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Religious metaphors and symbols in a psychiatric setting[1]

ABSTRACT

Within the Protestant tradition, the researchers examine the God-concepts of anxious subjects in a multi-disciplinary, psychiatric setting. (Anxiety is defined by the DSM-3-R.) They discuss the pastoral insights obtained from metaphorical and relational theology as well as the paradigm theory, and explore the connection between God-concepts and general cognitive structures. These structures were described by A T Beck. The God-concepts used in this study are the models of God as described by Sally McFague in *Models of God: Theology for an ecological, nuclear age* (1987). A relationship between the cognitive structures of anxious people and their God-concepts is identified. The therapeutic role of the pastor is redefined and discussed after this finding.

1. A STUDY OF SYMBOLS AND GOD-IMAGES IN PASTORAL CARE TO PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM ANXIETY

In this study, symbols are viewed from a specific perspective: relational belief in a psychiatric setting (anxiety). This study examines various theories on religious metaphors and symbols (called models). These theories are then tested in a clinical setting. The setting was introduced to the researchers by a psychiatrist who mentioned that he found that anxious persons "used God" in order to gain some control over their lives. Anxiety is a common illness in modern humanity, and has been labelled ". . . a typical human problem . . . the official emotion of our age" (Perry 1983:73). In society's fast pace of life today, anxiety manifests in diverse ways: panic, phobias, compulsive behaviour, etcetera.

After Carl Jung (1964:87, 106) had explored man's symbols as a universal phenomenon, he wrote that in our time there are millions of people who have lost faith in any kind of religion. While life runs smoothly without religion, the loss remains virtually unnoticed. But when they are exposed to severe suffering, enduring is another matter. Then people begin to seek a way out and to reflect on the meaning of life and its bewildering and painful experiences. Paul Zuidgeest (1985:337) echoes Jung as he states that "... personal symbols are interesting from another point of view. In a situation of crisis, people communicate with themselves and with others by means of symbols. Especially when fright is concerned, experiences are expressed in symbols, figures or metaphors".

1. This paper is based on research done during the MTh in Clinical Pastoral Care at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. The term "pastoral" refers to caring, guiding, sustaining, healing, nurturing and reconciling. The context of such care is the redemptive work of Christ. The term "clinical" is used as an indication of a specific healing and therapeutic environment which calls for professional care of the patient. The clinical context, therefore, functions as a basic environment for training in pastoral care. Training under supervision focuses on the following: crisis counselling, the relevance of people's faith in dealing with life issues and existential problems as well as the development of communication skills in pastoral care.

Symbols can be described as a form of representation. "A word or an image is symbolic when it implies more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider 'unconscious' aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained" (Jung 1964:4). Symbols are thus being used by people to find purpose and meaning in different situations. It is, therefore, not uncommon for Christians to call on God during times of crisis to communicate meaning to themselves and others. Pastors and caregivers in various settings have experienced this phenomenon in many ways since, historically, God has been invoked to explain both positive and negative events (Lalljee, Brown & Hilton 1990:168). Exploring with a person the meaning of life and death, and the presence/absence of God during a crisis or within that person's life, is an integral part of pastoral care and counselling; hence the challenge to pastoral care to assess the impact of God-images on parishioners' reactions and coping skills during a crisis.

2. THE DYNAMICS OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

Within theology many theologians have described the topic of anxiety from different perspectives (ie Kierkegaard 1980; Heidegger 1949; Tillich 1962). In this study anxiety and panic disorders are viewed as mental disorders, as defined by the *Diagnostic and statistical manual for mental disorders* (1987^3:237-253). The following are seen as part of the family of anxiety and panic disorders: general anxiety disorder, panic disorder with agoraphobia, social and general phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress syndrome.

To further understand the dynamics of anxiety disorders, the cognitive approach to a therapeutic approach was identified by A T Beck, R Laude and M Bohnert (1985:289-290). As cognitive psychologists, Beck *et al* identified cognitive structures (schemes) that seem to be inherent in people suffering from anxiety. Each cognitive scheme has common thought structures. In summary, Beck identified three schemes: that of acceptance, of efficiency, and of control. Customary thoughts within each scheme may be: I'm nobody, except if I receive love; I must always satisfy other people; I cannot be left alone; I am that which I have attained; I must control myself; I am either completely in control or I have no control; etcetera. Motives that govern these thoughts may be the need for acceptance, efficiency or control.

Another reason for choosing anxiety as the research topic for this study, is that the general nature of anxiety would not make it an uncommon phenomenon for pastors and caregivers in various therapeutic settings. As a disorder it has a great influence on a person's life. The universality of anxiety may be a cause for concern for pastors as, according to a recent study, the clergy's knowledge of psychopathology can be described as somewhat "dubious". When studying the knowledge of psychopathology of Catholic priests, Protestant pastors and Jewish rabbis in the United States of America, Domino (1990:36) found that generally ". . . clergy are not able to recognize signs of psychopathology . . . and therefore do not make referrals". Anxiety has truly changed from a theological, existential and even medical phenomenon, to a sociological phenomenon. Theology and pastoral care, in particular, may have to look anew to this "old partner". By writing this article, the authors attempt to show the interplay between psychology/psychiatry and pastoral care/theology.

This venture is a pilot study that aims to enhance the dialogue between psychology and religion. A review of the relationship between God-concepts and mental health results in diverse findings. The fact that the scientific study of this relationship is so controversial,

may have played a prominent role in limiting the amount of research between the role of psychology and religion. This controversial relationship also applies to anxiety disorders. According to Gartner, Larson and Allen (1991:11) contradictions in results (in research on the relationship between religion and psychopathology) continue in studies that manifest anxiety. They also found a growing literature regarding one particular form of anxiety: anxiety connected with mortality (death and dying). The connection between psychopathology and anxiety is still mostly unchartered terrain for pastoral care and little empirical research has been done from that perspective.

3. RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

By means of statistics ($p = < 0.05$) the patients who participated in this study showed that they answer to the criteria of an anxiety disorder (as defined by the DSM-R-3) after the following tests were administered to them: a) Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale; b) Sheehan Phobic Rating Scale; c) The Panic Inventory; d) Yale Brown Obsessive Compulsive Rating Scale, and e) the SCID RO. All were part of a study at a mental health institution (Stikland Psychiatric Hospital, Cape Town, South Africa), where these tests were administered.

The patients were asked to complete a questionnaire of 51 questions which was drafted under the supervision of the Human Research Council of South Africa. There was one "open" question and 50 Likert-type questions that covered four models of God. Although a small number of respondents were used, this study was conducted according to the guidelines set by methodological research: a predefined research domain, fixed goals, qualitative in nature, self-initialized explorative research and aimed at generating hypotheses.

4. GOD-IMAGES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF METAPHORIC THEOLOGY

Because of the dominant role of God-images in the research, the researchers were confronted with the notion of God as one of the key theological issues. The latter surfaces because of the assumption that in pastoral care to parishioners suffering from anxiety disorders, their perception of God could play a decisive role. However, the researchers realized that the concept "God" is virtually undefinable. Thus, the researchers found it impossible to give a working definition for this "theological" problem. A reason for this is that God cannot be "trapped" within a certain definition or specific dogma. "God is a sound, evoking our deepest intuitions of truth, reality, beauty and goodness. It is a generic concept, rather than a proper name" (Van der Merwe 1988:210).

Furthermore, it is difficult, if not impossible, to define "God" outside the perspective of a personal relationship and experience of faith. To define God, metaphorical language has been used; this opens an infinite number of possibilities, thus constituting an ever-changing concept. Although this may be a fact, "it is clear that our statements of God must indirectly be made through our experience of the world and of humanity . . ." (Van Huyssteen 1989:109). Our assertion about God may be tested by asking whether it provides us with optimal (or maximal) meaning in the present reality. Any meaningful understanding of God should integrate human experiences with meaning and purpose. Thus, in the interplay between God and humankind, a relational paradigm (founded on a relationship) has been set.

In trying to understand God in terms of a relational paradigm, three important concepts increase understanding: paradigm, metaphor and model.

4.1 Paradigm

A paradigm can be seen as a frame of reference (or a tradition of research) founded on clear-cut (stagnant) and implicitly predefined premises (Van Huyssteen 1989:49). In the Reformed tradition the concepts of *sola gratia*, *sola scriptura* or *sola fide* operate as such paradigms. Although religious paradigms may be communal, paradigms are, in essence, personal in nature. Every person operates with an individual paradigm, and this is important to realize within a therapeutic setting, as the pastor and the person in therapy may have diverse and often even contradicting paradigms.

Although the concept of paradigms comes from the natural sciences, it is not completely alien to the Christian religion and Christian spirituality. Various paradigms can be found within the history of Christianity. Some of these were identified by Hans Küng, as quoted by Bosch (1991:181): a) the apocalyptic paradigm of early Christianity; b) the Hellenistic paradigm of the patriarchal period; c) the medieval Roman-Catholic paradigm; d) the paradigm of the Reformation; e) the modern enlightenment paradigm, and f) the growing ecumenical paradigm. Each of these paradigms gave specific meaning to religious language and religious understanding, creating symbols (and also truth) by doing so.

The importance of paradigms in science was shown by scholars like Max Planck, Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr and Thomas S Kuhn. They helped to form the understanding that paradigms are being used to establish knowledge (Johnson 1983:29; Van Huyssteen 1989:49). The realization that the essence of knowledge is being formed by a specific paradigm eliminates the idea of having pure, unaffected and uncontaminated knowledge, or truth that can be described as being of an "absolute" nature. Various paradigms are comprehensive of various truths. The theological and personal paradigm of a person or community determines the truth for that person or community. It even shapes the character of a parishioner's faith. Therefore, it becomes important not just to understand a person's symbols, but also the system that surrounds that person and which played a significant role in the formation of his/her identity.

Being conscious of the importance of paradigms establishes an awareness of religious language, as it is also used within a specific paradigm and forms religious symbols. Religious language is primarily metaphorical in nature (Van Huyssteen 1989:126) and therefore most religious symbols can be seen as metaphors (eg God as Father is both a metaphor and a symbol). Metaphors are words with a familiar meaning that describe an unknown or lesser known entity/reality. In a religious paradigm a person would use words common to reality, like "Father" and "Mother" to describe God, the "unknown" Reality. For the caregiver, knowledge about paradigms is thus supported by knowledge about metaphors and how they function within a faith relationship. (By definition, symbols and metaphors are closely linked, and they are thus used as synonyms in this research.)

4.2 Metaphor and model

The emphasis on religious language and its metaphorical nature is being underlined by contemporary metaphorical theology. Metaphorical theology examines the metaphorical nature and function of theological language. It also explores the methodological requirements and possibilities of a theological discourse.

As stated, *metaphors* (as a figure of speech) are being used to describe God's relationship with the physical reality and humanity. Metaphors are closely linked to paradigms by definition: "Thinking metaphorically means spotting a thread of similarity between two dissimilar objects, events or whatever, the one of which is better known than the other, and using the better known as a way of speaking about the lesser" (McFague 1982:15). Thus we

can see the ordinary which we experience daily in a novel and unusual way. The "known" is being transformed by the brief look at the "unknown". In doing so, metaphors, like paradigms, establish meaning.

Models, through their "staying power" (Nouwen 1993:80), portray the image of God as a Being who can be experienced via different metaphors. We use these metaphors in our traditions, interpreting the Scriptures, and in our subjective meditations. Models have the tendency to seem fixed and secure, resisting any change. This is enhanced by the fact that a person makes a cognitive, affective and conative (component of the will) commitment to a model (Macquarrie 1967:1954). Models often are reflected in different church dogmas with the danger of becoming fixed ideas or confessions. Albeit, models are tentative and exposed to continuous change. The fact that a person makes an affective (emotional) commitment to a model may play an important role in understanding what meaning and purpose the symbol "God" has in his/her faith system.

Tradition is another important factor in understanding metaphors, as tradition is one of the major components that form a person's paradigm. "All Christian statements about God are primarily founded on the way believers' religious experiences are recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and for nearly two thousand years since then, on the religious experiences of Christians . . ." (Van Huyssteen 1989:129). Tradition, or confessional symbols, are also subjected to the governing definition of a metaphor: meaning of an unfamiliar subject is obtained by using a familiar concept. The symbols within tradition are mere interpretations of what we consider to be divine revelation, not divine revelation in itself. These interpretations are profoundly shaped by our self-understanding. Even within tradition, to believe that we can penetrate to a pure gospel unaffected by any cultural and other human relational accretions, is an illusion (Bosch 1991:182). Tradition that portrays symbols in a fixed and objective manner, does not take into consideration the very nature of metaphors.[2]

Understanding the very nature of metaphors may have a great influence on how churches portray their dogma and how caregivers and pastors operate within that paradigm. Working with fixed, objective symbols may inhibit an individual's understanding, and thus may also curb the healing process in a therapeutic setting, therefore enhancing the importance of models and symbols in a therapeutic environment.

4.3 Models of God used in this study

The models that were used in this study are "models of God" as proposed by McFague in *Models of God: Theology for an ecological, nuclear age* (1987). This work was chosen as it is one of the major works within the metaphorical theological movement. As stated, the researchers drafted the models into a questionnaire to be answered by the subjects.

The four models of God, including various metaphors, which McFague described, are: the monarchical model (God as King)[3], God as Parent (Mother and Father), God as Lover, and God as Friend.

2. Walter Brueggemann identified how symbols can vary in tradition (as a relational setting). He discerned four major "truths" around the fugure of David (1985:9-13). Truth, due to its relational character, is polyvalent and it may even include paradoxical images. (See also Capps 1990:177-181.) David is shown in several settings, for various reasons, and with diverse "portraits".

3. McFague (1987:63-69) uses the monarchical model (God as King) as metaphorical model to describe the confessional Christian paradigm: "The monarchical model of God as King was developed systematically, both in Jewish thought (God as Lord and King of the universe), in medieval Christian thought (with its emphasis on divine omnipotence), and in the Reformation

These models, as defined by McFague, were used in the (bilingual) questionnaire that was handed out to the group. Each model, as mentioned above, was used to establish an elaborate "dendrogram" in order to heighten its understanding. Using McFague's models, it was determined that, for example, a King: rules, may be distant, is seen as the Almighty, acts as the Judge, and is Holy. Each of these components were further broken down to at least six levels in order to derive questions that will be true to the model, yet simple enough to make sense to the subjects. McFague's four models were broken down and expanded in this manner, until they evolved into a questionnaire with 50 questions covering the models, and six questions on demographical information. The questions had a Likert scale, with subjects having the choice between the following options: definitely agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, definitely disagree. The South African Human Sciences Research Council compiled the questionnaire verifying its scientific and user-friendly nature.

5. PROCESSED DATA AND FINDINGS

i. Biographical profile of respondents

a. Number of respondents

	N	%
	17	55.8

55.8% of the available respondents chose to be part of this study.

b. Sex

	N	%
Male	10	58.82
Female	7	41.18

c. Ages represented

Ages varied between 24 and 58 years
10 Respondents (60%) < 35 years
7 Respondents (40%) > 35 years
M = 36.76 years

d. Church affiliation

	N	%
No affiliation	2	11.76
Reformed Church	9	52.94
Catholic Church	1	5.88
Mormon	1	5.88
Methodist	2	11.76
Old Apostolic	1	5.88
New Apostolic	1	5.88

(especially in Calvin's insistence on God's sovereignty). In the portrayal of God's relation to the world, the dominant western historal model has been that of the absolute monarch ruling over his kingdom" (1987:63).

e. Church visitation

	N	%
Every Sunday	4	23.53
2-3 Times per month	5	29.41
Once per month	1	5.88
Less than once per month	2	11.76
No visitation	5	29.41

f. Religious activity

	N	%
Active	7	41.18
Not active	10	58.82

g. Religious activity specified

	N	%
No activity	10	58.82
Service as a deacon	2	11.76
Preaching/evangelizing	2	11.76
Religious group	2	11.76
Other: Raja Yoga	1	5.88

h. Language

	N	%
Afrikaans	13	76.47
English	3	17.65
Afrikaans/English	1	5.88

ii. Statistical data

Compared with the whole questionnaire, each model received the following support by the respondents:

a. Median (M)

	M	Cumulative median/Number of questions
For the questionnaire	2.64	132/50
God as King	2.50	55/22
God as Mother/Parent	2.70	27/10
God as Friend	3.11	28/9
God as Lover	2.44	22/9

The median (calculated according to the 5 point Likert scale) shows that "God as Friend" received the most support as a model describing God. It is surprising that the "God as Mother/Parent" model had a higher median than the conventional monarchical God. A reason for "God as Lover" having the lowest median may be found in *eros* being an unfamiliar metaphor to describe the God-human relationship. This metaphor has received negative criticism throughout the history of Christianity (Tracy 1979:101).

Concerning the questionnaire, the "*Uncertain*" category was the respondents' consensus only 12 (12/50) times. Schutte (1993:5) found that this category is more often used by respondents as it is an easy middle course. What may have played a role in this, is the

dichotomy sometimes found in anxious persons (Möller 1990:29). Möller found that anxious persons portray polar cognitive structures. According to this finding, it is quite "normal" for the respondents not to choose the "*Uncertain*" category as the "easy way out".

b. Internal percentages

To view the above-mentioned from a different perspective, internal percentages for each model were calculated:

	Value	%
Average	179/250	71.60
God as King	81/110	73.63
God as Mother/Parent	34/50	68.00
God as Friend	35/45	77.77
God as Lover	29/45	64.44

(iii) Metaphors with correlative cognition

In order to broaden the interpretative paradigm within which the metaphors can be viewed, the metaphors chosen by the respondents were linked with cognitions identified by Back (1985) and Möller (1991).

a) Within the model: God as King (monarchical God)

1) A deterministic God
   * 76.47% of the respondents viewed God as being deterministic.
   * Cognitions: "Others are always trying to control me"; "I'm either completely in control, or completely out of control" (Beck *et al* 1985:290).
   * Brief reflection: Within this God-concept lies an external locus of control, believing that triumph and disaster come from a source external to the self (Mitchell 1989:21). "External locus of control", coined by J B Rotter out of the social learning theory in 1954, is the belief that powerful others, fate and luck, influence a person's life without that influence being contingent upon the person's behaviour; it is the opposite of an internal locus of control. This constitutes a certain way of experiencing faith, with a strong belief in prayer, rituals and symbols. David Katerndahl's interesting study (1991:395) finds a strong relationship between anxiety and panic attacks and an external locus of control: "In both selected and unselected populations, panic attacks are associated with greater externality. Phobic avoidance is also correlated with externality."

2) The omnipresent God
   * 76.47% of the respondents viewed God as omnipresent.
   * Cognitions: "To be rejected is the worst thing in the world"; "I can't stand being separated from others"; "I can't be alone" (Beck *et al* 1985:289-290), as well as: "When an expert figure or a family member is nearby, it will lessen or remove the symptoms" (Möller 1990:42).

3) The ecological God
   * 82.35% of the respondents viewed God as being solely responsible for the upkeep of the earth, dismissing any human responsibility.

* Cognitions: "If I let up, I'll fail"; "I can't ask for help"; "Don't bother other people" (Beck *et al* 1985:63, 289), as well as: "I won't be able to do that" (Möller 199:67).

4) The righteous God
* 70.59% of the respondents viewed God as being always just towards them.
* Cognitions: "When in doubt, I keep my mouth shut"; "I can't get others angry at me" (Beck *et al* 1985:63, 289).
* Brief reflection: These thoughts will inhibit any expression of emotion towards God leaving anxious people with affirmation of the status quo.

5) The trustful God
* 76.47% of the respondents believed that God can be trusted under many different conditions and circumstances.
* Cognitions: "To be rejected is the worst thing in the world"; "I'm either completely in control or have no control at all" (Beck *et al* 1985:290).

6) The invariable (unchangeable) God
* 76.47% of the respondents viewed God as unchanging.
* Cognitions: "Strangers are dangerous" (Beck *et al* 1985:64).

b) Within the model: God as Mother/Parent

1) The concerned God
* 76.47% of the respondents viewed God as a concerned God.
* Cognitions: "My security and safety depend on anticipating and preparing myself at all times for any possible danger" (Beck *et al* 1985:63).

2) The imminent God
* 82.35% of the respondents viewed God as imminent (and close) to people.
* Cognitions: "To be rejected is the worst thing in the world"; "I can't stand being separated from others"; "I can't be alone" (Beck *et al* 1985:289-290), as well as: "When an expert figure or a family member is nearby, it will lessen or remove the symptoms" (Möller 1990:42).

3) The ecological God
* 82.35% of the respondents viewed God as loving humans and nature equally.
* Cognitions: "I have to be cared for by someone who loves me"; "I can't be left alone"; "I'm nothing unless I'm loved" (Beck *et al* 1985:289).

c) Within the model: God as Friend

1) God as a Friend
* 76.47% of the respondents viewed God as a Friend of both the believer and unbeliever.
* Cognitions: "Since I have appeared anxious, nobody wants to be my friend, or associate with me"; "I can't be left alone"; "I need to be understood"; "I can't be separated from others" (Beck *et al* 1985:237, 289).
* Brief reflection: Underwood (1986:302) states that the object relational theory found that anxious and fearful children's perception of God is that of a Friend and a Companion.

2) God without fear
* 76.47% of the respondents do not fear God.
* Further reflection: This was an interesting finding as "fear" is part of the respondents' emotional experience. Logic expects fear to play an important role in the subjects' God-concepts.

d) Within the model: God as Lover

1) God, the source of Love
* 88.25% of the respondents viewed God as the source of love.
* Cognitions: "I am nothing unless I'm loved"; "I have to be cared for by someone who loves me" (Beck *et al* 1985:289).

2) The unique love of God
* 76.47% of the respondents view that God's love for creation is different from the love between two human lovers.
* Cognition: "If I allow someone too close, that person will control me" (Beck *et al* 1985:290).

iv) Other identified metaphors
* The will of God is uncertain.
* God is not male.
* The mute God (God of silence).
* The unique God (God is unique for each person).
* God is a companion.
* God expects a person to save him-/herself.

v) Statistical significant influence
Although the information gleaned, was subjected to two statistical tests (Ch^2 and T-test), no statistical significant influence ($p < 0.05$) was found. Thus, not one of the following variables showed any influence: age, language, church affiliation and church activity. This may be due to the fact that a very small number of respondents was used. One would expect that diverse variables, like church affiliation/tradition and culture, would influence the findings. To counter this criticism, this pilot study should be continued.

6. INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION

In this last paragraph, the researchers mention some conclusions that were reached after completion of the study.

6.1 Psychiatric understanding of anxiety
From the literature covered by this study, it seems that existential anxiety, as well as death anxiety, has been a topic that interested (pastoral) theology in the past and still continues to intrigue theologians. Anxiety, as a mental disorder, is still a barren field to be explored by pastoral theology. Knowing that anxiety accompanies many mental disorders will not only help the pastor who ministers to an anxious person, or the person him-/herself, but will further the dialogue between psychiatry/psychology and religion. In an era when many sciences question the legitimacy of theology and religion, it is important for theology to rise

above practising a "ghetto" science, interfacing with the other sciences that describe human nature and behaviour. This is a challenge to pastoral care in a time when people portray an openness to spirituality.

6.2 Paradigms and metaphors

Pastoral theology may want to be aware of the paradigm shifts that take place in the natural sciences, as those changes also influence a science such as theology. Just like any other scientist, a pastor acts according to, and from the directional paradigm that operates within him/her. As that paradigm is formed in a personal relational setting, it is important that every theologian/pastor asks him-/herself: "What forms the essence or foundation of my paradigm?"

In the Reformed tradition, there are set paradigms that operate: *sola gratia, sola scriptura* and *sola fide*. These paradigms may influence the pastor in counselling people who do not share that paradigm and the symbols that operate within that paradigm. The challenge to pastoral care resides in how paradigms influence pastoral care, how to examine the paradigm theory's use for pastoral theology, and how to operate in diverse paradigms.

Although a paradigm is formed by models or symbols, knowledge of metaphors and their dynamics further enhance the understanding of a person's experience of God. A person's understanding of God lies within a metaphor. This understanding is closely linked to that person's experiential and known world. As metaphors are tentative and temporary speech about God, they must be tested as to their value in the known world. In using metaphors as if they were eternal truths, the danger lurks that a specific metaphor (or symbol) may become irrelevant for the faith structure of a person's contextual reality.

This implies that a theology from "below" (where the individual's experience plays an important role) needs to balance out a theology from "above" (dogmatic in nature, kept alive by tradition). When this balance is disturbed, the real danger is that a theology (church) can become irrelevant in a specific setting, leaving people behind, or taking people along on a "predetermined" journey. This can also happen in a therapeutic environment, where the pastor may be "tied down" by dogma and traditions, unable to reach a relational person's needs without adding models and symbols familiar to the pastor.

The metaphors that live within a person unlock his/her cognitive, affective and emotional components and this knowledge is important in order to understand the system in which he/she operates. According to Spilka and Bridges (1989:345), monarchical metaphors constitute most of the traditional metaphors. These metaphors are being challenged by metaphors identified by metaphorical theology, metaphors that reflect contemporary thought and interpret modern reality. These metaphors may play an important role in "speaking" to a person in need, as metaphors surface in times of trauma (Jung 1963:106).

6.3 God-concepts

Metaphorical theology and the emphasis on metaphors establish the prominence of God-concepts. A God-concept is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon, impossible to be defined in a single theory. This is an important statement, as this study focused on the cognitive dimension of human experience. As stated, variables like different church traditions and ethnic background should show significant variations in the metaphors that are being used by persons, but this was not a finding in this study. Even though the theory around God-concepts are diverse, identifying a person's God-concept is an important aspect for understanding and counselling that person.

As the paradigm theory questions any fixed boundaries that may have formed a God-

concept, the latter cannot be evaluated from dogmatic categories such as "right" and "wrong," or even "functional" and "dysfunctional" (Louw 1993:306-311). What may be "functional" for one person, may be "dysfunctional" for the next. "Functionality" (ie it provides meaning and purpose for the person) can only be evaluated in terms of a person's individual system and paradigm. Working from a dogmatic perspective, the cumulative relationality is viewed as being of greater importance than individual responsibility and freedom. When the community realizes that their interpretations are tentative and not as "objective" and "sure" as previously considered, a person's individuality may be honoured again. As this touches on the hermeneutical question, the community's responsibility is emphasized and grows as they enter this process.

Working within this understanding of the functionality of God-concepts, it becomes important that a pastor must be able to make a spiritual and religious assessment, identifying the meaning that a particular symbol(s) play(s) within a person's paradigm. Enhancing meaning and purpose with those symbols becomes the dance to which the pastor is invited. In circumstances where the pastor and the person view a symbol as being "dysfunctional", a new God-concept may be introduced and explored by the pastor together with the person receiving therapy.

6.4 An anxious person's God-concept

This study has shown that the respondents did not view God from one model only, but that their God-concepts included all four of the models. According to the cumulative median, the respondents view God, primarily, as being their Friend. This is interesting as McFague (1987:63-68) views the monarchical God as the model that gives direction in confessional theology. In all four of the models, cognitions can be identified that support those models. Although this is the finding, this study chooses "*God as Friend*" as the pastoral key to help anxious people. Although scholars like McFague (1986:157-180), Tillich (1963:235-249), Jeremias (1971:108-118) and Moltmann (1978:50-64) explored the possibility of God as a *Friend*, this model needs more theologizing (see Louw 1993:308-309). God as Friend could bridge the chasm between the human person and God and change the dynamics in the God-human relationship. (Eg, how will the dynamics of confession change when the Listener is a Soul Friend and not a punitive Father?)

Although the model of God as Friend may be introduced to these respondents, it might be helpful to remember that they portray God as changeless. The dynamics of exploring other God-concepts may be difficult for anxious people to integrate. Sensitivity and the organic use of the Scriptures may ease any anxiety that may arise in this regard.

The importance of this study lies in the fact that the subjects' God-concepts showed a strong correlation with anxious people's general cognitive make-up. This enhances the pastor's role in a psychiatric setting as the human bio-psycho-spiritual nature is endorsed by this finding. With an external locus of control, and God being a "strong external force", it will not be uncommon for anxious persons to call upon God to intervene when anxiety or panic strikes. This study is aimed at broadening the paradigm in which people with anxiety or panic disorders operate.

6.5 Pastor in praxis

Most pastors, ministers and chaplains accept their own paradigm without questioning the origin of the paradigm or how it influences their ministry. It is important that a pastor has some knowledge of how paradigms, symbols and metaphors interact, as the pastoral act is also hermeneutical. According to Jung (1964:87), symbols are most likely to be found

where people search for meaning and purpose in life, therefore a pastor will identify symbols from varied perspectives and in diverse circumstances.

This study has also emphasized the importance for a pastor to have a workable knowledge of psychiatry and psychology.[4]

6.4 Recommendations

On conclusion of this study, the researchers have condoned Vanderpool and Levin (1990:17) who said that "... an intriguing and highly pertinent, yet largely unexplored set of issues awaits the attention of those interested in exploring religion-medicine relationships".

This study raises the following criticism:

a) The number of respondents is too small to view the findings with real significance. It was merely a pilot study.
b) The information was obtained by using only a questionnaire. Using personal interviews may enhance the findings and scientific quality of the study.
c) The questionnaire was used for the first time and needs more refining.

The following recommendations and questions will enhance further study:

a) Repeat the study with a greater number of respondents.
b) Revise the questionnaire.
c) Administer the questionnaire before and after medication, or before and after a panic or anxiety attack.
d) Support the questionnaire with personal interviews.
e) Paradigmatic thought needs to be developed within pastoral theology.
f) Will a person's God-concept change when cognitive restructuring has been done by a psychologist? (Eg, having moved the general cognitions towards an internal locus of control, and having identified the irrational thought structures, will the God-concept remain external to control?)

6.7 Hypothesis formed after conclusion

a) The God-concepts of persons with panic and anxiety disorders portray a strong resemblance to their general thought structure.
b) God as Friend is the pastoral key in ministering to parishioners suffering from anxiety disorders.
c) Anxious persons portray a minimal ecological consciousness.

In an age when Christianity's credibility is being questioned more and more, and when economic determinants remove chaplaincy from hospital settings, metaphorical theology and the paradigm-theory bring the promise of a new life, as they nurture the imagination of the religious community. And, in doing so, they not only deabsolutize traditional religion and criticize all voices concerned, but legitimize the presence of theology and pastoral care in areas where their presence is questioned.

4. In their North American study Larson and Larson (1991:35) found that 22% of all psychiatric patients visit only their pastor of minister. They also found that 21% visit psychiatrists, psychologists and other professional people, while 54% visit their general practitioner. However, there are still people who believe that their pastor, their church (thus God) can help them in their need.

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Oor lofprysing – en die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika[1]

ABSTRACT

The author argues that doxology, the praise of God, occupies a central place in the Reformed tradition and faith. This is also the case with regard to Reformed confessions, including the Confession of Belhar (1986). The expression "praise" can, however, be understood in different ways, and the paper briefly discusses three popular notions which are not typical of the Reformed tradition.

1. "Lofprysing" vorm die hart van die Christelike tradisie en baie spesifiek ook *die hart van die Gereformeerde lewensgevoel*. Lofprysing, doksologie, die roem van God, die bring van alle eer aan God, die dankbare groot maak van die Naam van die lewende God, dit alles vorm die hart van die Gereformeerde geloof en van die Gereformeerde vroomheid.

Vir Gereformeerde Christene is ons *geskape* om God te loof en te prys, trouens, die hele skepping saam met ons is die teater van God se glorie. Dit is die ruimte, die plek, die toneel waar die roem van God afspeel, sigbaar en hoorbaar word. Die hele natuurlike werklikheid verkondig die lof van God: van die sterrehemel tot die sand aan die see, die voëls in die hemel en die blomme van die veld, ja, die een dag stort vir die ander 'n boodskap uit, die boodskap van die roem van die lewende God. Saam met die Christelike tradisie is Gereformeerdes daarvan oortuig dat die hele skepping bestaan *ad majorem gloriam Dei*, tot meerdere eer van God.

Vir Gereformeerde Christene is ons egter ook *verlos* om God te loof en te prys. Ons is uit genade gered om die wonderbare groot verlossingsdade van God te verkondig, bekend te maak. Die lofprysing moet ook hoorbaar word in die wêreld, verstaanbaar, in alle tale, vir alle mense, en daartoe word die gelowiges gered en versamel deur die Heilige Gees tot 'n lofprysende gemeente. In die tyd, in die geskiedenis, deur die ganse wêreld heen dra die gemeenskap van gelowiges hierdie boodskap van roem en dank. Trouens, sê die Gereformeerde vroomheid, die heel belangrikste vorm van dankbaarheid vir ons verlossing is juis hierdie roem van die lewende God se grote Naam.

Kortom, vir Gereformeerde Christene is alles en almal bestem tot lofprysing, *soli Deo Gloria*.

2. Hierdie sleutelrol van die lofprysing word baie duidelik sigbaar in feitlik alle *Gereformeerde belydenisskrifte*.

Die *Westminster Shorter Catechism* sê dit natuurlik besonder nadruklik in sy bekende

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