. The Catholic Church teaches that one’s conscience must always be obeyed, but in the Catholic tradition the approach to conscience has always been deeply ambiguous. Conscience is regarded as the most fundamental and directly personal means whereby the individual apprehends moral goodness and truth. There is also an expectation that the judgments of conscience will be in agreement with church teaching. Hogan (2001:2) notes that these two views are a cause of constant tension between individual conscience and the institutional church.

Freedom, which remains essential to human dignity, is the question that lies at the heart of the human condition, and there is no clear agreement as to what it really is. Despite the fact that it is much
abused on various levels of existence, the concept of freedom is still highly valued. Because human freedom operates within the parameters of one's personal limits, it is never absolute but is always relative or conditioned. Yet Paul writes to the Galatians (5:1), "For freedom Christ has set you free...". Since in the Christian sense, freedom is the most intrinsic value of being human, Rahner (1974:189) suggests that one can think of human freedom as having two distinct dimensions. He distinguishes between what he calls the transcendental level of freedom and the categorical level. Rahner theology is based on the understanding that human beings possess a basic freedom, fundamental and deep-rooted, which enables them to determine themselves as persons. At this level freedom is not deciding between particular acts or objects; it is concerned with one's entire orientation towards life. This is what is known as the person's transcendental freedom. According to Rahner, the choice at this level is either the acceptance or refusal of a loving relationship with God. It is on the basis of this transcendental freedom that the person decides his or her fundamental option and determines whether it is for good or bad. The choice made at the transcendental level shapes completely the moral character of the person, and becomes the basis on which the she exercises choice and makes decisions. Rahner calls the daily exercise of choice, in which the individual makes decisions on the basis of available options, categorical freedom. In terms of these free choices, made at the categorical level, the person realizes by an ongoing exercise of freedom, the fundamental option for good and evil. In terms of this insight, Hogan (2001:134) concludes that a good conscience is not merely the sum total of good choices made over time, but rather the disposition or orientation to desire good, the culmination of a life lived consistently in the pursuit of virtue. The values and virtues that shape a person's conscience arise from beliefs about how the good is constituted, and how it can be sought (Hogan 2001:135).
Conscience is thus understood to be more than the sum total of particular decisions; it also refers to the integrated and consistent thrust of the person towards goodness. It is the dimension of one's character that determines the direction of one's life, one's self-conscious option for good. The *fundamental option* is the term used by Rahner for the basic orientation of an individual's life, either toward or against God. At the person's core s/he responds in positive obedience to the loving invitation of God, or has the option to disregard or disobey such a call. A life lived in the context of positive obedience is a life oriented towards seeking goodness and thus self-realization. A fundamental option that disobeys or ignores such an invitation is directed away from the search for wholeness. Each person's fundamental option is realized in the particular decisions that she makes and the virtues or vices that are cultivated (Hogan 2001:130). So in relation to self-realization it is not every single decision that is decisive, but rather the daily choices and ways of being, repeated over a lifetime, which develop a pattern that reveals the person's fundamental option for good or evil.

In traditional spirituality of Religious Life, obedience was exercised for personal sanctification, the emphasis being on the surrender of the gift of individual freedom to the will of another. Contemporary Christian views hold that Christian obedience, as it is a vision of love in the Spirit of Christ, is not only for personal sanctification, but that it enriches all Christian life. Obedience *per se* is not so much a sacrifice of surrendering of one's will, as it is a search that operates hand-in-hand with freedom. To be free in this sense is to be totally and joyously one's real, authentic self, so that one can step lovingly into one's place in God's world (Connolly 1983:76). Therefore since freedom is the part of life that is touched by the decisions of authority, there should be no opposition between authority and freedom. Rahner (1996:323) presents the person as essentially an interpersonal being, hence the understanding that an individual's orientation
towards others is a characteristic that determines the self-realization of her whole existence.

It is taken for granted that the vow of obedience is based on Christian obedience as taught in the Gospel. However, Ridick (1984:80) maintains that there is a distinction between human and Christian obedience in that the latter takes one beyond ordinary human obedience. She writes: “Christian obedience is the realization of the project of God in the human person”. This brings one to the obedience, which transcends and goes beyond the confines of the human vision, human integration and human functioning. Ridick (1984:85) indicates that although the evangelical counsels are based on the virtues, there is a difference between obedience as a virtue and obedience as a counsel. A counsel develops in the individual a new capacity for measureless, disinterested love, and sacrifice. This in turn challenges one to teach by one’s life, and to be an archetype of goodness, humility and service. The Consecrated Life incarnates an obedience of a distinctive character which originates from the depths of the Church. It is one thing to live baptismal consecration in a given circumstance, but quite another to undertake freely in charity, a public, lifetime commitment. For this reason consecrated obedience, like all other virtues, has to be exercised in a secularized socio-cultural context. Although Christian obedience was revealed and taught by Christ, the word ‘obedience’, as understood today, is not capable of bearing the weight of Christ’s obedience. For Jesus, obedience was not only an attitude of mind, but also a ‘mode of being’ that characterized His relationship with God the Father. It denotes Jesus’ intrinsic reference to God in so far as He was not able to live or understand his own self, except as standing before God (Papacio 1980:75). The unrepeatable and unique character of Jesus’ obedience is that it brought to perfection the principle and source of salvation for those who obey him (Heb. 12-2). The obedience of Jesus, lived by Him in a relationship with God the Father, is a ‘mode of being’, a
constitutive dimension of being human which introduces humanity into the very being of God (Papacio 1980:75).

The sacrificial aspect of obedience consists in sensitivity and response to the necessities and needs of others. At times obedience requires the renunciation of one’s own desires and interests for the greater good. In such a case renunciation is connected with the capacity to transcend the limits of immediate fact, and of the material process. This transcendence of self and its immediate needs, is in fact a means towards self-realization. Obedience at this level goes beyond the obedience to the laws of physical nature and fulfilment of the self. It enters a spiritual sphere which, according to the objective norms and principles beyond oneself, makes possible an obedience that involves conscience, judgment, decision and action. This obedience, which is freer, more mature, and profoundly human, transcends the immediate self for a greater objective good (Ridick 1984:77). A truly free, objective obedience facilitates human integration and self-realization.

When a Consecrated Religious vows obedience before the church, the action confers a sacred character on obedience. The Religious is thereafter committed to seek out and do God’s will in the light of the constitutions and directives of superiors of the Religious Institute. In reply to a possible question as to what witness-value the vow of obedience has in a culture of independence, impulse and self-will, Ridick (1985:75) suggests that Consecrated obedience has four dimensions of the supernatural dynamics within the world. These are christological, ecclesiological, eschatological and ascetical.

The christological dimension of Consecrated obedience places it in the context of Jesus’ obedience to His Father, and in His relation to the apostles and disciples. This was a lived submission of divine life and love (Ridick 1984:87). The Council Documents, (Lumen Gentium 42 and Perfectae Caritatis 14), affirm that the obedience of Jesus is worth following and that the Consecrated Religious, as a paradigm on earth,
deprivation stand in sharp contrast to each other. Poverty per se is not a good, and consecrated poverty, the complete 'non-possession' of material goods, seems to have lost much of its religious significance and appeal. At the best of times it is deemed fitting to look for a way of escape from poverty. This is especially the case when material deprivation causes misery and prevents the individual from realizing to the fullest, his or her humanity (Congar 1966:50). A current perception of the vow of poverty is that it is regarded as a non-essential element of the Consecrated life. This attitude is based on a conclusion that the purpose of the vow of poverty may have been relevant at other periods in history, when different economic systems and theologies prevailed. However, presently it appears inappropriate for an active Consecrated Religious to undertake a life of poverty (Demaria 1995:603). To overcome a certain uneasiness connected with the vow, several attempts have been made to change its name to that of 'simplicity', 'availability' or 'stewardship'. In contemporary society, the word 'poverty' has taken on negative political, social and even emotional implications which bear little relationship to the concept of the vow made by Consecrated Religious. Poverty covers a number of different, secular realities foreign both to monastic living, and to an evangelical understanding of the counsel. Currently, in Schneiders' (1986:168) opinion, there is widespread confusion among Consecrated Religious as to the contemporary meaning of poverty, and the new demands it may make on them.

Poverty, an analogous term, is used for a number of realities, but since it is first and foremost defined as a lack of sufficient material goods, the primary analogue for poverty is economic. The concept of poverty carries into other spheres the qualification of insufficiency, a lack, a defect, whether this lack be material or spiritual, literal or figurative (Schneiders 1986: 169). The identifying characteristic of poverty is insufficiency; not having enough of what is necessary for a meaningful human existence. Once it is defined in terms of its
primary analogue, material poverty, it becomes clear that poverty is an evil (Schneiders 1986:170).

Precisely because the concept of poverty is often ambiguous, there is an uncertainty as to why members of Religious Orders embrace it in their religious life (Rahner 1971:168). Rahner claims that it is extremely difficult to obtain any one clear idea of what poverty is or to view it as an objective phenomenon in its own right. The history of the Consecrated Life testifies to a constant record of shifts and variations in the interpretation of poverty. Also the motives and causes, which lie behind the practice of poverty have always been a matter of dispute (Rahner 1971:169). The value of poverty, considered as a concrete objective, is very different today than it appears to have been in earlier epochs in history.

Even though Consecrated Religious have for centuries, explicitly taken a vow of poverty, the actual value and virtue of poverty has a much longer tradition. It was a common belief in Hellenistic philosophy, which preceded Christian ascetic, monastic living, that poverty was a desirable condition for the pursuit of wisdom. Before a candidate embraced a philosophical career he was obliged effectively and radically to abandon all material goods. This casting aside of all worldly possessions was meant to free the individual to progress in the contemplation of the immutable, that is the divine being. In the Greek intellectual milieu poverty was thus a declaration of superiority, and Lozano (1986:126) argues that the interpretation of poverty from the time of Origen to that of Aquinas had more to do with a trait common to Hellenistic philosophers than with the Gospel. He claims that Origen would most likely have interpreted Mt 19:21: “if you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor...,” as a counsel which was obvious, and familiar in his own culture. The renunciation of material goods must be for Christians, as it was for pagans, the first step towards perfection. If one had to arrive at the personal maturity and perfection which the philosophers had in mind,
and which could only be found in communion with Christ, then divesting oneself ascetically of all material goods would not only purify the soul, but would facilitate contemplation. The important thing was to despoil oneself and renounce all. This, as is apparent, had little to do with the original sense of evangelical poverty as preached in the Gospel (Lozano 1986:127).

After the time of Christ the vow of poverty found acceptance in Christian asceticism. This paved the way for monasticism where the privation of material goods was distinctive characteristic of the life of the “perfect”. The monk had to divest himself effectively of material possessions and distribute the proceeds among the needy, thereby becoming like the poor (Lozano 1986: 120). Among the desert monks of the third and fourth centuries, poverty, which took the form of extreme self-stripping of everything except the barest necessities of life, played a primary role in their spirituality of contemplative union with God (Schneiders 2001:111). Even though they sought a life devoid of material supports, they did not live without the necessities of life. Eventually this act of divestment became a permanent point of departure for all forms of Religious Life. Initially the act of divestment in terms of Mt. 19:21 was linked to solidarity with the poor. Later, however, in the personal dispossession of worldly goods the monastic community, and not the poor, became the recipient. The monks and nuns of the first Benedictine monasteries founded in the sixth century, had nothing of their own, but the monastery was a prosperous economic unit that provided comfortably for the needs of its members. These in turn cared for the community’s goods with a reverence reserved for God’s possessions (Schneiders 1986:171-172). While poverty was spoken of as a lack, as insecurity, as a source of suffering, the important factor was for each religious to embrace the painful condition of the poor. However, this understanding was also to disappear in cenobitic monasticism. By entering a monastic community, which was often corporately rich in goods, the person embraced a comfortable life, and often acquired newfound security
(Lozano 1986:121). The rationale behind this thinking was not personal poverty, prepared for by the renunciation of private possession, but the communion and sharing of goods.

The type of poverty introduced by Francis of Assisi was a return to the ideal of ‘real poverty’, with the renunciation of material goods and property. This expression of poverty was understood as deriving “from evangelical conversion and from the perfect and absolute realization of a purely vertical dependence on God” (Congar 1966:58). Such radical poverty meant that one had to become as poor as the poor and with the poor, working as the simple folk worked, begging food, undertaking an itinerant life-style. The Dominicans adopted the Franciscan ideal and so did other mendicant orders, but Dominic chose poverty to enjoy greater freedom in the pursuit of study and learning, and not poverty for poverty’s sake. This insecure and uncomfortable life was consciously modeled on that of Jesus the itinerant preacher, but like Jesus the mendicants were not habitually in dire want (Schneiders 1986:172). Evangelical poverty, which Jesus specifically linked with freedom to preach the Gospel (Mt 10:8-10), was raised to a particularly high level in the ministerial projects of the mendicants during the Middle Ages. Since then it has played various roles in enabling religious congregations to accomplish remarkable ministerial feats with the slimmest of resources (Schneiders 2001: 113). At this time the vow of communion or sharing was changed to that of living *sine proprio* – without property (Lozano 1986: 122). However, “the mysticism of espousal to ‘Lady Poverty’ among the mendicants, especially the followers of Francis” writes Schneiders (2001:111), “put a different emphasis on the vow, seeing it as a primary way of imitating Christ in the *vita apostolica*”. The return to radical poverty by Francis and Clare was a reminder to the Church of its vocation.

While Consecrated Religious in various historical periods, did suffer want, this was never the object of the vow, since religious poverty in
the primary and proper sense, is not defined in terms of an insufficiency of material goods. When a religious publicly professes poverty, this refers to a particular form of Christian poverty, understood not simply as a material situation imposed and suffered, which in the bible has always seen as evil, but rather as an attitude of faith and hope by which a person is oriented towards the kingdom above all material things. In such a case poverty is not a limited Christian vocation open only to the few, nor is it an evangelical counsel or a charism. Unquestionably it is the vocation of every Christian, since according to Gospel of Luke 14: 33, “none of you can be my disciple unless he gives up everything”. Poverty orientates the Christian life towards the kingdom of divine grace. Mt 5:3: “Blessed are the poor in Spirit, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”. Poverty as an attitude, implies before all else, complete faith and trust in God. The individual relies entirely on God, and this is what constitutes being poor according to the Spirit (Lozano 1986:129).

As has been indicated, expressions of the spirituality and purposes of the vow of poverty have varied from one historical situation to the next. In its practical application to life, the vow of poverty progressed from divestment and sharing of goods, to a simple and austere style of living expressed in the simplicity of buildings and bare furnishings of rooms. This vow, as a consequence of the dependence it imposed, became primarily an ascetical means of achieving perfection. Many Religious Orders adopted various aspects of poverty, and recently, in all religious institutes, the ideal of solidarity with the poor, either political or economic, has begun to give a new orientation to the practice of evangelical poverty. These historical developments have enriched the meaning of the vow, and currently one can affirm a variety of interactive purposes that the vow serves in the spirituality of Consecrated Religious (Schneiders 2001:111). Because of the different expressions of consecrated poverty throughout the ages, it is reasonable to question the extent in which these interpretations were faithful to evangelical poverty preached by Jesus. By his life Christ
taught the value of evangelical poverty for all the Christian faithful, and the Catholic Church, through the document *Lumen Gentium 42*, calls all the faithful once again, to a renewal to evangelical poverty.

7.7.1. *Evangelical poverty and the vow of poverty.*

In Rahner’s (1971:173) opinion, despite the fact that it has a thoroughly material content, religious poverty and poverty in general should not be confused. Religious poverty is not an analogue of real poverty, hence Schneiders’ (1986:170) argument that it is necessary to seek the relation of religious poverty only in its proper, designated sphere. As noted by Rahner (1971:178) even in the teachings of Scripture several motivations, which are susceptible to and in need of analysis, are assigned for the practice of voluntary poverty. Since poverty in Israel was regarded as an evil and contrary to the will of God, it would be futile to look for any positive reference to it in the early books of the Old Testament. The poor in the Old Testament were not romanticized, nor was poverty glorified or proposed as an ideal (Schneiders 1986:176). A good person, was promised material prosperity, as this was considered a blessing, while poverty was a curse and punishment (Mc Dermott 1997:355). The goodness of wealth, and God’s desire to bless the chosen people with material possessions, reminded Israel that everything belongs to God, for the enjoyment of all humanity (Blomberg 1999:241). In Proverbs 28:6 it is claimed that to be rich is not the ultimate value: it is “better to be poor and honest than rich and dishonest”. A theology of poverty is developed in the Psalter. In Ps 9:10-14 and Ps. 10:12-14, the Israelites were presented as the *anawin*, the poor of Yahweh. They experienced God as He really is, and proclaimed His greatness and love. Since, as specified in Eccl. 13:24-25, they were in need of God, they considered the bounty of the earth to be God’s providence. Eccl.13: 24-25 reads: “There is nothing wrong with being rich if you haven’t sinned to get there. But there is nothing sinful about being poor either. Only the ungodly think so...”. However, in the scriptures Yahweh is often
shown to have a preferential concern for the poor. This became an experienced value as small communities, for example the Essenes at Qumran, lived out this Old Testament theology of poverty. The Essenes whose life-style was ascetic, lived a celibate life in community, and held temporal goods in common. However, in practice, while they cultivated a monastic and communal ideal, they maintained a certain amount of private property (Blomberg 1999:242).

In the New Testament Jesus is the consummate example of the truly poor before God. Nonetheless He assisted the poor, the distressed, the suffering and the hungry, and recognized their poverty as an evil, and contrary to the love of God. By his personal life, Jesus testified to the evangelical poverty that he preached, and in Mt. 19:16-29 the call of discipleship did not require abandonment of material goods, but rather a total orientation towards God. Jesus did not envision that the disciple should embrace material poverty as a religious value, still less as an ascetical means of achieving that uprootedness proper to an itinerant prophet. Evangelical poverty, writes Rahner (1971:179) is first and foremost a sharing in the life of Jesus who was for all practical purposes a poor man, or more to the point, lived poorly (Lk. 9:57; Mt 8:20; 2 Cor.8: 9). He was, strictly speaking, not in a state of abject poverty, nor was he really penniless or threatened by hunger (Jn. 12:6). The immediate motivation underlying Jesus’ teaching on poverty, is identical with that of His call to voluntary celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom. Evangelical poverty, according to Simson (1976:17), cannot be interpreted as material poverty since those who were promised liberation from their suffering; the blind, the leprous, the deaf, and the dead, were regarded as being among the poor.

Riches, in Jesus’ opinion, enslave the heart and prevent the development of attitudes of faith, hope and generosity. On the other hand, according to Matthew 19:23, the poor are those who have put their trust in God. Jesus does not, in the sociological sense, oppose the rich as a class, rather he points out that wealth is an obstacle to
the acceptance, in faith, of the kingdom of God. Material wealth is 'dangerous' to those who, as followers of Jesus, are serious in their spiritual quest. Nevertheless, since all of creation is good, material goods are not evil. Clearly, wealth *per se* is not evil, but given our human condition says Schneiders (1986:177), wealth can constitute a serious threat. Actual poverty is evil, as it has the inherent capacity to bring about the degradation of the human person.

In the light of the Gospel, being poor is associated with the quality of relationship with God and people. It is a refusal to become self-centred (Simson 1976:17). Evangelical poverty begins with the realization that one is limited and dependent, and that growth and happiness can be found through openness to God and neighbour. Generally one cannot make oneself poor, but Simson (1976:17) is of opinion that one can become poor through giving service to others. The growth of evangelical poverty, the sharing with others of what one has and what one is, follows the rhythm of love. Consequently Consecrated Religious who follow the example of Jesus, put themselves alongside the poor and the outcast, and renounce the common ideals of power, security and comfort. It can be inferred from this, that any form of poverty unrelated to the poverty suffered by others, cannot be evangelical poverty. Christians are called to "Listen to the cry of the poor". Evangelical poverty, says Rahner (1971:177), is that poverty which is recommended by Jesus himself.

Because evangelical poverty is open to diverse interpretations, the Catholic Church has always recognized that each religious congregation needs latitude to develop its own understanding and practice of the vow of poverty. Traditionally the 'poverty' of the Benedictines differed from that of the Franciscans, and theirs in turn differs from that of the Jesuits. Individual members of Consecrated Religious communities, while making the vow of poverty according to the constitutions of their particular congregation, are aware that there are other valid ways of interpreting the vow, but they promise to
pursue the goal of religious poverty according to the traditions of the group to which they are committed (Demaria 1995:605). Since the various traditions developed their own interpretation of evangelical poverty, it is necessary to measure and re-interpret the various traditions against the gospel value of evangelical poverty.

The spirituality of dying to 'self' is generally the basis of the interpretation of the vow of poverty. The death of self which is an essential tenet of Christian spirituality, is the only way to new birth in Christy. According to Demaria (1995:606), Christian spirituality is based on the paradox that out of death comes life: by dying to ourselves, we give birth within us to a new, Christ person. This forms the central spirituality of Christianity, and indeed is the foundation of Religious Life. The eventual goal of Consecrated poverty is to assist the Religious towards a fuller, and not a diminished life. Accordingly the living of this vow facilitates Religious to become humanly self-realized. Voluntary poverty, 'poverty of spirit', which is recommended by Jesus, is not a mere attitude of mind and conscience, but is a means by which those who practice it are set free. The spirit of poverty, the virtue to which all Christians aspire and which religious make the object of a vow, cannot be just another analogue of poverty. It cannot be a defect, if it is counted as a virtue. Hence it cannot be a form of insufficiency, but rather a proper disposition before God (Schneiders 1986:170).

Contemporary Religious find the traditional interpretations of the vow of poverty to be inappropriate for religious life today. Therefore the question arises: how can this vow, which is still part of the commitment made by Consecrated Religious, be a means of self-realization? At a time when Consecrated Religious are challenged to develop and evaluate new interpretations of the vow of poverty, an uncertainty prevails as to whether or not this necessitates complete identification with the poor. If a prerequisite for the vow of poverty implies total identification with the circumstances and life-style of the
poor, this will restrict not only the vow, but it will also demand of the religious a great deal of honesty. In this regard Lozano (1986:130) cautions that if the vow of poverty is to be authentic, and destined to contribute to the self-realization of the vowed Religious, the latter has to avoid “playing the game of being poor”. He argues that generally Consecrated Religious are well educated, and that an individual’s education is the best guarantee for the future. Schneiders’ (1986:179) agrees that education is a wealth built into the existence of Consecrated Religious, and it is something that the individual cannot renounce. She maintains that no one with an education or familial opportunities can ever be poor in the literal sense of the word, as inner resources, which mark them off forever from the truly poor, cannot be renounced. Education in Lozano’s (1986:130) opinion is an internal good that affects a person intimately and profoundly, and the poor have neither education nor money for educational advantages. So to presume that contemporary religious, in view of their present involvement in professional careers, can be materially poor is almost facetious. How poor, in comparison to the destitute, can a Consecrated Religious be, who holds a position of considerable administrative and professional responsibility? It is a fact, as Demaria (1995:613) claims, that Consecrated Religious are unaware both of the degree of their assimilation into the mainstream culture and consequently their invisibility as religious. They have inadvertently been brought into a consumerist society and have taken on board its demands. The vow of poverty is not real poverty, but the evil of insufficiency, nor is it an analogue of social and intellectual poverty. Educated Religious therefore are called upon to develop a disposition consonant with the spirit of evangelical poverty. Thus if educational advantages are mainly a source of personal security and power, it can be argued that a Consecrated Religious, by putting herself, sine proprio, at the disposal of the poor and needy, renounces the fruits of those advantages. To profess poverty sine proprio is to commit oneself to live and die for others, especially for the most needy. It means to stand alongside the poor in love, to become one with them affectively,
and to place all one’s educational resources at the service of the needy (Lozano 1986:130). In this sense poverty is much like celibacy, except that celibacy is realized on the level of interpersonal relationships, while poverty is realized in relationship to things (Lozano 1986:131).

Another contentious issue concerning the vow of poverty is that for the individual, it implies the acceptance of insecurity. The vowed religious voluntarily embraces insecurity, realizing that the more one pursues security through power and possessions, the more fearful and worried one becomes. Traditionally Consecrated Religious voluntarily dispossessed themselves of much material security and power so as rely solely upon the Lord and so become conduits of his power and grace in the world. However, as Demaria (1995:610) argues, Consecrated Religious Life, by virtue of its inner construction, is intrinsically a life that provides security. In a sense the Consecrated life comes across as more secure, less risky than the lives of those not vowed. If this is the case, has the vow of poverty lost its value, or has it always been misconstrued? There is a distinct perception that while a certain level of security is necessary for lives to function, all Religious should be people who at least recognize insecurity as an ideal towards which they move (Demaria 1995:610). Rahner (1971:172) says that one cannot be poor if one belongs to a rich community. He acknowledges that the concrete expression of poverty in various religious families depends on their own distinctive charism, hence the notion that the vow of poverty cannot be prescriptive.

It is evident that for humanity today “not having” does not particularly impress people as a religious value. It can be argued that the renunciation of luxuries by religious does nothing at all to redistribute material goods among the materially deprived. The hungry do not necessarily eat better because Consecrated Religious eat simply. The naked are not clothed because vowed religious dress simply. The vowed religious poverty of a few, remains powerless in the face of a skew economic situation which victimizes so many millions of people.
An American theologian, Van der Poel (1972:81), observes that in this present era Consecrated Religious are challenged to integrate into their life-style that form of possession and use of material goods which manifests the God orientation of the entire created universe. While the voluntary abandonment of material goods remains a meaningful expression that one's confidence lies in God, it does not necessarily manifest the spiritual depth of the material world. In other words the vow of poverty is intimately related to an appreciation and respect for the earth and for the spiritual dimension of the things of the earth. It therefore remains necessary; according to Van der Poel (1972:83), that humanity itself, represented by those dedicated to the religious dimension of human existence, while focusing on the transcendent perspective of humanity, should express the love of God in and through the material world. Then the material in which the life style expresses itself becomes animated with the love of the creator. In this sense one is enabled to see the deeper meaning and value of the Consecrated vow or commitment to poverty. It is not a lack of ownership that makes poverty a reality and spiritually valuable, but the challenge to maintain and express transcendent values (Van der Poel 1972:83). In respect of this argument Schneider (1986:180) maintains that the vow of poverty implies a life-style which reflects, not a particular attitude or set of behaviours, but rather a deep respect for the material universe as it impinges on personal and social existence.

While vows are based on normal healthy personalities, what is required from a Consecrated Religious is to make the vow of poverty an authentic religious experience; not only a high degree of self-knowledge and maturity, but also an open vision of oneself in relation to the material world and to others and their needs. It demands generosity, self-giving, and the availability of one's personal qualities and possessions so that, in this material world, the constant self-communication of the creator becomes manifested in human expression (Van der Poel 1972:84).
The goal and purpose of the human person is to be the earthly expression of the living image of God. "This immanent goal describes the human potential of self-realization precisely insofar as a person lives in this world with all the capacities, which are inherent in the earthly existence" (Van der Poel 1972:20). Because human self-realization in this world manifest itself primarily in material expression, humanity as a whole needs another style of living in which the transcendent goal becomes the explicit and primary focal point of existence. It gives expression to the human totality in which immanent and transcendent self-realization intertwine, complement and support each other (Van der Poel 1972:23). The heart of Christ’s teaching and the perfection of his imitation lie in a human self-realization in which human existence is filled with the life and presence of God (Van der Poel: 1972:39).

7.7.2. Consecrated poverty and self-realization.

Religious poverty, as defined by Schneiders (1986:190), is an evangelically inspired and structured relationship to material creation. This involves owning well, using well and suffering well for the purpose of transforming existence, our own included. The goal of religious poverty is a community in which all have the material supports necessary for truly human living. The fullest realization of this is a total openness to God, which makes salvation real and possible.

While the human person is destined to become self-realized and to transcend itself, each one still has a tendency towards egoism or self-centredness. To be self-realized is to overcome narcissism, and it is the vow of poverty that provides the spirituality to bring this to fruition. It is not material possessions, observes Van der Poel (1972:74), that makes a person self-centred. By nature every individual has the tendency to become self-oriented and this
selfishness is expressed in the attitude towards possessions. He warns that the more one finds security in power and in the material dimension of life, the less one will be inclined, or able, to recognize the deeper spiritual value of one’s own being. On the other hand, argues Schneiders (1986:177), material poverty does not guarantee spiritual openness, and one can be spiritually receptive without being materially poor.

In this material world there is a need in humanity to display and to love the spiritual or religious meaning of its own existence. This need finds a concrete expression in the Consecrated life style, particularly through the vow of poverty. While in the past the impression was sometimes given that ‘not having’ was virtuous, religious were usually provided with all necessary material goods, indeed more than many persons not vowed to poverty. Often the emphasis was placed upon ‘possessing in common’, which easily led to having everything one needed, provided one obtained the consent of the superior. This kind of poverty became another form of obedience and dependence (Van der Poel 1972:74). Contemporary theological thinking does not like the sharp dichotomy made between the material and the spiritual. Today there is a greater tendency to express spiritual values within material reality and thus integrate human wholeness. While there is also an inclination to bear witness to the spiritual value or dimension in one’s earthly existence, the integration would require a different expression of the vow of poverty.

Humanity, also needs another style of living by which the transcendent goal becomes not only explicit, but a primary focal point of existence. In reality the material, as well as the physical, psychological and emotional dimensions in humanity, all take concrete shape in the human body. However, in the case of the self-realization of Consecrated Religious, it is necessary to develop both human and spiritual qualities. Consequently it is important to discern the transcendent dimension of material goods rather than to spurn
them. The discernment of the transcendent dimension of material goods is possible, says Van der Poel (972:75), by virtue of humanity's presence in this world. Rahner would argue that this is possible because the person is "spirit-in-the-world", and possesses the ability to sense the transcendent element is God's creation. This becomes authentic only when poverty becomes an interior attitude and not merely a behavioural pattern or a mere concern with things. It becomes a dimension of an integrated life, a concern with being human. In this sense poverty is not a deprivation of material goods or possessions, persons or social interactions, but an integration, a liberation, a revelation and realization of the givenness of all things from God (Ridick 1984:3). Taken to its ultimate understanding poverty is not a deprivation, but a directing of one's being, and a distancing from fixation of any kind, in order to reach a total integrated intimacy with Christ. Poverty then is an expression of the integration of our being, an ordering of things and people according to the essential significance within them and within the self of the person.

According to Ridick (1984:6), poverty, in that it bespeaks one's abandonment and self-immolation of the use of will and of sensual desires, is another quality similar to that of obedience and chastity. The self is the meeting point between theology and psychology. Ridick identifies three levels of development and at each level an individual's development has an implicit relationship to the experience of poverty. On the psycho-physical level it is necessary to have a healthy attitude towards material things, and this needs to be respectfully guided by poverty. The typical human attitude at the psycho-physiological level is to possess things merely for security's sake, for the sake of having, rather than for self-development. This distortion of poverty, according to Ridick (1984:7), is an abuse which is detrimental to an ordered existence. If the aim of the practice of poverty is to promote a transcendent attitude, then there must be opportunities for sanctification, that is self-transcendence.
On the *psycho-social* level, the need for human relationships is expressed by an attitude which values people over and above things. On the *spiritual-rational* level of development the human person discerns a new and deeper supernatural meaning of poverty. Here one is granted the capacity to move from the centre of one's own existence and reach out to God (Ridick 1984:6). At this level of one's being, says Ridick (1984:7), God presents an invitation to go beyond the materiality of things and the transitoriness of humanity, and commit oneself to relationships which transcend the functional needy 'self'. This allows for a wise enjoyment and use of things, not only in their immediacy, but also in their capacity to reveal the hidden transcendent meaning of life (Ridick 1984:7).

On spiritual-rational level where self-realization occurs, the individual is enabled to define her self in the light of her relationship with God. At this point of development the intrinsic poverty of a person's infiniteness and state of receptivity becomes evident. Poverty is of assistance at every level of personal integration. This is the case when a person moves from the level of things, to people, and to self-transcendence in the love of God. In the formation process of a Consecrated Religious, the evaluation of the personal needs of each candidate at every stage of development, is a guiding principle. This should be done in order to determine the extent to which religious poverty assists the spiritual growth and disposition of the individual. An integrated and self-realized person is one who has internalized the attitude of poverty, which is that all things belong to God and find meaning in Christ. The internalized counsel of poverty is in itself integrative, and allows one to rise above the compulsion of personal needs, particularly those operative on the *psycho-physical* level. It enables one to love freely, unreservedly and faithfully, so that others too may exist and develop freely. Poverty deepens all relationships despite rejection, being ignored and forgotten (Ridick 1984:10).
When the evangelical counsel or vow of poverty has been integrated into one's personal life, it can lead to a certain forgetfulness of self. This in turn enables one to surrender all personal qualities in loving service of God and others and vice versa (Ridick 1984:13). Religious poverty facilitates communion with the transcendent meaning of self, person and things. The resultant spiritual awareness of inner meaning, distances a person from concern with the immediate symbol, the immediate cause of the material and practical meaning of things and social relationships (Ridick 1984:14). On the other hand the constant awareness of our own weakness and inner poverty makes us aware of our need for Christ. The more integrated a person becomes in the experience of self, the less she needs material goods or social advantages to enhance her personhood (Ridick 1984:14). In this context Ridick (1984:16) asserts that candidates for self-realization are on the path of transcendent realization, which implies self-emptying and freedom from self-gratification. When poverty is experienced as liberating, freeing and enriching, it focuses attention on God. Thus for religious poverty to be truly value-expressive, it must be indicative of one's outpouring of an intense love relationship with Christ which is a spontaneous attempt to preserve, nourish and expand that loving surrender to God. A true spirit of poverty is manifested in greater warmth, openness, detachment and creativity. Greed, according to Ridick (1984:18), is usually manifested in boredom, cynicism, isolation, hardness of heart and self-centredness. A spirit of poverty prevents both fragmentation of our inner self, and our becoming enslaved by our personal needs, desires and interests. Poverty in this sense is thus liberating, directing, freeing and enriching.

7.7.3. A spirit of poverty as true freedom.

The practical rediscovery of evangelical poverty is linked both to the absolute value of love, agape, beyond all moralism, and to the values of service, responsibility and witness. It is decisively bound up with
the rediscovery of the values of Christian existence (Congar 1966:56). An intrinsic value of Christian existence, which underscores a commitment to a life of service, is spiritual freedom, a condition that constitutes certain poverty. Rahner (1969:123) presents freedom as a free person’s capacity to choose, take possession of and realize the self. In terms of Rahner’s theology, since self-realization implies acknowledgement of one’s personal poverty, human self-realization occurs only through the mediation of other free persons. Because it is by their relation with others that individuals are constituted, this relatedness is an essential condition of human self-realization.

According to the American philosopher Deutsch (1982:24), freedom is part and parcel of personhood. A person, that is the integrated, articulated, particular human being, is free to the degree to which she realizes her self. Freedom is the quality of achieved personhood, and is in itself essential to the becoming of a human person. Poverty, as proposed by Macquarrie (1982:10), is not a manifestation of freedom. It forms part of the fundamental freedom of the autonomous human person, a being who is rational, conscientious, discriminating, responsible, and capable of choice, decision and creativity. Macquarrie (1982:11) suggests that this fundamental freedom can also be called personal or inner, or even metaphysical freedom. A human being without freedom is no longer human. “Freedom”, according to Macquarrie (1982:22) “is essential to the self-realization of humanity, without freedom there cannot be authentic humanity, it is a necessary condition for the realization of humanity as a value”. As freedom is fundamental to the human person, it is directed to some outward realization. The mysterious experience of freedom can perhaps only be compared with what one dimly imagines being the divine act of creation. This fundamental freedom, that both creates humanity and confers creative freedom on it, is what differentiates the human person from animals. In Rahner’s (1989:65) opinion, freedom is the ability to constitute oneself in and through relations with others. It is a process related to human transcendence, whereby the
person goes out both to another and beyond self. Freedom, as the original and primordial openness of the human being, is positively connected with the human quality of transcendence: the continuing process of creativity and development flowing directly from that freedom. Through poverty of spirit the individual is helped to transcend egoism; a false self, or false humanity. Although egoism forms part of the natural condition of being human, when exercised it diminishes humanity. Egoism leads the individual astray in her quest for self-realization, and only by transcending the narrow egocentric self can a fuller humanity be attained. The ideals of self-renunciation, intrinsically part of poverty, and self-fulfilment, are not contradictory. Poverty prevents self-aggrandizement, and it is only by exercising freedom in making choices, and by taking risks to transcend the self-centered and ungenerous self, that the self-realization of humanity take place (Macquarrie 1982:46). A spirit of poverty which sustains the process of total transcendence of the ego, facilitates full self-realization at the deepest level of one's being.

7.8. Evaluative commentary.

In terms of the credibility of Consecrated Life, the vow of poverty poses a massive problem. Nevertheless, as an aid towards self-realization, this vow is neither a dehumanizing deprivation, nor a Manichean devaluation of the material world. Rather it is the uncluttered search for true self-transcendence, wherein is found the true image of God. As a form of Christian asceticism, living the spirit of poverty is indeed a counter-cultural sign, serving as a protest against the prevailing tendency to accrue material goods. Often Consecrated Religious take the vow of poverty presuming that their witness, in living simple and austere lives, will assist in providing a more balanced and dialectical attitude to wealth and possessions either on a personal or communal basis.
In reality the vow of poverty is meant to challenge the Consecrated Religious in her relation to both material things, and to the ‘material’ of her personal being. It is meant to safeguard against abuses related to the physical dimension of humanity, as well as those connected to the material earth. The vow of poverty is about a spirituality that facilitates responsible care and stewardship of the goods of God’s creation. The notion of stewardship has a caring and affective connotation that forms part of being accountable for the goods of creation entrusted to our care.

The vow of poverty, traditionally understood, perceived the ownership of goods to be held, not by the individual but by the religious community. Consequently the Consecrated Religious was counseled to develop a spirituality of detachment from all things material. This in turn gave rise to a dualistic approach to life and to God. The contemporary vision of poverty challenges the person to develop in conjunction with, and in recognition of, the goodness of creation (O’Murchu 1999:66). Its function is to create a connection between the inner attitude of the spirit of poverty, and the material conditions alluded to in the Gospel. Deutsch (1982:18) is of opinion that one can become self-realized only with and through the ‘materials’ of one own being. This calls for a positive attitude towards one’s physical existence, which acknowledges that personhood can be achieved only by being honest with regard to the status of one’s own humanity. A true sense of poverty counteracts self-deception and assists in calling the religious to true personhood and freedom. In the lives of people there is a degree of self-perception or flattery at work most of the time. Consequently the vow of poverty, when incorrectly understood, can inadvertently place a person in a situation of self-deception. To deceive oneself, says Hogan (2001:157) leads to inner division and allows for complete self-fragmentation. Human beings have a tendency to rationalize their motives and intentions in positive terms. This can be an evasive tactic which explains moral failure in an individual who is essentially committed to living a morally good life. In its essence,
Religious poverty must be an attitude of the heart. Connolly (1983:65) describes it as a facet of Christian love in honesty and integrity.

While none of the three vows is meant to do violence to the person, the vow of poverty implies the stripping away, by the individual, of all that is false, egoistical and power oriented. To be self-centred and ungenerous is contrary to the spirituality of the vow of poverty. In order to reach authentic personhood and self-realization, those living the Consecrated Life need a fresh and challenging call to a new understanding of the vow of poverty, an understanding that will enhance personal sincerity and authenticity. Religious poverty enables the vowed person to imbibe a spirituality that assumes stewardship, non-possessive ownership and co-responsibility towards material goods entrusted to humanity by God, rather than the traditional position of detachment. It implies that the Consecrated Religious befriend material creation, and transcend dualistic divisions that separate the physical from the spiritual. This dualistic attitude undermines the inter-relationship of body, mind and spirit. As human self-realization has as its base human integration, it calls for an ideological shift. Instead of searching for perfectionism, the vow of poverty calls for a modification in spirituality that strives for holiness through wholesome use and sharing (O'Murchu 1999:104). Religious poverty requires the use and sharing of resources, personal and communal, in service of those who are materially poor and destitute. However, divestment does not guarantee that Religious Life will be more authentic, or that the relinquishment of properties will automatically favour the poor (Chittister 1995:160). The vow of poverty calls the religious to soulful living, discovering the sacredness within all living things. Human self-realization is facilitated by the individual connecting with the sacredness of the ordinary, with the soulfulness of simple things. This includes embracing the incarnated self. Authentic selfhood is the articulation of one's essence and to achieve this goal; all that is false or inauthentic has to be removed. This is done in order to make way for the true consciousness of the
self, recognition of surpassing reality as well as an awareness of the pretension in all other value systems. When one’s persona fits rightly, says (Deutsch 1982:19), and is recognized as a consequent of self-realization, then the opportunity for creative personhood emerges. Poverty is thus not determined towards self-aggrandizement but creates a spirituality that unearths the sacredness underpinning every aspiration towards self-realization and wholeness.


The call to the fullness of life underpins every God-given vocation. However the vowed life of a Consecrated Religious involves an entirely different self-definition and perception of life’s meaning, from that of secular society. The choice of celibacy, poverty and obedience as a life stance, involves a different life project from that which the majority of people undertake. The primary pursuit of family life and upward mobility, including the acquisition of personal possessions, the quest for wealth, power and arbitrary self-interest, are relinquished. On the other hand, the reality of the vowed life obliges the person to move towards others in relationship and service. If Religious Life is to become a way of expressing in action a deep religious experience, and of continuing to discover through creative action, a personal relationship with God, then the ongoing experience of both radical action and radical discovery is needed.

As Consecrated living is imbedded in collective, social existence, it also involves the search for deeper meaning. There is a perception that in the traditional living of Consecrated Religious life, the vows suffered from spiritual suffocation and consequently did violence to the Consecrated person. O’Murchu (1999:38), claims that the asceticism that frequently accompanied the observance of celibacy, often violated the sacredness of the body, the God-given giftedness of pleasure, eroticism and the capacity to relate to others in a warm and loving way. He also maintains that the privations endured in the name of
poverty, were often personally degrading and wasteful of time, energy and money. He asserts that the most violent of all was the sheer oppression exerted in bending people's wills, and evoking from them forms of submission that seriously undermined their dignity and freedom as incarnational human beings. Hence his appeal for a return of the vowed life to its pristine role where its deepest God-given significance can be appreciated. Since the Second Vatican Council (1965) the traditional theology of Consecrated Religious Life has given way to an understanding which is predominantly theological and spiritual. This life was seen as a particular way of actualizing one's baptismal commitment to follow Christ in his self-gift to God and humanity. Consecrated celibacy, freely chosen for the sake of the reign of God, and lived in community and mission, has emerged as the defining characteristic of this state of life. Poverty tends to be understood less as a collection of acts of personal self-denial, and more as a solidarity with and responsiveness to the poor. Obedience is being reinterpreted in the context of gospel freedom as a commitment to discern and follow the will of God in a community of equals, rather than as a subjection to superiors in a hierarchical power structure.

In Consecrated Religious life a profession is not a career; it is a calling. In reality Consecrated Religious women can be highly professional and competent, but in this context achievement is not measured only in terms of professional success. For Religious professional success is measured by the contribution to the mission of the church and service to the life of the people. The call to the Consecrated Life, which is based on a divine awakening, culminates in a religious commitment, which equals that of a covenant. In its true biblical sense, a covenant implies an invitation based on total commitment, because God's commitment to us is itself unconditional, unrelenting and forever (O'Murchu 1999:31). The readiness of a Consecrated Religious to respond to and live out a vocational choice requires the capacity for counter-cultural witness. While the response to a call to Religious Life is counter-cultural, it is also lived out in
direct interaction with contemporary culture. Because of this, a Consecrated Religious needs to be more aware of the ways in which the internal capacities of freedom are related to a choice of religious life. She must also discern the type of counter-cultural stance required by her vocation (Merkle 1992:32).

Response to the call is made in freedom, precisely because the overwhelming nature of the call is not one of greater confinement or limitation, but towards the fullness of life according to gospel values. It is a call of mutual engagement with human yearnings and struggles, in order to integrate values into one's daily life. The process of integration, of self-realization, is thus not a once-for-all achievement.

Today Religious life and secular society suffer in common many of the stresses and vicissitudes brought about by rapid social change. These include unemployment, unstable family structures, greater mobility and financial concerns and they impact on the way in which the vows of poverty, celibacy and obedience are lived in contemporary society. While the values of the vows remain unchanged, their meaning in the lives of religious is marked by a new world context. Religious Life does not offer the security it once did, neither does it provide answers to problems (Merkle 1992:94) and there is a subtle difference between living the vows and keeping them. To live the evangelical counsels implies authentic engagement with the issues of real life, while to keep them implies being at a distance from the world of reality or being superior to it. To keep the vows has strong moral connotations, living them has personal, interpersonal and social implications. Keeping the vows carries connotations of holiness and individual salvation, whereas living them requires a very different spirituality, one that is quite innovative, even for the religious themselves.

Traditionally Consecrated Life focused heavily on a philosophy of life based on the struggles of "freedom from". The vows were supposed to
help one to gain mastery over natural things and to live on a supernatural level. Internal limitations had to be overcome and renunciation was emphasized. Religious, in order to devote their lives to God, had to surrender money, marriage, control over personal decisions. Today as Merkle (1992:92) notes, Religious Life draws heavily on the philosophy of "freedom to". This philosophy of "freedom to" Merkle (1992:92) describes as the creative dimension of freedom. It develops alongside self-discipline which provides a sense of direction and purpose. Contemporary Religious have less confidence in determining precisely the ways in which behaviour can define the meaning of the vows. Fidelity involves responsible relationship rather than fulfilment of rules alone. Vows are meant to open the way to responsible adulthood in the particular Religious Congregation, the Church and society.

In order to uphold the religious experience which has always had a place in the faith community, a shift in the contemporary theological re-articulation of the three vows based on the evangelical counsels, is necessary. Today's world stimulates a new religious experience, as well as a re-formulation of fundamental attitudes deriving from the evangelical counsels. Insecurity forms part of the context in which the vows are lived today, because in secular circles the vows are not regarded as meaningful. The choice of poverty, celibacy and obedience still calls Consecrated Religious apart, but not in the same way as in the past. Presently, interaction with society is a constant factor and will need to be taken into account in the formation of a future Religious. Instead of the vows being a means of perfection, as was the case in the past, it is now a way of proceeding, giving direction and assisting in making choices (Merkle 1992:96).

While the traditional form of Consecrated Life called Religious apart, and this, to a certain extent, is still a factor, contemporary Religious are invited to discover the nature of the evangelical counsels through encounter in ordinary social relationships. Since the vows exclude
certain options that are legitimate for others, the interactions of religious, conscious or unconscious, with society as a whole, shape the choices they have to make. Fidelity to the vows leads the Religious in a process of self-discovery and conversion. According to Merkle (1992:96), the relevancy of the vows is in question once they no longer limit or focus choices. This happens because Consecrated Religious fail to integrate the vows with their experience in society. This will include the necessity to make choices as to how Religious express love, share goods and make decisions, in a way that will continue to set them apart. When Religious shape personal decisions consistent with their vows, their commitment to God, the deepest part of their lives, is revealed. Since not every detail of the vowed life is expressed in behavioural norms, as was the case before the Second Vatican Council, the individual Religious is called to a growing sense of world-consciousness. This demands a new spirituality and a different relationship with creation, which is reflected in her behaviour towards self, others, created things and God.

In view of the fact that a Consecrated Life is based on the constructive elements of the evangelical counsels, it should make a creative contribution towards the self-realization of Religious woman. The shift in theology, which affects the contemporary understanding of the vows, centres on the human person. To be a person in the presence of the true self, indicates a self that is deeper than personal accomplishments. When an individual recognizes and comprehends her true self, then the experience of real freedom commences. In the theological sense freedom is the distinct awareness of being human. It is characterized as the positive relationship to oneself which makes self-realization a potential goal in life.

Rahner, in his theology of freedom, confirms that a choice to live according to religious vows involves a prior "choice of self". This in turn necessitates a choice to construct the self in freedom. The vowed commitment presupposes that a basic level of freedom is already
operative in the individual’s life, since freedom involves the capacity to view life as a centre of meaning. The choice to be a consecrated religious should reflect this prior choice “to be”, which is essentially a choice to transcend self. This implies moving from a position of egoism and opening oneself in love to God, to reality, and to others. The vows must reflect the Consecrated person’s ability to love in openness. It is only this exercise in freedom, reflected in the ability to transcend self in order to love, which can be a means of self-realization. It is believed that God’s presence, which is the source of the call to transcendence, is essentially linked to a person’s true self.
CHAPTER EIGHT

TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF SELF-REALIZATION.

It is clear from the research and analysis undertaken in this thesis that all sciences, and in particular anthropological sciences, hold primacy of place in the process of unraveling the complexities of the human self. Each of these sciences, whether neuro-biological, psychological, theological, philosophical, biblical, spiritual or mystical in character, use appropriate methodologies to explore the intricacies of the human person and attempt to explain them. Each particular science, within the limitations of its own perspective, and shaped by specific data and insights, contributes to a relatively all-inclusive knowledge of the human self, thus contributing to the legitimation of humanity. In this regard neither philosophy nor theology, despite the spiritual nature of the goals set by both, do not have exclusive insights into the profound wisdom of the human condition. Indeed, in this area of scientific research, all insights relating to the human situation often overlap, amalgamate and have an impact on the growth and development of humanity as a whole. The study of self-realization provides theology with real-life questions on such topics as evil, suffering, hope, love, justice and freedom, and the theologian also connects the process of self-realization with the immanent, the transcendent, the human and the divine. By drawing on theologians' respective scientific insights, and their diverse approaches to humanity, theology is brought into the material existence of the human being.

Since it is the specific aim of this dissertation to determine the ground for a Christian theological anthropology that makes explicit provision for a doctrine of human self-realization, and to relate the doctrine as a theological substructure to the self-realization of Consecrated women, the research has endeavoured to identify the neuro-theological, psychological, philosophical, biblical and theological principles
relevant to the varied understandings of the self and self-realization. It is evident that anthropological self-realization forms part of the complicated processes of becoming truly human. This research has identified the Christian growth towards self-realization as an integrated process, and in addition to biblical data it takes into account the psychological, philosophical, theological, spiritual, cultural, socio-economic, political and historical understanding of humanity, in order to formulate an appropriate doctrine that will shape the humanizing process. To have meaning and relevance, a theology of self-realization, which concerns humanness and personhood, should be intentionally pragmatic and programmatic. Pragmatic, as it not only deals with the human existential, but it also gives concrete expression to essential humanness. Programmatic, because it sets forth a style of life\textsuperscript{15} that has the well-being and salvation of the human person as its major concern.

This research makes it clear that in order to come to a comprehensive understanding of self and self-realization, both complex concepts, the approach must be multi-dimensional. Because the vast and complicated domain of the self, knowledge and understanding of it opens the mind to a personal awareness of the infinite horizon of being. The self, created in the Image of God, provides a bridge between the human and the God-element in the individual. In one sense self-realization operates in much the same way as 'depth psychology', directing the person into the inner sanctuary of the true self where God is encountered.

This study of 'self-realization' and its many characteristics, viewed from such diverse scientific angles which overlap in endless variations, renders the task of conceptualization and definition very

\textsuperscript{15} For the purposes of this dissertation the Consecrated Religious life has been selected as a specific style of life centered on living the three vows and how they make provision for the self-realization of the consecrated woman. This does not imply that other forms of life-styles, such as the married or single state, are not intended on the self-realization of the individual.
difficult. It is, therefore most probable, that a working definition of self-realization would include an assortment of prominent characteristics. Before commencing on a possible definition of this concept, it would be well to determine the possible contribution a theology of self-realization could make to theological anthropology.

8.1. A theology of self-realization contributes to the process of humanization.

This thesis argues that a ‘theology of self-realization’, the aim of which is to bring praxis and theory into closer alignment, contributes not only to the ‘humanization’ of theology in general, but also to theology of Consecrated Life in particular. Self-realization, which is constitutive of the actualization of the whole of human existence, and contributes to the collective self-realization of people, cannot be studied as an isolated topic (Rahner 1996:15). This understanding is based on the belief that humanization, which is rooted within a multi-dimensional network of relationships, is an ongoing process throughout the life of the individual. The traditional treatises on the theology of Consecrated Life, in which the idea of self as a strength, is notably absent, are particularly in need of humanization (Chittister 1995:146). This is evident in traditional religious life practices, which called on the female to suppress and spiritualize her being, in particular her femininity. This approach was due to the warped theological anthropology that sustained consecrated life. God became an idea to be intellectually grasped, and not an experience to be encountered. Consecrated Life requires a theology that takes cognizance, not of certain selected aspects of a person’s being, but of its totality.

As this research project clearly indicates self-realization considers the totality of the human being and affirms in particular the goodness of humanity. The African systematic theologian, Augustine Musopole (1994:74-75), points out that “humanization has to do with the inculcation and maintenance of human integrity or humanness".
Since all human beings can contribute to the realization of cosmic harmony, this integrity is not confined to one’s own humanity, but includes other cosmic realities as well. Musopole (1994: 75 &171) argues that this process of humanization, which entails *being human by always becoming human*, not only constitutes the self-realization of all humans, but is also meant to foster “*rightly related individuals and community*”. This process is marked by a number of crucial stages, each of which, in the humanization process, has to do with the realization of greater humanness. He claims that this process shapes individuals in all dimensions, and to understand people, that is to feel and identify with them, is to enter into their process of humanization.

The awareness of being in relationship with God and others brings a consciousness of one’s dignity and integrity that is exclusively human. The reversal of behaviour marks human ‘fallenness’ from humanness is inhumanity, which is characterized by loss of dignity, a life of contradiction and a divided existence. Self-realization implies recapturing human dignity and integrity by reconciling essential humanity to the essence of humanness. This reconciliation implies becoming at ease with one’s own humanity, with that of others, with God, with the cosmic environment, and in particular with the spiritual dimension of reality.

Mature humanhood is defined more by wisdom expressed in the best possible ways of relating, than by legal age, physical development, educational and professional attainment or productive processes. It does not imply using recognition for professional or academic achievements as substitutes for growth in humanness. If this is the case, humanness remains stunted for lack of appropriate nurture. Self-realization joins all forces that work for abundant life. Musopole (1994:183) suggests that one is never too old for this kind of growth towards self-realization; to be human is to manifest a deep desire to grow consistently towards the ultimate goal of humanness.
While it is believed that self-realization brings the humanizing process to innate consciousness, it is, also understood that it is manifested in ontological relationality. This is based on mutual relationships in which each person is able to develop a morally righteous and humanly authentic character. True humanization is thus ontological in the sense that the human state is in constant ‘referredness’ to God. It follows that self-realization is concerned with inherent possibility and actuality, as well as the essence and existence of the human person, as being and becoming reality. It deals with the truth of its being; its goodness and perfection; its beauty and its contingency with finite reality. It reflects on its actual existence and its intelligibility with the modes of concrete existence and behaviour. It considers the substance of the human as being; its nature and personality; its quality and relation as well as causality and purpose. Despite the great variety of insights into the nature of the human state, still more questions, which endorse the view of the human as mystery, remain unanswered.

8.2. A theology of self-realization is based on recognizing the element of mystery.

A theology of self-realization will acknowledge the human being as mystery, a ready-made metaphysical question. The human being as mystery is always in need of understanding, and consequently a systematic study of ontology provides the necessary assistance towards human insight into the mystery of being. It is therefore reasonable to assert that in a fresh effort to develop a theology of human self-realization, the vast body of valuable truths about the human person already discovered and systematized, cannot be ignored. The theology of self-realization draws on established concepts and principles of the various sciences, and in turn the theologian or philosopher deduces supplementary concepts, principles and truths, flowing from former and necessary conclusions.
Since human self-realization forms part of the reality of humanity and what transpires in the depths of human existence, the process intends to summon a person, and in this instance the consecrated woman, not only before the mystery and truth of her own being, but it also brings her into relationship with the incomprehensible mystery of God. Rahner's (1989:16) theology teaches that self-realization occurs when the human and supernatural existential\textsuperscript{16} form a unity. In his view, this unity of reality and its original self-presence are already present in the individual’s free self-realization. Rahner points out that in terms of theological anthropology the human person is formed by the following determinations: it is oriented towards incomprehensible mystery; transcendent; responsible and free; exists in the world and is social by nature. Considering Rahner’s view that these determinations constitute the true personhood of the human being, this thesis proposes that human self-realization is not only fostered by these characteristics, but also accommodated and historically constituted by them. It is assumed that a theology of self-realization would operate from the basic assumption that the human person is mystery and becomes self-realized in relation to the mystery of God. Rahner observes that theological self-realization implies being grasped by mystery. By experiencing her being as mystery, woman comes to realize that her own mystery and the mystery of God, are intrinsically connected. From this it can be concluded that a proposed theology of self-realization has, as its point of departure, the mystery of both God and humanity which are intrinsically connected. While the mystery element of both God and humanity is of vital importance in the drive towards self-realization, the human person is not in a state of perfection, but constantly in need of redemption. Human self-realization takes into account the contribution that the incarnation of Christ made to humanity’s self-realization. It is therefore imperative that self-realization for the Christian assumes christological

\textsuperscript{16} Existential is Rahner's phrase which refers to an element in a person's ontological constitution precisely as human being, an element which is constitutive of the existence of the human person prior to his or her existence.
individual is characteristically an integrated person who has achieved her identity. Christianity contributes to both these characteristics.

8.3. A Christian theology of self-realization is ‘salvational’ and thus ‘christological’.

The sense of salvation is an inherent part of a Christian understanding of self-realization. In order to overcome alienation and personal hostilities which are constant threats to life, humanity is constantly in search of lost harmony. In the Christian sphere salvational self-realization is a move from individualism to community, from dualism to wholeness, from individual to collective identity. In this way, self-realization based on Christian principles, helps the individual, in her efforts to humanize humanity, to define her self as a human person, a process involving both self-liberation and self-determination. Christians actualize self-realization, as a universal characteristic, by maintaining the integrity of their lives in relation to one another and to Christ who is the bearer of humanity.

For the Christian, Jesus, who brought his humanity to full realization, that is to the fullness of being, represents human wholeness. The process of self-realization for Christians is grounded and centred on the person of Christ as well as on his Good News. Since Jesus is the meaning of human self-realization, a Christian’s experience of and relationship with Christ, is fundamental to the whole process of self-realization. Musopole (1994:171) claims that human beings are best described as ‘humanly-divine’, and that Jesus as God-incarnate was also ‘humanly-divine’. However the resurrection of Jesus reveals His full cosmic nature as being also ‘spiritually-divine’. Authentic humanity as manifested in Jesus is also divinity, and to be divinized in Christ is to be authentically humanized; that is the meaning of salvation or inheriting the reign of God. The Christian faith teaches and believes that authentic humanity is ultimately realized in the

existence.
This thesis holds that Christianity is an agent of humanization or salvation. To become self-realized is to accept one's ethnic, cultural and historical identity as a gift from God. The Gospel of Christ calls for a new humanity and a new life in Christ. Self-realization, a process of being by becoming, keeps the individual moving and growing towards full humanness. To achieve authentic humanity, the person in following Christ, grows into a mature and responsible human being. The very heart of Christian discipleship is living and growing towards the "whole measure of the fullness of Christ" that embodies full humanness.

Christians believe that to be like Christ is to have reached the point of maturation. The full reality of self-realization which remains hidden, becomes awareness when Jesus is encountered. The Gospel as the agent, must play an intrinsic role with self-understanding in the process of self-realization. Those who are committed to the self-realization of authentic humanness, endeavour to humanize cultures, societal structures, institutions and the world. Those who accept this responsibility and act on it, are the ones who according to the Gospel teaching, truly inherit the earth and realize the reign of God.

8.4. The theology of self-realization identifies freedom as a fundamental principle.

This research confirms that the achievement of human self-realization occurs in, and is intrinsically related to the responsible use of freedom. Freedom as the basic principle of human action, understood in terms of transcendent self-determination, is realized in history, while freedom is realized in freedom. Freedom expresses individuality, fundamental to the realization of authentic humanity. In itself it does not mean license, but is a product of responsible love. License, the enemy of humanness and freedom, embraces all aspects of human
existence, economic, mental, social, cultural and religious. *Guadium et Spes* (IV.21) teaches that while freedom, understood in terms of transcendent self-realization, is the basic principle of human actions, it is not absolute, nor is it an end in itself. However, a person is only free when freedom is used maturely and consciously for the good of the individual and of humanity as a whole. As Rahner (1969: 123) observes, freedom is understood both as the taking possession of oneself, and being realized through the mediation of other free persons. As is evidenced by divine love and freedom, human beings are constituted and self-realized by their relations to others. In sum it can be concluded that self-realization is relational and is essential for humans wholeness, enabled in love and self-giving.

When people begin to relate incorrectly and unwisely on various levels, political, social, economic or religious, freedom is imperiled. The self as the principle of freedom attains self-realization by being authentic to his or her own being, and by letting conscience be the guide to a responsible use of freedom. Another notable truth affirmed by this research is that conscience, as the ultimate source of human transcendent freedom, is the final and deepest root of morality in which the individual finds self-determination. The Polish philosopher, Andrew Woznicki (1979:34), acknowledges that conscience, which summons the person to authentic selfhood, is the key-point of personal self-completion and transcendence. Because there are *directions* towards diminished as well as fuller humanity, a sound conscience is needed for the correct use of freedom. This directedness is known at the deepest level of conscience where decisions are made and freedom utilized. Conscience, however, is more than a sum of decisions, although each choice is important. Conscience is the integrated and consistent thrust of the individual towards goodness, the dimension of character that decides for or against personal self-realization. This is where the issue of fundamental option, the term given to the basic orientation of a person’s life, comes into play. This basic orientation is either towards or against God, either to seek or to
turn away from good. The daily choices and ways of being, repeated over a lifetime, develop a pattern that reveals the person's fundamental option, whether for or against self-realization. This research testifies to Rahner's anthropological insight that human beings possess a fundamental and deep-rooted freedom, which enables them to determine themselves as persons. It is transcendental, rather than categorical freedom, that enables the individual to accept a loving relationship with God and to reach self-realization. It is on the basis of transcendental freedom that one decides one's fundamental option, which in turn determines personal self-realization. The values and virtues that shape conscience are also significant in the self-realization process. However, people are not constituted with a fixed nature, which must be regulated by unchanging laws, but with an openness and fluidity, which enables them to find new and fulfilling modes of existence. Although this may imply having to live with contradictions, nevertheless self-realization transcends obvious difference and inconsistencies.

The Idealistic philosophers believed that self-realization could be achieved by intellectual insight and reasoning alone. Philosophy long recognized that reason is only one aspect of personhood that reflects on the particularities and limitations of the human context. A person engaging in rational inquiry, does so in a particular cultural and historical setting, where emotions, intuition and imagination play a role. Traditionally philosophers have insisted upon splitting the personality so that human nature may be suppressed and guarded by reason. As a result of this split, both the emotional life and the intellectual faculties of human beings have been crippled. Self-realization is accompanied not only by an act of thinking, but also by the total personality, including the natural expression of emotional and intellectual potentialities. These potentialities including the ability to love, are present in everybody, and become real only to the extent to which they are expressed spontaneously (Dewey 1970:208).
8.5. Love is the dynamic sustaining quality in the theology of self-realization.

Love emerges as the pervasive quality that sustains self-realization. It is a spontaneous activity in free pursuit of the self, and involving the psychology of free will. Activity means the quality that can operate creatively in one's emotional, intellectual and sensuous experiences as well as in one's will. The acceptance of the total personality and the elimination of the split between 'reason' and 'nature' forms part of self-realization. Spontaneous activity is possible only when essential parts of self are not repressed, and the different dimensions of life have reached a fundamental integration. Freethinking, feeling and acting are expressions of self, and moments of spontaneity are often moments of genuine happiness. These could include the fresh and spontaneous perception of a landscape; the dawning of some truth as the result of thinking; a sensuous pleasure that is not stereotyped and the welling up of love for another person. These are rare and uncultivated occurrences. Negative freedom isolates the individual, whose relationship to the world is distant and distrustful, and whose self is weak and constantly threatened. Spontaneous activity is one way in which a person can overcome the terror of aloneness without sacrificing the integrity of the inner self. In spontaneous self-realization the self is reunited with the world, with humanity, nature and with its own self (Dewey 1970:209).

Love, is the spontaneous affirmation of others; the union of the individual with others while preserving the individual self. Love is not the dissolution of the self in another person. The dynamic quality of love lies in the very polarity. It springs from the need to overcome separateness so that it will lead to oneness, without in the process eliminating individuality. What holds true of love holds true of all spontaneous action. It affirms the individuality of the self, and at the same time it unites the self with humanity and nature (Dewey 1970:209). However, spontaneity in relation to love does not imply
slavish adherence to all feelings and emotions. The process towards human wholeness is an integrated one and involves the interplay of reason, emotion and reflection (Hogan 2000:147).

Self-realization needs reflection which takes place in space and time. Prayer and religious experience form an essential part of the transcendental realization of love. Love is engendered by the person’s encounter with God, and it is precisely in the transcendental fulfilment of love that the human person experiences the act of self-realization.

Because humanness is relational, relatedness serves as a necessary condition for human self-realization. Duffy (1993:226) emphasizes that in human love both the lover and the beloved reach authentic self-realization through inter-relationship. He reiterates Rahner’s statement, that human love is the opening up and the ecstatic giving of oneself to the other. While contemporary psychological theories and practices testify to the complexities of emotional life, all would agree on the necessity of the affective dimension in human growth. This thesis confirms that love and emotional affectivity do have an essential role in the activity of self-realization, and it suggests that human wholeness will be seriously flawed if the contribution of love and emotional affectivity is not prized. Clearly, it is important for the purposes of self-realization that individuals engage critically with the emotional side of their nature. Just as rational and intellectual capacities can be impaired, so too can one’s emotional life be limited in significant ways (Hogan 2000:147). The journey towards human wholeness requires responsible loving and relating. Love shapes and evaluates relations; relating, contextualizing and giving dynamism to relationships. Neither love nor relating should be neglected, nor should they be considered trivial or peripheral in human growth.
8.6. The theology of self-realization is based on wholeness of Being.

It is evident from this research that there is no a single definition that covers all aspects of self-realization. However, the following is a comprehensive contribution towards the formulation of a working definition of self-realization: it is the complete authentication of the fullness or wholeness of the Essence of Being. This encompasses aspects of the neuro-biological, psychological, philosophical, biblical-mystical and theological contributions towards an understanding of self-realization. "Wholeness of the Essence of Being" is the one single, indispensable element, which with remarkable consistency, pervades the descriptions of most scientific approaches to the human realization of self.

8.6.1. The fullness of Being.

Almaas (1996:397) describes the fullness of Being as "Being in its totality and completeness, including all its dimensions and aspects". *Being* is inherently a unit, a non-dual presence that contains no levels, but can manifest itself in levels and dimensions experienced as true and objective in their own sphere of experience (Almaas 1996:399). Almaas (1996:399-400) argues that *Being* is realized in phases, and these appear as the different dimensions of *Being* are realized. As each level or dimension becomes self-realized the person experiences his/her developing identity and the emerging and corresponding phenomenological properties.

The self-realization of the individual is an achievement, it is not a given. However an achievement involves actualizing one's own potentialities in the process of becoming truly human. As each person is unique there can be no one, fixed pattern, although as earlier mentioned, there are directions towards both fuller and diminished humanity. At the deepest level of each individual, the natural voice of conscience knows and provides the desired directedness. The truth of
each person is a creative articulation in varying degrees of rightness of her individuality within the enduring reality of the self. Often, however, the individual is dependent on and restricted by her own experience, and does not develop the qualities and characteristics that would allow her to be known, independently of her experience. The self-realization of any person regardless of gender, culture or background, is part of the complete self-realization of humanity, and the entire process relies on an inclusive theological anthropology that fosters the value and wholeness of being.

It is apparent that woman’s self-realization requires a dynamic integration of particular conditions and universal features that determine being female, and need to be articulated in a manner that is appropriate to her own self. Because womanhood is the articulation of being, woman can only be self-creative by means of her intrinsic being. Although there is often a marked discrepancy between a person’s inward life and its outward expression, only when the two are integrated does womanhood become an appropriate medium for self-expression.

According to Almaas (1996:401), woman’s self-identity is basic to self-realization, since identity is what situates individual awareness in the dimension of experience, and its absence may be manifested as a sense of unreality. He claims that self-realization challenges not only the self-identity structure of the woman, but also all structures that support and relate to it. The most significant of these is the self-entity structure which supports the identity structure in many ways. The true nature, the core of the woman’s identity is God Image, and this she needs to experience in her psyche. As already established, the self of the woman, similar to that of a male, is a God-Image (Clift 1994:71). To call the self a God-image is to suggest that the self and the God of theologians, the metaphysical God, share the same attributes. As has been noted in chapter two, the self in Jung’s terms is also the psychic totality of an individual, and in Christianity, Christ is a symbol of the
self. The archetype of the self is encountered in symbols of totality and wholeness. The self as symbol include a union of opposites male and female, dark and light, good and evil.

Woman, experiencing her being or dimensions of her being, is able to experience her true identity, and this opens the path to individuation, which gives impetus towards wholeness or completion. She comes to appreciate herself as authentic being, the essence and true nature of her real self. The whole task of individuation involves the integration of opposites, and also aspects of the unconscious into consciousness. Being, which encompasses the body, feelings, thoughts, actions, sounds, sights and meaning to be, is the nature, the essence, and substance of self. In overcoming the split towards the experience of wholeness, it takes the form of healing, religious experience and the union of opposites. Almas' (1996:408) describes being as that which is indivisible unity, oneness, which woman comes to realize and experience not only as her true nature, but also as the nature of everything, including her relationship with the rest of creation which also has being.

A theology of self-realization that penetrates the life and consciousness of the woman assists in formulating and demonstrating the feminine truths of her inner experience. Self-realization utilizes feminine symbols that 'grasp the woman in her depth' as a religious experience (Clift 1994:96). As she comes to experience her essential identity with the specific understanding that is connected to the complete realization of pure being, she becomes aware of the purification that it involves. A theology of self-realization challenges woman to deal with and transcend the distorted state of her female ego-self, constructed since childhood by the construed perceptions of society, culture, church and history. Self-realization urges the woman to challenge the unappraised state of the ego-self, and to search for the absolute truth of being. Self-realization which occurs in the depth of being, deals with the authentic reality of woman, the mystery of Being.
To experiences the essence of *being* is like looking into the very essence of God (Almaas 1996:422). This experience brings insight as to the inherent goodness of what it means to be a woman, created in the image of God, and at the same time it annihilates the false cultural, social, economic and ecclesial misperceptions about woman.

While feminist theology challenges woman to experience herself as equal to males; in self-realization she is called to *fullness of being*. Fullness of being is gender-free, and woman in particular is challenged to transcend her search for equality by experiencing her fullness as being in unity with all other beings, regardless of their nature or standing. While she is called to transcend the self that has been created in and by history, the emerging self-realization ontology, which takes cognizance of feminist wisdom, emphasizes the importance for every creature. The theology of self-realization implies therefore that the woman comes into an authentic developed sense of self, and through this transcends culturally, socially, economically and religiously induced habits of self-denigration.

8.7. Self-realization towards the wholeness of consecrated women.

A discussion in Chapter Two, deals with Jung’s teaching that God calls each person to recognize her own personal wholeness, which is different from that of any other person. For this reason a theology of self-realization cannot be prescriptive as each individual pursues her own destined road to wholeness. This was also the case with Jesus, whose becoming included being the historical Jesus, and the resurrected Christ. In the whole process of individuation or self-realization, vowing obedience to the ‘will of God’ is decisive for consecrated religious woman. Wholeness lies in developing a dialogue between the self, the ‘God-image’ in woman, and the ego, the centre of conscious willing and striving (Clift 1994:105). Jungian psychology reminds all Christians who live in this personal relationship with God,
that the freeing experience of following God's will comes from submitting to the will of life.

If self-realization is to bring the consecrated woman to a meaningful existence she must experience the depth of her Being. The danger of not knowing her real self could be that she would find herself isolated. Hence the advantage of an experience of love between the self and another. Chaste celibate love, the constituent part of consecrated woman's very being, enables her to participate in the essence of God and assists her in appreciating her own human dignity. Love that constitutes the natural reality of life and is fundamental to Christian experience, ought to be for the consecrated woman, a creating, healing factor; an expression of complete acceptance, and a means to overcome polarities. Self-realization is promoted by the authentic ability to love the self, to experience self-acceptance, an approach rarely encouraged in the traditional spiritualities of consecrated life. Mechanisms believed to promote personal holiness emphasized by traditional spirituality, included deprivation, self-denial, self-chastisement, self-discipline and mortification of the body. A contemporary theology of self-realization appeals for a humane spirituality intent on nurturing the individual's total being.

In the case of the consecrated woman self-realization does not exclude the nurturing, mothering capacity. Without exercising the faculty of self-realization she will be barren, since all females are sustainers and bearers of life. Factors like maternal self-consciousness and compassion, love, creativity, nurturing and warmth, unbounded compassion, concern for justice, protection, healing and liberation constitute essential aspects of feminine self-realization. However maternal creativity and nurturing are not confined to those who has given birth to a child. Mothering, for a consecrated religious, does not necessarily imply the pre-structured pattern arising from the relationship of childhood. It is rather a mature realization of mutuality with God, apparent in human responsibility, and
cooperation with God's transforming design for the salvation of the world.

Self-realization is taking place when one first experiences the depth of Being, and at this point the consecrated woman begins to realize her own poverty as well. What becomes apparent when she starts to encounter the depth of her Being is that she no longer identifies with the ego-self. The ego-self is fundamentally poor, and holding on to any form of attachments would mean resisting awareness of the poverty of a denuded ego-self. To a certain extent self-realization implies letting go of the importance of having a position, recognition, the fruit of work, accomplishments, knowledge, and even a state of development. Almaas (1996:418) says that this experience of letting go of the intrinsic condition of the ego-self, often activates deep grief, a sense of loss, sadness and emptiness. In the Catholic tradition this state of poverty is called 'mystical poverty', and is identified with the ego-self becoming denuded of its own representations and increasingly transparent to the presentations of Being. With this comes a new sense of emptiness, which is the true poverty of the real sense of self. This profound sense of inner void and spaciousness is identical to the absolute depth of Being. What occurs, says Almaas (1996:419), is a transformation of narcissism that creates space for the true self to be realized at the depth of Being. By surrendering all positions and concepts of the self the woman discovers the absolute depth of her true nature.

The consecrated religious is assisted towards self-realization by participating in and availing of the conventual/monastic structures that provide opportunity for silent, nonverbal encounter with the infinite mystery which constitutes the enabling condition for any experience of self. Self-realization facilitates the claiming of oneself in freedom, finding a new way to love the self and others, and affirming oneself in trustful acceptance. This form of self-relation necessitates living through a changing history of the God experience.
8.8. Conclusion

Contemporary studies claim that genuine personhood is realized when women transcend all that prevents self-realization towards mature selfhood. It is also essential that the self-limitations created by traditional and contemporary social, biological, theological and philosophical suppositions are transcended. The aim of a doctrine of self-realization is to assist women to know and break-through to their own strength and creative power. It seeks to enable them to experience the reality of God, which prepares the way to a respectful appreciation of their own human dignity, as well as of their self-giving love and self-affirmation. This places them in a position to reform the practices, religious or secular, that sustain the unrealized potential of women.

Self-realization is not predominantly an intellectual endeavour. On the contrary, since it dictates woman's authentic character, it is fundamentally experiential. Self-realization transcends prejudices and all unwarranted beliefs and practices that bar women from imaging God. Their realization of self is inclusive, and comes as a transforming grace for society and church. Consequently all emancipatory praxis is of benefit to all people and to creation in general. Self-realization prizes women's authentic humanity, while at the same time gracefully uncovering that which violates the actualization of their personhood. It considers woman's theological identity, as a person made in the Image and Likeness of God, who experiences being redeemed by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. It also deals with the tragedy of sin, death and the mystery of grace (Johnson 1995:8). In one sense self-realization allows women to affirm themselves as self-transcending persons, broken by sin, and yet renewed and redeemed by grace.

While self-realization builds on and takes cognizance of feminist theological principles, it is inclusive and calls on the strengths of both
women and men alike, seeking the inner transformation of all. It is a positive doctrine in that it deconstructs old themes and questionable mind-sets, so as to contribute to a new vision of the full personhood of all. The intention behind this reconstruction is to ensure that full humanity is attributed to both women and men. Whatever denies, diminishes or distorts the fullness of humanity, counteracts self-realization. While self-realization thrives in an environment that promotes true humanity, unwholesome structures and distorted symbolic systems undermine and stunt all positive growth.

A theology of self-realization makes provision for women to exercise their own self-definition in the renewed ownership of the female self as God's good gift. The capacity of self-realization proves that human beings are dynamically orientated towards fathomless mystery. It capitalizes on an increasing awareness of human openness to infinite mystery, as the source, support and goal of their existence. Individual self-realization rests on an awareness of the dynamic orientation of the person towards God, and on the experience of one's own depth and openness to the holy mystery of God.

Although the theology of self-realization is intrinsically positive, it addresses the negative traditional theology and interpretations of scripture which devalue woman, and which has become internalized. To counteract this negative approach, the theology of the self-realization of women seeks to constitute a new experience of God as beneficent towards the promising 'new' self. Self-realization brings awareness of the dynamic reaching out to the mystery of God in whose being every person participates. Appropriate language, female metaphor and innovative symbol that is graceful, powerful and necessary, emerge from the encounter with the holy mystery. For a theology of the self-realization of woman, a new, self-naming salvation-language must be created which includes all of humankind in relation to divine mystery. In this sense women are perceived as full participants in the mystery of redemption.
Self-realization transcends the dualistic anthropology that separates body from soul, or man from woman. It goes beyond clamouring for an egalitarian anthropology which is limited and self-confining. It admits to self-transcendence based on beliefs that the human person is the embodiment of God. Self-realization appeals to the truth that the human person shares in God’s nature and thus possesses the inner capacity to become self-realized. Self-realization advocates the restoration of a dialectic of opposites. It transcends both the dichotomization of humanity and dualistic anthropology, and makes way for participation in the *Imago Dei*. From a pragmatic perspective this leads to reverence for women, to the moral imperative not to deface the living image of God, but to promote it responsibly through transformative praxis. For the Christian, self-realization is Christological and consequently women are Christomorphic, transcending the physical. Those who live in Christ are icons of Christ and through the power of the Spirit “all of us are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18).

A self-realized woman respects her humanness and strives to overcome all narcissistic alienations. Various human situations provide a self-realization context: the point of ultimate integration of the self into final reality, the absolute nature of *Being*. Since the ultimate identity of the person forms part of each one’s spiritual journey, self-realization cannot ignore the realization of the Absolute. Almaas (1996:441) confirms that the central process of spiritual development is self-realization, which means the realization of one’s *Essential Identity*. In Christianity this is seen as the abiding *stillpoint* at the centre of *Being*. God-within-us is the stillpoint, and while the individual self is not God, the stillpoint functions as the ontological ground, the true centre and identity of the self. The genuine structures of consecrated life such as contemplation, prayer and service, supports the religious to arrive at this spiritual reality, the *stillpoint*, reaching which is to discover the true self filled with her
true nature, the \textit{essential presence}, which is inseparable of its \textit{essence}, namely God.
CHAPTER NINE

CONCRETE PROPOSALS TOWARDS MAKING SELF-REALIZATION A PRACTICAL REALITY.

9.1. Introduction

The challenge in this section is to offer some practical, concrete proposals as to how self-realization, itself an abstract concept, can be studied and applied in the life of the individual. Since the theory claims to make human self-realization a real, valuable human goal attainable by most people, it is necessary to give concrete expression to ways in which this can be achieved. While self-realization is about both wholeness and salvation, the personal search for meaning is rarely recognized as the search for salvation. The Church as the ‘purveyor’ of salvation should create the means whereby self-realization is translated into an experiential reality. However tradition and church practices often place restrictions and prohibitions that prove a stumbling block to personal Christian growth. What follows are a few concrete suggestions that may assist in creating a new meaning and a greater awareness of the need for full human living, including the normal concerns of life, reflected in truth, love, and dignity.

9.2. “Grassroots-theological-reflection” groups that function therapeutically.

A theology that functions therapeutically is inclusive, and enables women and men to flourish by affirming and legitimizing their full ministry in the church (Wolski Conn 1995:89). Such a theology, as it unravels the distortions created by certain interpretations of biblical texts, will determine whether there are in revelation, connections between feminist goals and human self-realization that prevent the
woman from valuing and affirming herself as an authentic image of God. Particularly in the Roman Catholic Church, the denial and denigration of the ability and worth of womankind has led to unresolved developmental issues in the area of full leadership and ministry.

Small "grassroots-theological-reflection" groups, should be set up with the express purpose of exploring, formulating and teaching an appropriate theology of self-realization. Since one of the goals of this study would be therapeutic, this would assist and empower people to understand their own full human potential, and enable them to reach a deeper ecclesial maturity. Catholic Christianity, which sustains orthodoxy, that is a continuity with the founding experience, and which has lost women and young people in the historical unfolding of tradition, would be enabled by these grassroots theological groups, to re-establish a tradition that locates woman, firmly and visibly in her own right, as a full human being. In this manner, self-realization for all would become a concrete and essential part of Christian theological teaching, promoted by the Church as essential to realization of the self of all of its members. Rahner (1981:12) acknowledges that the "Church today - this may (and must, if the preacher is to be credible) be said without prejudice - is a burden: a burden which may not be thrown off, since that would be fatal in the long run to Christian faith...". It is clear, as Rahner has pointed out, that to carry out such a project would not be without difficulties. While human self-realization is indeed facilitated by an ecclesial spirituality, there is no need to disguise either the difficulties encountered or the limitations of such a spirituality. It is therefore essential that ordinary lay groups be empowered to contemplate the struggles of a church still coming into being, and help to create an attitudinal environment where the ministerial gifts of all will find a generous reception. Authentic ecclesial spirituality, which involves commitment to change and renewal, is not the exclusive responsibility of the hierarchy; lay groups within the Church also have a vital role to play in the development
and formulation of theological insights. However the hostile attitudes towards change which would ensure the involvement of the whole Church in the process of transformation, could obstruct movements which would allow for the involvement of the laity and human sciences in the search for and formulation of theological truths. Nevertheless, since self-realization refers to the totality of human life energized by an inner drive for self-transcendence, it is envisaged that these "grassroots-theological-reflection" groups will create space to search freely for truth and ecclesial communion rather than furthering the attitude of ecclesial self-maintenance.

9.2.1. Critical reflection groups among vowed religious.

For the purposes of self-realization, communities of vowed religious, more specifically women, within the church, are also called to address prophetically and creatively the alienation felt by some of their members regarding their possible role as priests in sacramental ministry, which in the Roman Catholic Church is the prerogative of men only. Bearing in mind that many people who are or were ordained, may not necessarily be self-realized, so too can it be concluded that personal self-realization does not rely on the sacrament of ordination. Nevertheless, exclusion from ordination has for some women, become a critical issue, perceived as an oppressive and discriminatory practice. As this is currently a burning issue in the Church it should be addressed. Both consecrated men and women can assume theological leadership in seeking constructive ways to examine the exclusiveness of gender-related ministries, and devise new and inclusive liturgical rituals and symbols which transmit the values of consecrated life, and its specific charisms, to the next generation. For example, Dominicans whose charism it is to preach the Word of God, should form preaching groups and avail of opportunities to preach in appropriate settings. Since tensions around ‘men-women’ ministry relationships in the Catholic Church constitute some of the most critical and destructive today, it is deemed essential
for self-realization purposes that the tension between the dictates of ecclesiology and the practical needs of ministry, find creative solutions. While people are aware of the defects and shortcomings of the Church, it is better to focus on a healthy sense of church, rather than on power struggles, shortcomings and weaknesses. If the Church is meant to be an instrument that facilitates personal self-realization, it is critical that it create structures and liturgical experiences of God that involves the whole person. The prophetic consciousness of those who live the vowed life, ought to challenge the Church to create such pathways in order to facilitate growth into holistic maturity and self-realization. Contemplative insights into gospel living assist both men and women in their continuing search for contemporary expressions of the special charism that consecrated life holds in the Church.

9.3. Formation programmes that reflect consecrated vowed life with prophetic consciousness.

While the vows of poverty, celibacy and obedience, central to consecrated life, still signify a special vocation in the Church, they are currently experienced by many as counter-cultural and as negative symbols. The understanding of the vows has shifted, and to rediscover and make sense of their meaning, in part modifies human consciousness in the context of world consciousness. Formation programmes for both church seminaries and religious novitiates need reconsideration and reformulation if vowed consecrated and celibate clerical lives are to have any lasting significance in the Church. This thesis proposes the creation of formation programmes which are not only receptive to self-realization, but at the same time are conceptually and concretely aware of the imperfections of modern society. The unqualified perception that the consecrated, vowed life is a 'state of perfection' in a deficient world, has to be studied critically and modified. This perception imposes a hidden constraint that is often causes stress and is not conducive to natural living out of the process of self-realization.
In the face of present-day culture, fidelity to relationships is experienced very differently, and this situation of constant change and insecurity forms part of the context of living the vows. As Merkle (1992:95) says: "to live the vows today is to commit oneself to adapt to new circumstances and to be willing to learn in a state of life which is in transition itself". The commitment of the vows brings consecrated men and women into close contact with the hurts of a changing society. While their vocation still calls consecrated people apart, it also calls on them to step into the waters of the local and global church and there reveal the prophetic nature of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. To do this would imply that the candidates for consecrated life should possess a sense of identity, psychological and social stability, as well as 'everyday wisdom'. The formation of young priests and religious can no longer be separated from their respective cultures, and interaction with society should be a constant determining factor. Consecrated men and woman may and should encounter many things that are inconsistent with the vows, and should therefore be challenged to name these inconsistencies. Knowledge of the vows is not enough; they must be put into practice. It is only by living the vows that their content and meaning unfold. Living the vows is counter-cultural in that they reflect the values relevant for all people serious about achieving self-realization that is built on meaningful relationships.

9.4. Church liturgies to engender inclusive experiences of transcedence.

Rahner claims that in our experiences of transcendence, the human person meets God as the holy mystery. If meeting God as mystery and the experience of transcendence form an intrinsic part of the self-realization of each individual, this thesis advocates that structures be set up that will ensure that such experiences will be made more
comprehensible to, and within the reach of all. Rahner (1996:21-22) says:

“If transcendence is not something which we practice on the side as a
metaphysical luxury of our intellectual existence, but if this transcendence
is rather the plainest, most obvious and most necessary condition of
possibility for all spiritual understanding and comprehension, then the holy
mystery really is the one thing that is self-evident, the one thing which is
grounded in itself even from our point of view. For all other understanding,
however clear it might appear, is grounded in this transcendence. All clear
understanding is grounded in the darkness of God”.

Liturgy is understood as a symbolic expression of our fundamental
acceptance, and consequently worship is an experience of
interpersonal communion with the God as holy mystery. The typical
experiences of worshipping communities appear to fall short of the
required aspirations to self-realization. As most liturgies provide some
measure of consolation, if only through familiarity and routine.
Rahner (1983:148) maintains that worship would only become an
explicit of God if our daily lives testify to an explicit experience of God.
For this we need direction to God more than education about God.
The experience of Church liturgy should enable the participant to
recognize God in the material of normal life where God is also present.
However, if liturgies are exclusive, and insensitive to feminine
expressions of openness, gentleness and receptivity, this is not likely
to happen. The liturgy of the world and church liturgy ought to be in a
synchronized relationship so as to facilitate the development of the
spiritual self. Just as inculturation has become a sensitive reality
within the Catholic Church in Africa, so too should the feminist
hermeneutic become a pervasive motive in liturgical celebrations.
Ingrained cultural mind-sets that proscribe feminine symbols, need to
be distilled by liturgical rites that facilitate transcendent pathways
towards self-realization. Critical liturgical committees in local parishes
and dioceses could assume responsibility for this task.
9.5. Theological forums in the creation of an anthropological hermeneutic towards self-realization.

A new theological language that presumes a hermeneutical attitude towards self-realization could be explored by *theological forums*, which form part of lay, religious and clerical formation programmes. These should question theological traditions in the light of contemporary insights and world-views. Their debate on the proper Christian attitude towards the means of self-realization could draw on various traditional biblical and theological analogues. While biblical culture does not always support the self-realization of woman, neither does the philosophical analogue of the self-realization process give total support to a specific dualistic understanding of humanity. However, the psychological analogue, which over the decades has reflected the human consciousness to itself, and raised issues of value and of the ultimate, prompts questions of self-realization. In addition the contemporary cultural analogue must ask questions relating to human self-realization, since culture manifests a shared understanding of the human person. In addition this study suggests that contemporary cultural structures of the Church be addressed, and new emerging theological truths about the woman have a significant impact on the reconstruction of practices and ideologies which will support self-realization. In this regard a new theological language, while hermeneutically focused on human self-realization, would demand of the modern theologian a sensitivity to the influence and contribution of cultures to a better understanding of the process of self-realization. The neuro-theological studies concerning the ways in which the person is formed to experience God, is a relatively new scientific field with much untapped potential for further research. The fact that the self is connected not only to the brain, but also to the totality of the nervous system, and the suggested idea that the limbic system may well be the seat of the self as well as a transmitter to God, is a distinctive question of further exploration.
9.5. Conclusion.

In theological terms, the basic question posed by this study on self-realization is as follows: In relation to the actualization of God's distinctive goodness in all created things, how is the human person to actualize the purpose and meaning of its own existence? The actualization of God, or God's Self-communication is revelatory in the lives of all, and consequently human self-realization participates in God's holiness. The literature on theology and self-realization raises many more questions than it answers, hence the fact that this thesis does not offer a definitive theology, but rather a plausible framework for further investigation. It encourages ongoing systematic reflection on the relation between theology and self-realization either on a theoretical level or in terms of church practice. Often the church, in a practical sense, disclaims the ability to engage in the task of self-realization and leaves it entirely to the individual. Questions could be raised about the connection between a specific model of church and the personal self-realizational interests of the individual. Those who hold a more hierarchical, authoritative or institutional model of church would more than likely abide by an individualistic attitude to self-realization. Those who hold a local community view of the church will show a greater interest in building up the individual through personal interaction and dialogue. To engage in theological exploration of the means of self-realization implies interrogating present church and cultural attitudes and practices as well as those ecclesiastical structures that undermine self-realization.
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<td>A.</td>
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